A Constructive Theology of Truth as a Divine Name with reference to the Bible and Augustine

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

A Constructive Theology of Truth as a Divine Name
with Reference to the Bible and Augustine
(Summary) Emily Sumner Kempson

This study is a work of constructive theology that retrieves the ancient Christian understanding of *God as truth* for contemporary theological discourse and points to its relevance to biblical studies and philosophy of religion. The contribution is threefold: first, the thesis introduces a novel method for constructive theology, consisting of developing *conceptual parameters* from source material which are then combined into a theological proposal. Second, applying this method to selective texts of Augustine of Hippos' corpus and the Christian Old Testament does original work to excavate their accounts of truth and divinity. Third, this harvest is re-interpreted and developed into a constructive theological proposal, that understanding *God as truth* can robustly contribute to accounts of truth in general.

The first chapter positions my study within the fields of theological and philosophical debate and presents its methodology. This clarifies its relationship with historical theology, and delineates a productive engagement with biblical studies and cognitive linguistics, which accomplishes theological retrieval and resolves interdisciplinary tension.

The second chapter examines Augustine's writings *On Free Will* (*De Libero Arbitrio*), *Confessions* (*Confessiones*), and *On the Trinity* (*De Trinitate*). This engagement produces conceptual parameters that cover mathematical truth, Trinitarian logic, and human epistemic limitations.

The thirst chapter examines the Old Testament. Judicious engagement with biblical scholarship and cognitive linguistics illuminates the Hebrew text's complex articulation of senses and concepts associated with truth. From this, I extrapolate conceptual parameters that address truth-bearers and the relevance of divine truth to God's love, being, law, word, and wisdom.

The fourth chapter synthesises and augments the conceptual parameters developed in chapters two and three. The resulting constructive theology establishes the consequences of approaching 'God as truth itself' for truth in general. The relevance to perennial controversies in theology are noted, along with its potential to resolve philosophical challenges with further study.

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Chapter I: Context and Method

Truth has become a problem for Western thought. Although always contested, over the past century, an unprecedented uncertainty over *truth itself* has arisen. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries both analytic and continental philosophy have persistently disputed the nature and existence of truth. This uncertainty has spread from academic discourse to the public sphere, often with widely lamented consequences—such as the so-called 'post-truth' quality of recent political debate. Theologians and church communities have not been immune from the impact either, perhaps most notably in attempts to defend their faith's reasonableness. Strikingly, the increased academic and public interest in truth has conducted itself almost without reference to a once commonplace understanding of truth. Specifically, there has been little reference to the longstanding and sophisticated tradition of speaking of God as truth.

It is the purpose of this study to retrieve this understanding of naming God as truth for contemporary discourse in Christian theology. The strength of this constructive impulse may perhaps be best appreciated by considering three questions, phrased in general terms: i) What form did the idea take in its prime? ii) What led it to be overlooked and omitted? and, iii) Can the ancient Christian approach to God as truth be given a contemporary articulation? The first two are historical questions. To i), one would answer with a *historical theology*, depicting the historical notion(s) *per se* of God as truth. For ii), one requires a *history* (possibly in the form of a *genealogy*) for an answer, laying out the historical progression of events that lead to the notion's decline. Question iii), however, is a matter for *constructive theology*, in that it can only be answered with a theological proposal that demonstrably re-articulates the ancient notion of God as truth for contemporary theology. This project is addressed principally to the third question, 'Can the ancient Christian approach to God as truth be given a contemporary articulation?' and thus, it is a study in constructive theology, not historical theology or intellectual history.

This study lays out a methodology specifically tailored to the task of retrieving an ancient Christian approach to God as truth for contemporary discourses. The methodology incorporates historical theology and modern biblical scholarship—particularly with the aid of cognitive linguistics—utilising their insights for constructive theological import. Applying the novel

method will clarify the relationship between historical and constructive theology and enact a productive interdisciplinary *rapprochement* between theology and biblical studies. This will involve drawing on the Bible and texts composed by the highly influential Christian theologian Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE). Examining these texts in Chapters II and III will also yield newly articulated insights into each corpus' portrayal of the relationship between truth and divinity. These insights, characterised as 'conceptual parameters' will be reconfigured in Chapter IV to create a new constructive theology of truth—one that addresses many longstanding theological controversies and challenges involving the nature of truth and truth-claims in Christian theology and philosophy.

This chapter provides the groundwork for my proposal. I begin (I.1) by distinguishing the study of truth itself (alethiology) from epistemology and scholarship in general, indicating that this project primarily consists of alethiology. Next, I clarify the West's current predicament over truth and outline the major philosophical responses. This delineation of current thought provides the intellectual context and points of reference—a foil—for this study's proposal. I then (1.2) display in miniature the Christian understanding of God as truth—indicating its centrality and antiquity—so that its absence from present discourse is thrown into relief. This lacuna is further illustrated (I.3) by three instances where theological discourse, despite a driving concern for truth, has nevertheless overlooked the understanding of God as truth (Christian fundamentalism, reformed epistemology, and postliberal theology).

Their oversight, however, does not indicate that this study is the first to observe this *God-as-Truth* gap. We shall briefly review (I.4) three theological projects that have attempted to address the oversight by providing their own theologies of God as truth: those of Hans Urs von Balthasar, of Bruce Marshall, and of John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock. For reasons that will be explained, this study does not continue their work, instead preferring to present a new methodology for constructive theology, one particularly fit for the task of retrieving an ancient Christian approach to God as truth and re-conceiving it for contemporary discourse.

The remainder of the chapter outlines our distinctive methodological approach (I.5). Essentially, because I understand constructive theology to be inherently interdisciplinary, I have devised a method that respects its distinction from historical theology, biblical studies, and cognitive linguistics, while at the same time responsibly drawing on these neighbouring fields. The method's most distinctive trait is its aim to draw *conceptual parameters* from historical texts

(in our case, the Bible and Augustine's corpus) and then to deploy these parameters in its constructive theology of truth.

I.1 The Trouble with Truth

Scholarship, Epistemology, and Alethiology

Preliminarily, it is crucial to distinguish three inquiries, each of which is concerned with truth, though in different ways. Broadly speaking, these are: scholarship (the pursuit of truth and/or knowledge); epistemology (the study of knowledge itself); and alethiology[1] (the study of truth itself). Making this tripartite distinction clarifies the aims of this project and its intellectual context.

According to the three-part schema I have devised, scholarship is characterised by the pursuit of truth in the form of knowledge. Its practitioners intend to discover and establish what is, was, or will be the case, as well as to determine whether certain beliefs are true, in a manner that is demonstrable to others. Under this broad definition, practitioners include not only scholars but also scientists, judges, and journalists. At least two bastions of society, its judicial and academic/educational institutions, are integrally dependent upon scholarship so understood. Notably for our purposes, scholarship (as the pursuit of truth) implicitly presupposes an established alethiology and epistemology. Put differently, scholarship confidently presumes that one understands what truth is, and second, that one knows how to attain truth such that it counts as knowledge.

Epistemology—instead of primarily seeking to acquire knowledge as scholarship does— asks what knowledge *is*. In the most influential recent formulations of analytic philosophy of religion, epistemology defines knowledge as 'justified' true beliefs, in contra-distinction to true beliefs that are accurate merely by chance (which disqualifies them from being knowledge). Epistemic theories differ in their explanation of justification, but all agree that justification concerns the legitimate circumstance for holding true beliefs such that they count as knowledge. In this way, epistemic theories frequently stipulate that true belief only counts as knowledge

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[1] NB: 'aleth*i*ology' not 'aleth*e*ology.' The former term is preferred because it is etymologically applicable to both philosophical and theological studies of truth.

when the appropriate truth-seeking method has been followed. Epistemology's study of knowledge as 'justified true belief' focuses on the content of 'justified' while largely passing over 'true.' For this reason, it shares scholarship's confidence that 'truth' is already well enough understood so as to not require special attention, but questions the second presumption, that one knows how to attain truth such that it counts as knowledge. The result is that one's epistemology has direct implications for one's scholarship.

Alethiology is distinctive in that it seeks to question and clarify scholarship and epistemology's shared presumption that truth is already well understood. The study of truth itself openly questions the nature, qualities, value, and definition of truth. At its most extreme, alethiology disputes whether truth exists at all. Having distinguished the pursuit of truth and the study of knowledge from the study of truth itself, it is clear that scholarship depends upon epistemology, which in turn depends upon alethiology. An understanding of the nature of truth (implicit or explicit) is nested within all epistemologies, and an epistemology (implicit or explicit) is nested within all scholarly pursuits of truth or knowledge.

One result of the nested relationship between these three inquiries into truth is that when alethiology openly questions the nature (and even more so the existence) of truth, there are repercussions for epistemology and scholarship. These implications are practical as well as theoretical. One's conceptualisation of truth has a direct real-world impact, for instance on scientific methods, scholarly procedures, religious practice, judicial process, political campaigns, and public debate. This state of affairs should make it no surprise that scholarly debates over the nature of truth have repercussions in the public sphere. My study of the longstanding and sophisticated tradition of naming and approaching God as truth is driven in no small part by a deep concern for the direct impact alethiology has upon cultural institutions, especially those that are crucial to society's functioning and individual flourishing.

This study is designed to be primarily a work of alethiology, in that it takes *truth itself* as principal topic. It must be remembered, however, that alethiology is intricately connected with epistemology and scholarship. Their inter-relation is taken into account by this study in two ways. First, during Chapter II and III's examination of the Bible and some of Augustine's writings, attention will be paid to their epistemological stances insofar as it illuminates their treatments of the nature of truth itself. Second, Chapter IV's proposed constructive theology of

truth will elaborate upon its alethiology by including the potential implications of this approach for epistemology.

Troubling over Truth: Analytic and Continental Philosophy

The tripartite distinction of scholarship, epistemology, and alethiology explains why eras centrally concerned with the pursuit of truth or the nature of knowledge do not necessarily question what *truth* is. This was the case in the early modern period. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, however, Western philosophical thought increasingly convulsed over the nature of truth itself. Many conflicting theories of truth now exist in tension and the questions posed by alethiology are very much alive, rendering truth an unresolved problem. The following brief study of, first, the early modern consensus, and, second, the diverse ways in which twentieth-century analytic and continental philosophical traditions have understood truth, highlights the highly fragmented and contested intellectual landscape. In the process of this review, I will also introduce and define the phrase 'thin truth', which will be a key term going forward, especially in Chapter III.

As explained above, writers have frequently and comfortably pursued scholarship and epistemology without engaging at length with questions concerning the nature of truth. This was the case during the early modern period when epistemology absorbed many of Europe's best and brightest minds.[2] An account of truth was certainly 'indispensable', but only because of its subsidiary relevance, developing secondarily out of other concerns.[3] At this time, the notion of truth that predominated was that 'truth is the agreement of our thoughts with their objects'— a view which predates the modern period, most memorably expressed by Thomas Aquinas as '*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus,*'[4].[5] Early modern thinkers did not dismiss Aquinas' notion of truth as a medieval misstep to overcome; on the contrary, this motto was widely endorsed by seminal thinkers, including Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Christian Wolff, Georg

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[2] Michael Glanzburg, 'Introduction,' in Michael Glanzburg ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Truth* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 2.

[3] Alan H. Nelson, 'Early Modern Theories of Truth,' in Michael Glanzburg ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Truth* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 75.

[4] The translation of this phrase is contentious, but it roughly means 'truth is the agreement of thing and intellect.'

[5] Clinton Tolley, 'Idealism and the Question of Truth' in Michael Glanzburg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Truth* (Oxford: OUP, 2018) 93-4.

Meier, and Kant.[6] Of course, they did not all develop this motto in identical ways, but the basic idea of truth was thought to be uncontentious.[7] For many centuries it appears that truth was a matter of general agreement; epistemology, rather than alethiology, was a more common point of concern.

This early modern consensus among Western intelligentsia over the basic idea of truth may no longer exist in academia, but something like it continues at a popular level. Many people today still hold the basic notion that truth is an agreement between thoughts and the object of thought. In other words, a widespread, intuitive, and unreflective understanding exists among English-speakers that one sense of 'truth' is when a thought, sentence, or similar accurately indicates some aspect of reality. I will refer to this simple notion as a 'thin' sense of truth in order to distinguish it from other senses of the word 'truth' in this study.

'Thin truth' indicates a sense of 'truth' as a thought, sentence, or similar which agrees with an aspect of reality. If one excludes philosophers and other academics, this intuition rarely involves a developed articulation of categories; distinctions between thoughts, beliefs, sentences, and propositions are undefined and disputes over what constitutes 'agreement' do not arise (correspondence? correlation? identity? reliably accurate indication?). Importantly, 'thin' truth is only one of several senses of truth that the common English-speaker can understand without deep reflection. None of the common phrases 'a true friend', 'true love', and 'truing a beam' imply a 'thin' sense of truth.

Because 'thin truth' is an intuitive, widespread, and unreflective understanding, I will largely not impart aspects of philosophical truth-theories to it.[8] 'Thin truth' is an important term for this study going forward, especially once it is contrasted with what I will call 'thick' truth— meaning an understanding of truth which combines a sense of 'thin truth' with additional senses. The content of 'thick truth' will be clarified in later chapters.

The demise of the early modern general agreement regarding the nature of truth is readily apparent from the highly diverse understandings of truth articulated in the twentieth century, both in the work of continental philosophers and in the many rival truth-theories of analytic

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] This distinguishes the use of 'thin' in this study from philosophical writings that use 'thin' to denote a property that is 'metaphysically thin', meaning that it does not have a nature. There is no such implication in this study's use of 'thin truth.' Likewise, it does not denote the distinction sometimes made in ethics between thick and thin concepts where 'thick' concepts are both evaluative and descriptive and 'thin' concepts are only one or the other.

philosophers. Viewed together, these schools of thought demonstrate that the essence of truth—including whether it has one at all—is up for debate. Despite their widely divergent commitments, methods, and schools of thought, all are clearly engaged in what I have called alethiology.

Analytic philosophy has been directly concerned with the nature of truth from its earliest days.[9] Founding figures such as Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Gottlob Frege, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Frank P. Ramsey railed against the understanding of truth advocated by British idealism, most prominently by F. H. Bradley.[10] The continuing uncertainty over the nature of truth is evident in the unabated proliferation of truth theories in analytic thought ever since. Four 'classical' truth-theories emerged early on:[11] coherence, correspondence, pragmatist, and identity theories, each of which can be said to accord with a common intuition about truth. Coherentist views, in essence, take truth to be characterised by the coherence of all truths together; a belief is true if it coheres with other true beliefs. This accords with the intuition that two contradictory beliefs cannot both be true (i.e. the law of the excluded middle). Correspondence theories account for truth as when a proposition (or similar) corresponds to the world. I would consider 'thin' truth to be the background intuition of this truth theory, that is, that there is truth when what is said or thought matches reality. Pragmatist truth-theories could be said to express the intuition that truth is useful, and so it posits (broadly speaking) that truth is what works such that it is satisfactory to believe—it can be successfully relied upon. Identity theories are the fourth type of classical analytic truth theories. These hold that truths do not correspond with reality (unlike correspondence theories); rather, they are *identical* with reality. This, I would say, accords with the intuition that when one says something is the case, that the truth of the sentence is the matter at hand. A more recent addition to the four classical truth theories is deflationary theories of truth, which hold that defining truth is a fool's errand. The deflationary intuition is that when a statement is true, nothing further needs to be added to it to convey the point.

Different forms of these theories have come and gone, but often when one theory falls out of favour it re-emerges in new form: e.g. traits of early-twentieth century coherentism are evident

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[9] Thomas Baldwin, 'Truth in British Idealism and its Analytic Critics,' in Michael Glanzburg, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Truth (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 126.

[10] Glanzberg, 3.

[11] For more detailed treatments, see in the bibliography: Lynch, ed. (2001), Kirkham (1997), Künne (2003), Wrenn (2015), Schmitt (1995) and Glanzburg, ed., (2018).

in Michael Dummett's anti-realist theories of truth.[12] The predominantly Anglophone analytic debate has argued over the relative merits and faults of coherentist, correspondence, pragmatist, and deflationary accounts of truth. In the process, it has refined its preferred linguistic apparatus (e.g., devising symbolic logic and adopting Tarski's T-sentences) and gained insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and possible variations of each truth-theory's opposing positions. Nevertheless, as indicated by the anthologies and current surveys cited above, consensus remains elusive. In short, the uncertainty in analytic thought over the nature of truth is made evident by the continuing proliferation of truth theories.

Continental philosophy's handling of truth (its alethiology) has been characterised by a series of intellectual giants—rather than theory-types—who have each developed influential webs of thought concerning truth's conditions of possibility and its character (or lack thereof). Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Michel Foucault stand out for their influential alethiologies.[13] Each of these thinkers built upon his predecessors, engendering a certain family resemblance among them. But just as individual relations may go their separate ways rather than form a cohesive family unit, so too these continental philosophers' individual understandings of truth do not amount to a single coherent vision. Similar to analytic thought, a variety of proposals concerning truth has arisen from the continental philosophical tradition, some of which even go so far as to dispute truth's existence or attainability. While this study does not engage at length with how the continental philosophical tradition has enquired into the nature of truth, a highly programmatic survey of these four thinkers serves to highlight specific terminology and concepts that have become widely adopted beyond this tradition, and which I will use in later sections of this study.

First, Nietzsche is widely known for impassioned prose commending brutal honesty and the pursuit of truth above all else, often typified by his vociferous declaration that God is dead. Some further recognise that his later work[14] implies that once a society loses its belief in God, it will ultimately lose its faith in truth as well, gaining a despondency over whether truth is attainable, worthwhile, or even exists. More work has been done, however, to reconstruct

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[12] Ralph Walker, 'The Coherence Theory of Truth,' in Michael Glanzburg ed., The Oxford Handbook of Truth (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 219-30.

[13] For selected relevant works of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gadamer in this regard, see their bibliographic entries; for an overview of Foucault on truth see Deere (2014) and Rouse (1994).

[14] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: CUP, 2001). Book 5, §343-4.

Nietzsche's posthumously named 'perspectivism', the idea that no one can ever escape one's own perspective to achieve an 'objective' view of truth. Second, Heidegger's most well-known contribution to discussions of truth (alethiology) is the idea that there is a *condition of possibility* for truth, something which is conceptually prior. Before one recognises truths, there must first be something, some field, which first is intelligible and then subsequently is recognised as true. The dynamic underlying truth, he says, is one of revealing or un-concealing, in such a way that any revelation necessarily entails a concealing too. (He supposes the etymology of the Greek *alētheia* for truth is 'unconcealing.') Third, Gadamer expands upon Heidegger's rendition of truth as, at root, 'un/concealing', and elaborates its impact for hermeneutics. In his eyes, this means that all interpretation (all meaning-making) cannot simply re-produce the original, but rather emerges from a fusion of the horizons between the source text and the interpreter. Because this is always a unique event particular to the individual horizons that are fused, there is no single method which can encapsulate or codify the process of finding meaning. Finally, Foucault, an ardent follower of Nietzsche, studied the historical production of knowledge, giving special attention to the role of power in determining what is taken to be true. In his account, political, economic, and institutional regimes control the production of knowledge, and in his view, there is no remainder, nothing else to 'truth' other than the impact of their power.

As with analytic truth-theories, I would suggest each of these continental approaches to truth has a certain resonance with common intuitions about the nature of truth. Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectivism contested the value and attainability of genuine objectivity; similarly, many people certainly recognise they cannot completely escape their subjective viewpoint. Heidegger's portrayal of a concealing/unconcealing dynamic as the ground of truth's possibility chimes with the intuition that recognising truth brings something already in existence to one's awareness. Gadamer found truth in a fusion of disparate horizons which is irreducible to any method, which accords with the diversity of methods established for different objects of scholarship as well as the experience that every new truth a person comes to grasp is known in relation to his/her unique set of pre-existing knowledge. Foucault laid bare the role of power in the production of (so-called) knowledge and truth, making it difficult to deny that truth is not merely discovered but also established and constituted by our discourses and practices of scholarship (broadly understood). This study does not evaluate or critique these positions, but

will reference them in passing to contextualise and clarify the understanding of truth presented in this study.

Evidently, twentieth-century philosophy in both its analytic and continental variants has dealt extensively with matters of alethiology. In addition to scholarship and epistemology, truth itself has become a question in academic circles, with little consensus over its general form. As these truth debates continue to be digested and their implications teased out, the public sphere has felt the impact of academic uncertainty—a progression that is hardly surprising given the relationship between the academic disciplines of alethiology, epistemology, and scholarship and the importance of these concepts in informing the aims and practices of society's cornerstone institutions, such as education, the judicial system, and political debate. Words are signs of the times; one bellwether of *zeitgeist* is vocabulary. 'Post-truth' went from being an obscure neologism to emblazoning international headlines in less than a decade. This rise to prominence was so pronounced that it led the Oxford English Dictionary to designate 'post-truth' as its 2016 word of the year. Undeniably, concerns over the actuality and attainability of truth which had once been limited to academic spheres have irrevocably passed into public discourse. Over the past century and a half, Western thought and society has increasingly convulsed over the nature of truth itself.

I.2 Truth as a Divine Name

Remarkably, despite the turmoil over alethiology, a once-common way of understanding truth has not entered the philosophical fray. This is the long-standing Christian tradition of naming and approaching God as truth. This section outlines this venerable tradition and its scriptural foundation. This overview will render its absence from much current theology and truth-debates all the more striking. 'Truth', as we shall see, is but one of many divine names in the Christian theology. Of late, divine *attributes* have received more scholarly attention than divine *names*, so this section also outlines the importance of distinguishing between the two. This project aims to be squarely within the divine names tradition, though it does hold implications for discussions of divine attributes. To that end, the important distinction between treating divine attributes and treating divine names—and its significance for this study—will be

brought forward, as will the appropriateness of the phrase 'God as truth' for this study's endeavour.

Naming God Truth

Christian theologians through the ages have written, prayed, and sought holy knowledge while naming God Truth. As Chapter II will establish, Augustine says that God is truth and the chief good, whom one comes to know through loving God who is love itself. He addresses God in prayer and names God as Truth throughout his seminal autobiography *Confessions*.[15] His early dialogue *On the Free Choice of the Will*[16] aims to prove God's existence by first showing that eternal truth exists and then that this truth must be God. His mature work *The Trinity*[17] expounds upon the Trinitarian Godhead and each of the three divine persons as truth in themselves. Subsequent to Augustine, 'Truth' is one of the divine appellations discussed in Pseudo-Dionysius' *The Divine Names* as part of a contemplative ascent towards the transcendent God.[18] Anselm too elaborates upon the 'truth' as a divine name[19]. Thomas Aquinas explicates at length on God as truth itself.[20] Even during the Reformation, calling God truth itself remained so fundamental that it is stipulated in the opening pages of the Westminster Confession.[21] The accounts of God as truth (their content, metaphysical implications and practical applications) vary from one to the next, but they hold a common conviction that the God revealed in Christ is appropriately named 'Truth.' Much more work could be done to investigate the variations and commonalities within the longstanding practice of naming God as truth among Christian theologians; this would be a worthwhile task for historical theology. This study, however, aims to

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[15] Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions,* trans. Maria Boulding and ed. David Vincent Meconi, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1997). Henceforth, *Confessions.*

[16] Augustine of Hippo, 'On the Free Choice of the Will', in *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. and trans Peter King, (Cambridge: CUP 2010), 3-126. Henceforth, *Free Will*.

[17] Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill and ed. John E. Rotelle (2nd ed., New York: New City Press 1991). Henceforth, *Trinity.*

[18] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works,* trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 55, 105-110. I am not suggesting that Denys is building directly on Augustine. The 'divine names' tradition was already a broad one by his time.

[19] Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works*, eds., Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: OUP, 1998) 31-32, 46-7, 51, 152. ('Monologion' chapters 18, 30, 31, 35; 'On Truth' chapter 1).

[20] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book One: God*, trans. and ed., Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: UNDP, 1955),1.60.1-1.62.5 (p204-8).

[21] Anon., *The Confession of Faith: The Larger and Shorter Catechisms with the Scripture Proofs at Large together with the Sum of Saving Knowledge* (Inverness: John G. Eccles Printers, 1976), p19, chapter 1 article 4.

be a constructive theology which is occupied with alethiology, producing a contemporary theology of truth which names God as truth. For this reason, it does not pursue the historical theological project and instead selects one theologian, Augustine of Hippo—who is one of the most ancient and well-developed Christian examples of treating God as truth—to serve as insightful historical source material for constructive theology (see Chapter II).

To Augustine, 'truth' is not a Hellenistic divine attribute which he brings into the Christian fold; on the contrary, he is fully aware of its prominent position in the Bible as a divine name, as no doubt were the aforementioned theologians who name God 'Truth.' The New Testament indisputably secures Truth's place among the divine names of Christian theology, due to a number of widely known and centrally located passages in which 'truth' and 'true' are key terms for God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The most prominent use is in the Johannine literature. The opening prologue of John's gospel directly draws on Exodus 34.6 when it proclaims twice that the incarnate Word, who is Jesus Christ, is full of 'grace and truth' (1.14,17).[22] Jesus explicitly self-identifies as no less than truth, saying 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,'(John 14.6). As for the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is named by Jesus repeatedly and explicitly as the 'spirit of truth' (John 14.17, 15.26, 16.13; cf. 1 John 5:6 'the spirit is truth'). Johannine literature also makes the true God a recurrent theme, as in John 3.33 ('Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true.') and John 17.3 ('And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'). If we read Jesus's assertions that 'He that sent me is true' (John 7.28, 8.26 KJV) in light of Trinitarian orthodoxy, then it is clear that the Father (as well as the Godhead) is true. God is also named as one who is true in Pauline literature (e.g. 1 Thess. 1.9 'how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God,'; Rom. 3.4 'although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true' cf. Rev. 6.10 'they cried out with a loud voice, "Sovereign Lord, holy and true…"'). Calling God 'truth' and 'true' is, in short, a prominent theme in particular portions of the New Testament.

This practice does not emerge out of nowhere—like all of Christianity, it is built upon a Hebrew foundation. 'Truth' appears as a divine self-naming in the Jewish Hebrew Bible and

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[22] All biblical translations are NRSV unless noted otherwise. Because of ʾĕmet's variable translation as both 'truth' and 'faithfulness' (see Chapter III), recourse is occasionally made to the KJV to highlight a pericope's relevance to this study.

Christian Old Testament.[23] In Exodus 34.6, one of the cardinal divine self-revelations, immediately after refusing to show his face to Moses, God instead chooses to self-describe and identify as: 'YHWH, … abundant in goodness and truth' (KJV). The psalms praise YHWH as 'God of truth' (Ps. 31.5 KJV) and invoke divine truth on numerous occasions. The frequent naming and invoking of God's truth in the Old Testament is obscured in English translations, because the Hebrew word for 'truth' (*ʾĕmet* translated as 'truth' in the KJV pericopes above) is at times alternatively translated as 'faithfulness' (the NRSV's choice for Ex 34.6 and Ps 31.5). Chapter III will investigate the implications of this variable translation and uncover a web of utterances about God and truth that are opaque in English translations. This study will map relations among divinity, truth, and related concepts (e.g. wisdom, law, word, and YHWH) in the Old Testament which develop in the New Testament.

This overview from the Old Testament to the Westminster Confession indicates that naming God 'Truth' is an ancient Christian practice with biblical roots which endured at least into the early modern period. This study takes two sources of this tradition, the Old Testament and compositions by Augustine of Hippo, as primary resources for its constructive theology of truth.

The Divine Names

This study also emphasises the significance of treating truth and true as divine names rather than simply as divine attributes, and draws on the work of Janet Soskice to indicate the importance of this distinction and the value of recovery of divine names at this time. The longstanding and sophisticated tradition of naming and approaching God as truth is but one of many names in Christianity's 'divine names' tradition. This tradition is a collection of names used for God and things God is called, such as Love, the Holy One, Rock, Light, and Wisdom. Unlike Islam's codified ninety-names of God, there is no definitive or exhaustive list of divine names for Christianity. Treatments of divine names are often distinguished from treatises on the Trinity which only treat the names of the Trinitarian persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

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[23] Throughout, this study refers to the Old Testament, rather than the Hebrew Bible, because this study is a work of Christian theology that treats the text as Christian Scripture. Its Old Testament analysis is meant to only have authority as a work of Christian theology, and makes no claim to being pertinent for Jewish interpretation of scripture. This respects Judaism's prerogative to interpret its scripture for itself.

though this is not always a clear-cut distinction, as may be seen in the common use of the divine name, Word). The most well-known example of this line of theological thought is Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise *The Divine Names*, though as Janet Soskice points out, he is by no means alone; the divine names are expounded upon by many illustrious theologians, including Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Ambrose, Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, and Philo of Alexandria.[24] Furthermore, rather than being restricted to highly technical treatises, the divine names are invoked in liturgy, prayer, and hymnody, as in the Sarum Rite of medieval England.[25]

Soskice rightfully indicates that the *divine names* are not to be confused with what modern theologians refer to as *divine attributes*, though there is arguably some overlap between the two. Divine attributes are specific qualities of God, such as when Descartes specifies the five attributes of a perfect being: one who is infinite, eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent.[26] All divine attributes may be predicated of God. It is readily apparent that the names recited by the Sarum Rite and enumerated by Pseudo-Dionysius are not all predications in the sense of classical attributes. The medieval litany includes 'Messiah, Emmanuel, Firstborn, Alpha, Omega, Lamb, Serpent, Goat, Lion, Word, Worm, Splendour, Bridegroom.'[27] Pseudo-Dionysius lists the names being, life, light, and truth alongside sun, star, fire, water, cloud, and rock.[28] Lamb and star (or even being-a-lamb or being-a-star) cannot be said to be attributes of God. In this way, nomination is not identical with predication; divine names may be used in a more varied manner than divine attributes. In addition to predicating an attribute (eternal, everlasting), divine names can be metaphorical (light, rock), or designate God's relation to creation (creator, redeemer), or express an identity statement (God is Love).[29]

The significance of a divine name—whether metaphorical, relational, as an attribute, as an identity, as a proper noun, or otherwise—only becomes clear when one observes how the name is used in the broader Christian context. The dangers of removing divine names from their theistic context are profound. A divine name that has been deracinated and treated as a purely philosophical divine attribute may be stripped of characteristic traits it possessed within the Christian divine names tradition. For instance, removing the practice of calling God 'eternal'

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[24] Janet Martin Soskice, 'Being and Love: Schleiermacher, Aquinas, and Augustine,' *Modern Theology*, 34:3 (July 2018) 481.
[25] Ibid., 482.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Pseudo-Dionysius, 55-6.
[29] Soskice, 'Being and Love,' 489.

from the Christian devotion to a Creator God alienates it from the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*.[30] This in turn makes it possible for the characterisation of the 'eternal' God to have more in common with Aristotle than Christian thought. As Soskice explains,

> where for Aristotle divine "eternity" can mean everlastingness with neither beginning or end, for Aquinas – and for that matter Augustine and Boethius – divine eternity cannot be this, but must be that God, as Creator of space and time, is not a creature of space and time but absolutely present to all created temporality.[31]

To prevent the distortions of un-contextualised readings, this study attends to the broader textual context of Augustine's writings and the Old Testament when investigating in what way they speak of God as truth. Its significance can only be fully understood within the larger theistic framework.

Another distinction between divine attributes and divine names is that divine names are classically taken to be scriptural in origin. In his seminal text *The Divine Names,* Pseudo-Dionysius explicitly says as much: 'we must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed.'[32] Examples are 'I am being' (Exod 3.14, Rev 1.4), 'good' (Matt 19.17, Luke 18.19) 'eternal' (Isa 40.28, Bar 4.8), and 'truth' (John 14.6).[33] It is true that some have argued that certain attributes which are also divine names are deducible from rational reflection. Others have taken the classical attributes to be Hellenistic in origin, subsequently baptised by Christian theologians into orthodox doctrinal thought. Nevertheless, for the purposes of Christian theology, one should be able to draw on scriptural support for each and every divine name, and 'Truth' is no exception. For this reason, among others, this study makes the Bible one of its two main resources for its constructive theology of truth.

God as Truth

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[30] Soskice, Janet Martin, 'Athens and Jerusalem, Alexandria and Edessa: Is there a Metaphysics of Scripture?' *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 8:2 (April 2006) 149-162.
[31] Soskice, 'Being and Love,' 484.
[32] Pseudo-Dionysius, 49.
[33] Pseudo-Dionysius, 55.

In this thesis I will speak of 'approaching' and 'understanding' 'God *as* truth' in order to preserve the multivalent quality of naming God and, in due course, attempt to perform its retrieval. If one were to say from the beginning that naming God 'truth' means 'God is Truth' or 'God is true' these might misleadingly suggest the 'is' of identity. Speaking of 'approaching' and 'understanding' 'God *as* truth' encompasses a range of possibility as to how 'God is truth' might be taken, consonant with what we find in earlier theological texts. This means it can compass additional phrases which do not 'name' God as truth but are clearly cognate (e.g. 'the truth of God,' 'the true God', 'God is true.' etc.). Occasionally Truth will be capitalised in this study when it explicitly functions as a name for God, but this practice is not universally applied because of the vagueness of some instances. In this way, the content of 'God *as* truth' will be given greater detail from the course of our study, rather than my analysing the significance of the phrase in and of itself.

It appears that the language of divine attributes has displaced treatment of the divine names. In Soskice's view,

> At some time in early modernity the divine names tradition fades away, especially in Protestant and Anglophone writings, and is replaced by discussions of the "classical attributes" – infinite, eternal, immutable and so on – defended or attacked as free-standing philosophical assertions. That is what we find in Locke, Hobbes and Hume and their modern successors amongst philosophers of religion.[34]

Interestingly, Soskice argues elsewhere that the slippage from divine names to divine attributes (and the loss of the former's distinctively Christian features) is at the root of the twentieth-century contention that Christian thought does not have a distinctive metaphysics of its own, but rather one which it adopted from Hellenistic thought. As she puts it,

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[34] Soskice, 'Being and Love,' 482. She also observes that Roman Catholic 'Handbook theology' also contributed to the rise of divine attributes and fall of divine names.

I … ask whether it is true, as some say, the fathers baptized Aristotle and that the classical divine attributes ('eternal', 'unchanging', 'One' and so on) were simply lifted from Greek philosophers to adorn the brow of the God of Israel. My answer will be 'No', my strategy to draw attention to a Christian (and Jewish) teaching that is metaphysical but distinctly unhellenic – creatio *ex nihilo* – and to argue that this teaching had dramatic implications for religious language, including the divine attributes, or as I prefer to call them, the divine names.[35]

The repercussions of exclusive attention to divine attributes is significant enough that she argues the eclipse of divine names by divine attributes in modern, especially Anglophone, theology has been detrimental. As a result, some names have been left out/forgotten because they are not easily amenable to being considered as attributes. Some that *are* amenable have risked losing distinctive Christian characteristics (e.g. eternal, free). As an antidote, Soskice recommends that the divine names receive renewed attention. This study proceeds along sympathetic lines, in that its theology of truth treats truth as a divine name rather than as simply a divine attribute. It proposes that treating God as truth was once a robust and distinctive understanding of 'truth' in the ancient world, and may be successfully retrieved, resourced for current debates over truth, being first of most obvious relevance to Christian thought, and secondarily to philosophy. In this study's view, (a) talk of divine attributes is not in itself wrong, though it needs careful work to maintain contact with Christian theological thought and (b) continued attention to divine names is important. This study attends to truth as a divine name - and if successful will produce insights that are of value for those who seek to articulate truth as a divine attribute.

This study does not, however, attempt a genealogical explanation of how 'truth' specifically fell from favour as a divine name over the course of the modern period, resulting in its absence from much current theological discourse. This study is meant as a proposal situated among current theological and philosophical discourse, and for that reason the next two sections (I.3-4) examine the theological context, attending first to recent theological work on questions of truth that has overlooked truth as a divine name (I.3), and attending second to those that have taken up this ancient Christian locus of thought and practice (I.4).

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[35] Soskice, 'Metaphysics of Scripture,' 149-50.

I.3 A Theological Lacuna

Despite the twentieth century's proliferation of interest in truth (its essence or essential qualities, see I.1), the conceptual possibility of God as truth itself (see 1.2) appears largely forgotten. The gap, or lacuna, is evident in (at least) three arenas. First, at a popular level, the phrase 'God is truth' is often merely a poetic way of saying 'God doesn't lie,' or 'what I have asserted about God is true.' Second, it is largely absent from philosophical inquiry: neither continental nor analytic philosophical traditions, which we surveyed above, have developed truth-theories that lay weight on the idea of God as truth. Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, there is a theological gap or lacuna; when one turns to the theologians and traditions from this period who have sought most prominently to assert the relevance of truth for Christian theology, little recourse is made to understanding God as truth. This section explores the lacuna where a productive theological locus once stood.

Three strands of debate will be taken into consideration: Christian fundamentalism, reformed epistemology, and postliberal theology (including its 'postconservative' off-shoot). I have selected these theological developments because, while all three focus sharply on the veracity of Christian truth claims, the character of their approaches to establishing the truth of Christianity greatly differ from one another. Each recognises that Christian theology requires a robust articulation of the origin or nature of Christian truth, yet none turns to the idea of naming God 'Truth.' In other words, even theists who are preoccupied with the truth-value of Christian faith rarely make recourse to God as truth itself. My conclusion is non-evaluative, in that it does not judge what impact—positive or negative—this omission has on the three strands of Christian thought. It is not arguing that this lack or omission is a fatal flaw. The aim is to establish the remarkable absence of a robust approach to God as truth.

Christian Fundamentalism

Christian fundamentalism, one of the most potent religious forces of the twentieth century, has been perhaps the most vociferous and high-profile Christian tradition to insist on the importance of 'truth' for right belief, and it is therefore worth examining precisely how 'truth' is

understood within this tradition. James Barr's lengthy and influential analysis in *Fundamentalism* is well respected among scholars and provides us with a theological insight into the movement as it existed in the late twentieth-century.[36] As Barr makes clear, Christian fundamentalist thought has typically drawn on an understanding of truth that resembles correspondence theories. Moreover, Barr argues, this approach has progressively reconfigured this tradition's approach both to biblical texts and to its own evangelical origins.[37] It has not, in other words, offered an account of 'truth' as a divine name.

Fundamentalism is often charged with 'literalism' in its approach to the Bible, but, as Barr is quick to demonstrate, fundamentalists frequently advance non-literal readings of scripture. It is *inerrancy* rather than *literalism* which is of greatest concern.[38] The central tenet is that the Bible is inspired and free from error—not merely theological error, but error of any kind, including historical, geographical, and scientific fact.[39] In his analysis, Barr finds that it is not a literalistic hermeneutic but a sense of truth as 'correspondence to external reality' which is preserved above all else.[40] In his analysis,

> Though the degree of correspondence is allowed to vary, and in this sense, as we have just seen, fundamentalist interpretation is not literal, correspondence with external reality must be affirmed as an inalienable and essential property of the biblical texts, and especially so when they narrate events that seem on the surface to be events in space and time. We can best illustrate this by putting it negatively: for fundamentalists it is usually wrong to interpret a biblical passage as if it were a myth, or a legend, or the product of theological reflection, unless it itself represents itself as a piece of theological reflection.[41]

For fundamentalism, in other words, maintaining correspondence between verbal biblical pronouncements and the external material/concrete world is paramount to maintaining inerrancy.

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[36] James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 2nd ed., (London: SCM, 1981).
[37] Fundamentalism here is not to be equated with conservative evangelicalism per se, but rather a particular ideology within the evangelical tradition of Christianity. See, Barr, *Fundamentalism*, xix.
[38] Ibid., 40.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 49.
[41] Ibid., 50.

Barr also draws attention to the fundamentalist efforts to harmonise all biblical passages. This practice stems from the concern that if any one part were to be untrue, it would impugn the divine authority of the entire text.[42] The insistence that the Biblical text be perfectly consistent has superficial commonalities with a coherentist view of truth, but it is driven by concern for the consistency of divine inspiration, rather than an understanding of the nature of truth. Notably, Barr argues persuasively that this is an approach to scripture that is not substantiated by the text itself. While there is support for the inspired and authoritative nature of the texts, the extension of these two concepts to *inerrancy* is based purely on supposition: 'here conservative evangelicals go over to a purely philosophical and non-biblical argument: if it was inspired by God, then how could there be any error of any kind in it? . . . [this] belongs to a purely philosophical assumption.'[43] Inerrancy, I would add, is a natural extension of the idea that truth is correspondence with external reality; if any part of the Bible lacks this, then that part is not true, and if the entire Bible is the inspired authoritative word of God, then none of it should lack this quality.

Fundamentalism's overwhelming commitment to inerrancy and correspondence-type understandings of truth also drives its engagement (and disengagement) with biblical criticism and other forms of Christianity. Barr asserts that fundamentalist biblical interpretation will freely pass from literal to non-literal, depending upon which best supports the case for correspondence-truth. Similarly, it does not genuinely draw conclusions from biblical scholarship, but merely uses it to substantiate the conclusions it has already determined. Furthermore, Barr notes that the same priorities have caused a 'frightening alienation of fundamentalism from the main stream of the church life and theology.'[44] Fundamentalists have willingly alienated themselves from their own evangelical heritage, he warns, because 'in place of the religious functioning of the Bible it takes, as primary guarantee of the authority of scripture, the absence of error, especially in its historical details.'[45] The long-standing evangelical emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus, the incarnate God, has been gradually replaced by a relationship with an inert text. In Barr's view, 'It is striking that a religious form which places so much stress on personal faith in Christ is made dependent on a rationalist proof of the inerrancy of the Bible, in which the

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[42] Ibid., 62, 65, 70.
[43] Ibid., 84-5.
[44] Ibid., 338.
[45] Ibid., 339.

promises of God are not considered trustworthy unless they are enshrined in a book all statements of which are infallible and inerrant.'[46] Clearly Christian fundamentalism is not most closely concerned with the relationship between God and truth, but rather with the *Bible* as truth. Correlatively, it is not the holiness of truth and the worthiness of its pursuit, but rather particular truths of biblical texts that are maintained by any means necessary.

Barr identifies two difficulties that result. First, there is the movement's hostility towards other forms of Christianity whenever there is a perception of doctrinal disagreement or of the other being 'non-evangelical'. Because of the narrow correspondence view of truth, acknowledgement of the valid faith of Christians who differ on doctrinal issues would 'damage the exclusiveness claimed for the evangelical path to God.'[47] The movement's preferred alternative is to dismiss other forms of Christianity as illegitimate (e.g. 'Catholic not Christian'). The second difficulty is hostility towards modern theology and biblical criticism because their questioning of fundamentalist interpretations is taken as a threat: one to sever 'the intellectual link with the Bible which for fundamentalists provides them with the final assurance that their religious faith is true.'[48] As these interpretative authorities are rejected, fundamentalism becomes increasingly dependent upon personal authority, all as a result of resting their faith's truth on biblical inerrancy and a correspondence view of truth.

From Barr's insightful analysis, it would appear that fundamentalism's understanding of truth has divorced its adherents from their own conservative evangelical tradition, the biblical text, the broader Christian tradition, church community, and the intellectual community, resulting in a dependence upon a code of exclusion and personal authority, with dire political and religious consequences. Relevant to this study, even though truth is an overriding concern in Christian fundamentalism, no significant use is made of the practice of naming God 'Truth'. It is the truth of the Bible—rather than God as truth itself—which is maintained at any cost. Surely, this is based in a desire to defend the reality of God as revealed in Christ, but, functionally, the Bible has replaced God as the focus of defensive action. It could be that if a theology of God as truth displaced the emphasis on biblical inerrancy and correspondence truth, many of these difficulties would become avoidable without compromising faith.

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[46] Ibid., 340.
[47] Ibid., 342.
[48] Ibid.

Reformed Epistemology

A similar lack of attention to the possibilities of understanding God as truth is noticeable in recent Christian theology that engages with analytic thought, as may be exemplified in the work of the theist philosophers labelled 'reformed epistemologists.' A brief study of three prominent thinkers in this tradition—Alvin Plantinga, William P. Alston and Nicholas Wolterstorff —highlights that they are centrally concerned with the truth and justifiability of Christian belief, especially belief in God's existence. Their direct engagement with God and truth does produce epistemologies that directly involve the divine, but it does not generate an *alethiology* wherein divinity and the nature of truth itself are intimately related.

Alvin Plantinga's magnum opus *Warranted Christian Belief*[49] is the culminating volume of his trilogy on warrant. The first two books aim to establish that warrant, rather than justification, is what separates genuine knowledge from accidentally true belief, and the final volume intends to demonstrate that there is warrant for Christian belief. His main topic, then, is epistemology, and truth is undeniably at the heart of his project—he avows that 'Everything depends on the *truth* of Christian belief.' But the nature of truth, alethiology, is not in question for him.[50] This is clear in the passage below, in which Plantinga uses contemporary confusion over truth's nature to illustrate that obvious realities can become confused in a cognitively compromising environment. He offers,

> An analogy: Thomas Reid and others point out that the idea of truth, as a relation between beliefs and the world, is part of our native noetic equipment. We ordinarily take it utterly for granted that there is such a thing as truth, and we ordinarily take it for granted, with respect to any given belief we hold, that it is indeed true. But the right kind of cognitive environment can squelch and smother our notion of truth, so that some people in some circumstances wind up apparently with no concept of truth at all.[51]

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[49] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).
[50] Ibid., xiii.
[51] Ibid., 216.

It is evident from this passage that, in Plantinga's view, someone with un-addled cognitive abilities will naturally hold what I have termed a 'thin' sense of truth (that is, truth as a relation between beliefs and 'the world', see I.1). Even when, later in his study, Plantinga considers other views of truth, he lists what he calls 'postmodern' versions only to clarify that in his view they offer no insights into the nature of truth. He explains that they are incompatible with Christian belief, and he thus dispenses with them without further consideration of the long debate over truth itself that has marked Western philosophical thought.[52]

Plantinga's lack of interest in alethiology is also evident in his distinctive position that the proper functioning of human noetic capacities involve God. For Plantinga, humans have an innate *sensus divinitatis*, a 'kind of faculty or cognitive mechanism' that can provide a sense of the divine, similar to sense-perception or memory.[53] He argues that if this *sensus divinitatis* is innate, it follows that belief in God is properly basic. This would mean that just as 'I am conscious' is a properly basic belief (it does not require evidence to be considered knowledge) because it is self-evident through sensory experience, so too would belief in God be properly basic (i.e., not requiring evidence to be knowledge). In brief, this is how Plantinga hopes to secure the Christian's right to claim that his/her belief in God is warranted, even if it can do little to persuade those who have no awareness of a *sensus divinitatis* in themselves. The truth of Christianity is at stake, but for Plantinga it is a question of epistemology, which implicitly presumes 'truth' to be a sort of 'thin' truth or correspondence; 'truth' is certainly not another name for God.

Another reformed epistemologist, William P. Alston, stakes out a similar position in *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience.*[54] Like Plantinga's focus on the *sensus divinitatis,* Alston sets out 'to show that putative perception of God can provide justification for certain beliefs about God and thereby contribute to a basis for religious belief.'[55] He advances a 'doxastic-practice epistemology' which focuses on how belief-forming practices justify belief, but he provides no in-depth consideration of the nature of truth. There is only a footnote clarifying that his epistemology 'takes the realist view that there is a basic (roughly, "correspondence") concept of truth, and a single concept of reality, that is common to all

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[52] Ibid., 424-5.
[53] Ibid., 172, 175.
[54] William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
[55] Ibid., 68.

doxastic practices. They all aim at forming correct beliefs about a common reality.'[56] Behind his sense of truth as 'roughly correspondence'—'thin' in my terminology—no sense of God as truth itself is detectable in the text.

Nicholas Wolterstorff fruitfully serves as a final example of the way truth has been dealt with by reformed epistemology. In his essay 'Can Belief in God be Rational If It Has No Foundations?' he addresses what he calls 'the evidentialist problem', that is, whether there is enough evidence to justify belief in God.[57] This problem is at the forefront of Plantinga and Alston's minds as well: where Plantinga wishes to show that belief in God was properly basic (thus exempt from demands for evidence), Alston prefers to argue that mystical experiences can supply evidence for theistic belief. Like Plantinga and Alston, Wolterstorff's concern is with whether one can be justified in taking beliefs about God as true, leaving the 'thin' sense of truth itself un-interrogated.

Insightfully, Wolterstorff recognises the 'evidentialist problem' to be a uniquely modern conundrum. Looking back to the medieval thought of Anselm and Aquinas he recounts that,

> Taking Anselm and Aquinas as typical, it becomes clear, then, that the medievals were doing something quite different in their project of natural theology from meeting the evidentialist challenge. They were engaged in the transmutation project of altering belief (faith) into knowledge. No one in their milieu was claiming that it was permissible to believe that God existed only if one did so on the basis of adequate evidence, and with a firmness not exceeding that strength of the evidence.[58]

If the evidentialist problem is a uniquely modern challenge, one might infer that that the problems addressed by reformed epistemology do not arise for certain pre-modern Christian understandings of truth. Relatedly, this thesis will ultimately advocate for a 'thick' sense of truth, one which incorporates the 'thin' sense alongside a richer account of truth and, by extension, true belief. Foreshadowing this study's proposal, there is a point when Wolterstorff displays a sense

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[56] Ibid., 239 fn19.
[57] Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Can Belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?' in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: UNDP, 1983), 136.
[58] Ibid., 141.

that belief in God is deeper than simply holding true beliefs about God and related claims. In his opening paragraph, he states:

> Central to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam alike is the conviction that we as human beings are called to believe in God—to trust in him, to rely on him, to place our confidence in him. To believe in God is our fundamental human obligation. Central also is the conviction that only by believing in God can the deepest stirrings of the human heart be satisfied.[59]

Here, believing in God takes on qualities of trust, reliance, and confidence as well as cognitive assent. Wolterstorff does not, however, follow up on this notion that Christian belief may be more than a conviction awaiting appropriate rational evidential support. His essay remains committed to meeting the evidentialist challenge on its own grounds.

There is much to be said for the work of reformed epistemology in meeting the evidentialist challenge, as many theists, atheists, and agnostics hold it to be of decisive importance for religious epistemology. This study's interests, however, lie first with alethiology. From this brief survey, it is apparent that although reformed epistemology is highly concerned with matters of truth, its proponents do not explore the possibility that belief in God may be metaphysically consequential for the nature of truth. It is this possibility that this study explores. This is, I suggest, a meaningful lacuna in the otherwise valuable insights of the reformed epistemologists; moreover, as I will suggest in my concluding chapter, it is possible that this kind of constructive theology of truth which names God as truth itself could contribute positively to the reformed epistemologists' attempts to address the evidentialist challenge.

Postliberal Theology

Both Christian fundamentalism and reformed epistemology contain a dominating concern for truth, without extensive questioning of the nature of truth itself. Rather, both have absorbed or deployed non-theistic theories of truth (frequently though not always something akin to a correspondence theory of truth) in an effort to answer popular and philosophical demands that

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[59] Ibid., 135.

faith be justified. The final theological tradition I will consider—that of postliberal theology, including its more recent postconservative offshoots—has dealt more directly with questions of what I have called alethiology. As a brief study of three seminal thinkers in this tradition (George Lindbeck, Hans Frei, and Kevin Vanhoozer) makes clear, postliberal thought has recognised that certain widespread understandings of truth are problematic and has taken steps to avoid these problems with limited moves to develop alternatives. It has not, however, recognised the value for its own questions of a revived alethiology of God as truth itself.

When George Lindbeck published *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, it was explicitly intended to address how the truth of Christian doctrine can be defended today. His book proposes a 'cultural-linguistic' approach to doctrine, one derived from 'philosophical and social-scientific approaches.'[60] As James Fodor explains, Lindbeck's approach is meant to navigate between the dominant 'propositionalist' and 'experiential-expressivist' models for understanding religious doctrine (the former focusing on doctrinal truth as an objectively measurable reality and the latter viewing doctrine as 'non-informative … symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations.'[61]) In this way, he seeks to avoid both fundamentalism and liberal theology's approach to doctrine. The complaints of some critics notwithstanding, Lindbeck is committed to propositional truth maintaining a role in the development and nature of religious doctrine, saying, 'We must not simply allow for the possibility that a religion may be categorically as well as symbolically or expressively true; we must also allow for its possible propositional truth.'[62] Lindbeck's book proved greatly popular, with both its adherents and its detractors recognising that he had located a commonly felt problem in the dichotomy between 'propositionalist' and 'experiential-expressivist' approaches.

When Lindbeck does present an account of truth, it addresses the truth of statements. In it, he articulates two rough analogues of coherentist and correspondence truth-theories, which he calls 'intrasystematic' truth and 'ontological' truth. In his own words,

> The first ['intrasystematic' truth of statements] is the truth of coherence; the
> second ['ontological' truth of statements], that truth of correspondence to reality

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[60] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984), 7.
[61] James Fodor, 'Postliberal Theology,' in David F. Ford and Rachel Muers, eds., *The Modern Theologians: an Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 232.
[62] Lindbeck, 63-4.

which, according to epistemological realists, is attributable to first-order propositions. Utterances are intrasystematically true when they cohere with the total relevant context, which, in the case of a religion when viewed in cultural-linguistic terms, is not only other utterances but also the correlative forms of life.[63]

Doctrine, Lindbeck proposes, can be defended as truth in the 'intrasystematic' sense, in that doctrines are 'second-order' propositions, rather than being 'first-order propositions' that make 'ontological truth claims.'[64] We can see that Lindbeck has passed into alethiology in his efforts to defend the truth of doctrine—not yet offering a full account of truth while yet refusing to uncritically adopt the alethiologies implicit in challenges to Christian faith. While Lindbeck does discuss the nature of truth, his excursus does not suggest that divinity in some way undergirds the nature of truth.

If Lindbeck showed a hesitancy to adopt un-interrogated or implicit theories of truth, then Hans Frei exhibited an outright refusal to adopt a regnant theory of truth or to offer his own definition. Frei was centrally concerned with biblical exegesis rather than doctrinal formulations and proposed that a hermeneutic of narrative should be applied to the Bible. His seminal work, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative,*[65] examines gradual changes in hermeneutical approaches to biblical text from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, over which time, he argues, the approach of reading the Bible as "realistic narrative" was gradually lost. The alethiological implications of his narrative or 'aesthetic' approach to scripture are explicitly addressed in his essay 'Remarks in Connection with a Theological Proposal.'[66] He asserts that understanding the biblical text aesthetically 'often entails the factual affirmation and existential commitment.'[67] And yet, even as questions of understanding and truth are not to be avoided, superfluous specificity is to be scrupulously avoided: 'My plea here is—the more formal and less loaded one can make the notion of understanding the better. … it involves a search for a notion of

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[63] Ibid., 64.
[64] Lindbeck, 80.
[65] Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
[66] Hans W. Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: OUP, 1993).
[67] Ibid., 43-44.

understanding that is as little as possible moved by considerations of man's understanding as moved by his being.'[68]

Frei's essay 'Response to "Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal"' (from the same collection) also lays bare the source of his reticence to define not only 'understanding' but 'reference' and 'truth.' He laments that there is no clear 'natural' philosophy from which a theologian may begin.[69] For this reason, he will admit that a certain idea is indispensable while refusing to define his terms for fear of privileging the matter. He defends himself by saying a simple definition is not possible:

> So, "reference," again, is a difficult thing to get hold of even though one wants to refer. Unlike Dr. Henry, I think "reference"—to say nothing of "truth"—in Christian usage is not a simple, single or philosophically univocal category. … I do not mean to deny reference at all.[70]

Frei intentionally does not advance a theory of truth *per se* and yet is very clear that his work necessarily raises and deals with such concerns. His reticence to define truth does not result from viewing questions of truth to be peripheral, but rather a concern that defining truth and related topics would obscure, mislead, or privilege the questions at hand. This concern to avoid excessive conceptual baggage is a commendable commitment, and undoubtedly stems in part from Frei's concern to avoid the same hazards that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach is meant to avoid; Frei too does not wish a false dichotomy between different theories of truth to occlude a narratival reading of biblical texts.

I would tentatively suggest, however, that greater articulation of a theory of truth would in fact help Frei's wider project. Examining Lindbeck and Frei's response to questions concerning the nature of truth, I agree with James Fodor's critique that 'As a whole, postliberals have been less than forthcoming on what a more full-bodied, *theological* account of truth looks like.'[71] Fodor states:

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[68] Ibid., 31.
[69] Ibid., 209-10.
[70] Ibid., 210.
[71] Fodor, 240.

The question of truth looms large in postliberal theology. To be sure, much of postliberal theology's polemic against existing theories of truth serves a wider agenda of correction, reform, and repair—which does not include setting up an alternative account of theological truth. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon postliberals to become clearer on these matters than they have sometimes been.[72]

Chapter IV will suggest that understanding God as truth could provide greater clarity to a Christian account of truth, such as Fodor desires.

One more recent theologian in the postliberal tradition who *has* attempted to provide a fuller account of truth is Kevin Vanhoozer. Vanhoozer is deeply informed by postliberal sensitivities, while in fact self-describing as a 'postconservative' theologian. He shares Lindbeck and Frei's concern to expand the sense of 'truth' beyond what is merely 'propositional', and in his major work *The Drama of Doctrine*[73] goes further than either of his postliberal predecessors in seeking to address specifically alethiological questions. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that Vanhoozer's proposal in this work explicates how truth may be understood within a specifically Christian context (what he calls 'theological truth'), rather than presenting a general truth theory or understanding of truth in its own right. He says he will uphold truth as *adaequatio intellectus ad rei* in the sense of 'correspondence of mind and thing/subject matter' only if he may 'define *adaequatio*' to mean 'sufficient, good enough' instead of 'a perfect, complete equivalence between language and world.'[74]

Clearly, Vanhoozer aims to critique *adaequatio intellectus ad rei* as it is traditionally understood (in his words as 'the philosopher's ideal of complete equivalence'). His re-characterisation of 'adaequatio', however, does not amount to a re-characterisation of truth in general because he only applies it to the case of Christian truths. For Vanhoozer, God's word (by which he means the Bible) is sufficient to convey the necessary propositions and imaginative orientation that the faithful Christian ought to possess. One can gather this from his own summation,

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

[74] Ibid., 286.

It is time to draw the various threads of this discussion together and say how postconservative theology affirms truth as *adaequatio intellectus ad rei*. The adequacy of that is truth's measure should not be seen in terms of the philosopher's ideal of complete equivalence but in rather less formal terms: good enough, sufficient. Scripture is sufficient, first, in the formal sense: just these literary forms are adequate for rendering the Word of God. The truth of God's word is not merely but richly propositional. Scripture summons the intellect to accept its propositions, but it also summons the imagination to see, feel, and taste them as well. …The truth in Scripture is adequate, second, in that it suffices; it communicates enough. … Enough is not an absolute but a relative term: we know enough truth for the purpose at hand. Specifically, our intellect apprehends enough of what God is doing in Christ (the res, or substance of the theo-drama) to understand the main thrust of the action.[75]

Plainly, this is a theory of the truth of the Bible, not of God or the content of faith. Despite his critique of other theories of truth, Vanhoozer has not presented his own so much as asserted that scripture is 'good enough' to answer whatever religious truth concerns an individual may have. He has made a productive a play on words, punning *adaequatio* with 'adequate', to re-characterise truth only in the context of Christian truth claims, not broader non-Christian contexts.

In an earlier work,[76] Vanhoozer appears to concur with such a characterisation of his position, stating that he wishes to address the 'evangelical truth claim', which is neither an 'empirical' nor 'existential': 'it is primarily a claim about the reality of God. … The evangelical truth claim is thus a claim about *the meaning of the whole*.'[77] He next advances a special epistemology for evangelical truth claims, based upon martyrdom and witnessing, with the hope of addressing the epistemological challenges of the twentieth century. Once again, his proposal does not touch on truth in general, keeping more narrowly to the truth of revelation and faith.

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[75] Ibid., 291.
[76] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002).
[77] Ibid., 339-40.

There are times when Vanhoozer speaks briefly in a manner that might imply the idea of God as truth, but these do not amount to more than an evocative turn of phrase, as when he refers to Jesus as 'God's truth claim':

> Jesus, one might say, is God's truth claim: the divine self-revelation in history, the Word above all words that can be relied on—the Word (a person rather than a proposition) whose life, death and resurrection, taken together, displays how things (ultimately) are (or will be). The truth of Jesus Christ has a propositional component.[78]

Here, we see once again that this is not a development of his understanding of truth in general, but of truth as exclusively related to Jesus. Though he describes Jesus as truth in the sense of a person being true, this does not appear to inform an understanding of truth in general.

Lindbeck, Frei, and Vanhoozer have rightly identified what I term alethiology as one of the modern challenges to Christianity. There is much to appreciate in Lindbeck's approach to doctrinal truth, Frei's reintroduction of biblical narrative, and Vanhoozer's '*adaequatio*' alternative to evangelical propositionalism. Yet it is my suggestion that, for all their aspiration to address questions of truth, the postliberal thought of Lindbeck and Frei has in fact been rather less articulate in its constructive proposals. The same could be said for Vanhoozer. Like Lindbeck and Frei, he openly affirms the importance of truth to his inquiry and also has a healthy sense of the difficulties of these waters in modernity. But his account of the veracity of evangelical truth claims does not amount to a complete alethiology because it leaves non-Christian truth untouched. Beyond tantalising suggestions, understanding God as truth itself has no notable role in his work. If truth itself has become a problem, it would appear that this avoidance of problems, while salutary, is not itself a provision of solutions. Lindbeck, Frei, and Vanhoozer do not wish to become beholden to secular definitions of truth. And yet, their various responses do not fully advance their own truth-theories beyond what might specifically regard Christian truth.

Naming God as truth, I propose, could fill the gap. If postliberal theology and its successors were to integrate an understanding of God as truth into their theology, they could

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[78] Ibid., 339.

build more usefully on the pre-existing strengths of their projects. This thesis aims to provide the necessary groundwork for such a shift in understanding, by proposing a contemporary constructive theology of the ancient understanding of God as truth.

Conclusion

This brief survey of three currents of Christian thought explicitly concerned with truth indicates that the idea of God as truth has largely vanished, even from theological discourse, despite the pressing concern with God and truth. Christian fundamentalism has sought to address it through a commitment to biblical inerrancy, that is, the Bible as truth. Reformed epistemology appeals to carefully reasoned claims about experience, whether about properly basic beliefs or mystical experience. Only the postliberal tradition has explicitly attempted to address questions of the nature of truth—alethiology—and even then has done so in a limited form, and with no treatment of the venerable tradition of naming God as truth and truth as divine. It is this striking lacuna that this study seeks to rectify.

I.4 Recent Treatments of God as Truth

There are, however, three prominent recent theologians who have engaged in alethiological questions and have done so with the constructive aim of articulating an understanding of God as truth for contemporary theology: Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bruce Marshall, and Catherine Pickstock and John Milbank. All three recognise a crisis of truth, whether for Christian theology specifically or Western thought more broadly; each seeks resolution through a thoroughly theological alethiology in which God is named as truth. This section provides an overview of their proposals and engages in a brief analysis of each before finally highlighting two points significant for this study. First, each agrees with this study's contention that discussion of God as truth has been unduly neglected in recent theological discourse; and, second, this study makes a unique contribution when it employs an approach of retrieving the ancient understanding of God as truth that is distinct from the methodologies employed in these three projects.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Hans Urs von Balthasar is known for his multi-volume theological reflection on three divine transcendentals: beauty (re-characterised as glory), goodness (re-characterised as drama), and truth. By divine transcendentals, he understands God to essentially be *beauty*, *goodness*, and *truth*, and creatures to be capable of being called beautiful, good, and true only by analogy to God. The trilogy explicates these transcendentals throughout, with the most sustained treatment of God as truth in three volumes titled *Theo-logic*.[79]

In Balthasar's account, the idea of transcendentals had been dismissed in the late modern era. The positivism of his day, he says, was constitutionally opposed to transcendentals of being and similar concepts, a rejection made all the easier by Kant's earlier emptying of the once venerable ideas.[80] Balthasar goes on to say that 'ever since Nietzsche' there has been a 'hollowing out of the transcendentals' to the point that anyone who looks directly at all the 'falsehood, malice, ugliness' and so forth that humanity has inflicted on the world, is left with no choice but to 'dismiss the idea that being is true, good, and beautiful as hopeless.'[81] Balthasar is attempting to respond to this banishment of the transcendentals. In the absence of transcendentals, Balthasar sees a number of questions have grown around truth itself, and 'one of these constantly recurring questions is the question: Does truth in fact exist?'.[82]

Balthasar's 'General Introduction' and 'Introduction' to *Theo-logic* contend that the sense of a God named Truth has been lost and that it would be beneficial to recover it, integrating it into one's understanding of truth overall. He articulates his own understanding that God undergirds man's faith in the transcendentals: 'It is God then who secures the transcendentals against all the assaults of human freedom—however much ruin this freedom might cause.'[83] A form of the idea that God is truth is at play in his thought, as the transcendentals are grounded in God's being and he wishes to have all discussion of worldly truth leave a door open to the infinite.

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[79] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Volume I: Truth of the World,* trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000); ——, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Volume II: Truth of God,* trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); and ——, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Volume III: The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).
[80] Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I*, 15-6.
[81] Ibid., 16.
[82] Ibid., 23-24.
[83] Ibid., 17.

Balthasar's methodology for theological recovery begins with philosophy. At the beginning of the *Theo-logic*, he indicates philosophy's indispensable role in his project, saying,

> From the first to last, the trilogy is keyed to the transcendental qualities of being, in particular to the analogy between their status and form in creaturely being, on the one hand, and in Divine Being, on the other. … By its very nature, theological insight into God's glory, goodness, and truth presupposes an ontological, not merely formal or gnosological, infrastructure of worldly being. Without philosophy, there can be no theology.[84]

Balthasar describes his 'preliminary philosophical work' as being in the form of a 'renewed phenomenology that gazes upon the truth of the world in an original act of beholding. This phenomenology will serve theology best.'[85] What he later describes as 'an immanent phenomenology of worldly truth' serves as the methodological foundation of his theology and appears to be greatly indebted to Martin Heidegger.[86]

Balthasar's affinity to Heidegger is widely observed, and the similarity in his understanding of truth has been specifically noted.[87] There are obvious parallels between Heidegger's account of truth and Balthasar's subsequent formulation, as they both etymologise *alētheia* to portray a dynamic of concealing and unconcealing/revealing, with a central role given to mystery and freedom.[88] Of course, Balthasar's elaborations and conclusions are not identical with Heidegger. Balthasar spends the first volume of Theo-logic expounding his philosophical foundation, while Volume II is mainly concerned with Jesus Christ as truth and Volume III with the Holy Spirit. In this way, the structure of his works reflect his methodology, which begins with continental philosophy (specifically phenomenology in a Heideggarian form) and then expands to draw on explicitly Christian theological sources.

Bruce Marshall

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[84] Ibid., 7.
[85] Ibid., 32.
[86] Ibid., 227.
[87] Barbara Sain, 'Truth, Trinity, and Creation: Placing Bruce Marshall's "Trinity and Truth" in Conversation with Hans Urs von Balthasar's "THEO-LOGIC,"' *Pro Ecclesia*, 8/3 (summer 2009), 274.
[88] cf. the progression of topics in Heidegger's essay 'The Essence of Truth' and Balthasar's *Theo-logic I.*

Bruce Marshall states that his motivation for writing *Trinity and Truth*[89] was his conviction that 'a genuinely theological account of truth and epistemic justification needs to be robustly Trinitarian.'[90] In this, he differs from the reformed epistemologists discussed earlier, who seem generally satisfied to let a received philosophical sense of truth stand, even as they query and revise justification and warrant. Nonetheless, similar to the reformed epistemologists, Bruce Marshall sets out in *Trinity and Truth* to ask 'what it is for Christian beliefs to be truth' by engaging analytic thought.[91] His rationale for this philosophical partnership is not unlike Balthasar's, when he says

> This book's engagement with analytic philosophy of language aims not to provide
> a philosophical basis for Christian beliefs, but to make theological use of some of
> the best available reflection on the topic at hand. It strives to turn an important
> body of text and argument to specifically theological purposes – to follow, in
> short, the scriptural injunction to "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (ii
> Cor. 10:5).[92]

After careful consideration over a number of chapters, Marshall determines that on analytic truth-theory, a 'Tarski-Davidson' account of truth, is 'the most plausible outcome currently available of the long philosophical debate about what truth is.'[93] He then attempts to square this with the biblical assertions (as he interprets them) that ' "is the truth" is a genuine predicate of both Jesus Christ (see John 14:6) and of the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 5:6).'[94] In his truth theory, he does consider God to be truth, in that he speaks at length about Jesus and the Spirit as being themselves truth, and he describes a metaphysical situation where the persons of the Trinity undergird almost all truth. His result is that the Tarski-Davidson account is 'left-

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[89] Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).
[90] Ibid., xi.
[91] Ibid., 6.
[92] Ibid., 14.
[93] Ibid., 241.
[94] Ibid., 242.

intact' and to it he adjoins a supplement, a theological expansion, which renders 'truth' as an intelligible predicate for the second and third persons of the Trinity.[95]

He portrays a Trinitarian dynamic in which all three persons of the trinity are involved in making the sentence/proposition 'Jesus is risen' a true one that an individual may hold. He even explains how correspondence within the Trinity may be extended to persons in general, as follows: 'If correspondence to the Father is itself identity-constituting and non-contingent for the Son, then "truth" belongs, in a sense, to God's own identity, in the form of the Word's perfect correspondence to the Father whose total reality he expresses.'[96] Marshall then extends this idea to (almost) all true statements, on account of their participation in divinity. He excludes true statements about evil things, which can have no participation in God. True statements which are about evil things retain applicability of the Tarski-Davidson theory of truth without the Trinitarian expansion.

Upon closer examination, it emerges that some truths are not divine, that God as a whole is not considered to be truth, only the second and third persons, and that Marshall has not so much developed a theory of truth grounded in God, but rather that he has adopted a 'Tarski-Davidson' understanding of truth (as he calls it) and then explicated its metaphysical repercussions if 'Jesus is risen' were considered to be true in this sense. The conclusion of his speculation is that God is instrumental in humans coming to know (most) truths and that the Tarski-Davidson view of propositional truth can be applied metaphorically to the second and third persons of the Trinity. At the end of the day, the Tarski-Davidson theory of truth is 'left-intact.'[97] Holding God to be truth does not affect the initial divinity-free definition of what constitutes truth.

John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock

The third exception to the present-day lacuna around approaching God as truth is *Truth in Aquinas*[98] by John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock. They too see a gap in theology regarding God as truth, and they seek to fill it. Yet unlike Marshall (whom they strongly criticise) and

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[95] Ibid., 243, 245.
[96] Ibid., 271.
[97] Ibid., 243.
[98] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Balthasar (of whom they make no explicit use), Pickstock and Milbank do not set out to draw on contemporary philosophy. They instead turn to Aquinas[99] as the main resource for their proposal. Their stated motivation is straightforward, for there has been nothing less than a 'crisis of truth':

> One can detect four main attitudes toward truth in contemporary thought. The first is a doubt as to the possibility of truth altogether; the second is a confinement of truth to practice rather than theory; the third, a confinement of truth to theory rather than practice, but a theory so esoteric that only a tiny minority is privy to it; the fourth promotes, in the face of the first attitude, a fideistic affirmation of some religious truth or other.

After presenting their view of the weaknesses of each position, they employ 'a new reading of Aquinas' understanding of truth' to address these shortcomings in contemporary thought.[100]

Where Marshall and Balthasar begin with philosophy and add a theological expansion (noting that they believe their philosophical material is inherently open to such expansion), Pickstock and Milbank design their view of truth to be entirely theological, in contrast to modern truth-theories:

> So whereas for modern correspondence theories and some other theories such as coherence theory and diagonalization, one first has a theory of truth and then might or might not apply it to theology, for Aquinas, truth is theological without remainder.[101]

Their result is to integrate God at all levels. All modes of being are true only in reference to the divinity, for 'truth is also a property of all finite modes of being insofar as they participate in

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[99] Their reading of Aquinas is distinctive (cf.: William Wood, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Claim that God is Truth,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 51/1 (January 2013) 21-47; Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: a critical inquiry* (New York: Routledge, 2014). This study limits its observations to methodological structure and motivation of *Truth in Aquinas* and does not weigh in on debates over Thomistic interpretation.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 5.

God.'[102] Similarly, even a person's judgments as to the correspondence between one created object and another involves God. As they explain,

> For when the human intellect receives into itself the species of the material substances it knows, it does not know them in the manner of an arraignment of inert facts. Rather, it must always judge or discern whether they are true to themselves. This means that even corresponding to finite objects is really only a corresponding to the Mind of God.[103]

Consequently, to them the incarnation, paradigmatically encountered through the Eucharist, is the only way to regain the divine contact that genuine knowledge requires.[104] Christ and liturgical participation are crucial for redeeming one's cognitive faculties from the deleterious effects of the fall.

> For Thomas Aquinas, in a post-lapsarian economy, the Incarnation is the sole ground for the restoration of our participation in the divine understanding. Consequently, for us, not only are things true only as participating in God; also they are only true as conjoined to the body of the incarnate Logos. Aquinas therefore insists that, besides being sole bearer of grace to us, Christ is alone our reliable teacher, who restores for us also truth and knowledge.[105]

It is readily apparent that Pickstock and Milbank have presented a thoroughly theological understanding of truth wherein all truth is intrinsically divine-related.

Conclusion

Considered together, the accounts of 'God as truth' in Balthasar, Marshall and Pickstock and Milbank are noteworthy for the current study in two respects. First, each concurs with this

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[102] Ibid., 9.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., 53.
[105] Ibid., 52.

study's contention that there has been insufficient consideration of the significance of God as truth. Second, consideration of their various methodologies helps to highlight the distinctive methodology of this study.

This study adopts a rather different methodology from Balthasar and Marshall, both of whom are methodologically dependent on insights drawn from secular philosophy. Balthasar begins with continental philosophy (specifically phenomenology in a Heideggarian form) and then expands to draw on explicitly Christian theological sources; Marshall adopts an account of truth drawn from analytic philosophy and accords this Tarski-Davidson theory great importance in shaping his own theological account of truth. As Sain notes in her article comparing their accounts, this dependence shapes their different resulting proposals for understanding God as truth.[106] Without examining whether the resultant theology is compromised by this philosophical background, it is enough to note that Balthasar and Marshall seek to revivify the theological discussion of truth with methodologies significantly dependent upon secular philosophical discourse. While valuing both thinkers' contributions to the theological discussion of truth, this study proceeds in a methodologically distinctive manner. It is theologically and biblically grounded in a way intended to be avoid dependence upon any particular modern philosophical approach to truth and thus be accessible to all such approaches.

In contrast, Pickstock and Milbank ground their exploration of truth in a theological source: the writing of Aquinas. Like this study, they are attempting to retrieve a pre-modern understanding for contemporary circumstances. On the other hand, this study chooses different source material, grounding itself in the Biblical text and drawing on a late antique rather than medieval theologian. Rather than engaging in further comparison, though, I feel it better to let my own methodology speak for itself; it is to this task that I now turn.

I.5 Methodology for Constructive Theology

Presently, the nature and even existence of truth has become an open question in both continental and analytic philosophy. Though the pre-modern understanding of God as truth has been largely overlooked, the previous section explored three exceptions to this forgetfulness. This study employs a markedly different methodology from these three, as detailed in this

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[106] Sain, 274.

section. Our aim is a Christian constructive theology of God as truth, one which is congruent with the Bible, congruent with the Nicene Creed, and informed by Christian tradition. Rather than beginning with contemporary philosophy or medieval theology, this study turns to the ancient origins of Truth as a divine name, giving special attention to Augustine and the Old Testament in the hope that those who recognise the truth-fraught state of contemporary Christian belief and practice will be interested in a constructive retrieval of an ancient Christian approach to truth. This study's attempt to correct the neglect of an ancient and formerly prominent approach to truth is unlike any that have gone before, and the remainder of this chapter elaborates the method through which my constructive theological proposal will be advanced.

The Choice of Source Material

One guiding commitment of this study's constructive theology is this: if Christianity has genuine insight into God, and truth has become a problem, theologians should return to the earliest encounters and see what can be learned there regarding the nature of truth.

The first ancient resource from which I will draw is Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE). The choice of Augustine is made for a number of reasons. He is a seminal figure and ecumenical figure, one of the most influential theologians in the entire Christian tradition and one who both Roman Catholics and Protestants recognise as a central theological resource while the Orthodox Church holds him in reverence. Another reason for taking up Augustine is that he speaks about God as truth explicitly and at great length, including in the three texts we will examine: *On the Free Choice of the Will*, *Confessions*, and *The Trinity*. These works vary greatly in genre, topic, and chronology within Augustine's corpus, indicating that the topic held lasting significance and interest for Augustine. This vein in his thought, however, has been unduly neglected. No major study on the notion of God as truth in Augustine exists. Finally, I have been drawn to Augustine's understanding of God as truth because of the consonance of his writing I see in the scriptures, which has lead me to believe it has more biblical resonances than are usually acknowledged. Indeed, on the level of historical theology, I would argue that in addition to the central role in his writings for God as 'Truth'—even to the extent of using 'Truth' as a divine name—it is possible that Augustine brings to fruition ideas that spring from deeply biblical roots. For these reasons,

although other theologians could well be used, this study selects to analyse Augustine as a source of conceptual parameters for a constructive theology of Truth.

The second resource for my constructive theology of truth is the most ancient, central, and authoritative texts in the Christian tradition: those codified as the Bible. For ecumenical reasons, I will limit my investigation to books which all Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christians include in their Bibles, which in practice means overlooking the deutero-canonical or apocryphal books, though I believe they would further substantiate a number of my findings. Because of space limitations, I will not be able to give the entire biblical canon its due attention. I have chosen to focus on the Old Testament for the following reason. Even though the New has priority in the sense that its testament to the revelation of God in Christ is the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith, the Old Testament has its own priority in the sense that the revelation of the New cannot be properly understood without first taking into account the revelation of the Old. It is the one God Yahweh who is revealed in Christ. Thus, I believe that the New Testament's treatment of truth and divinity will not be properly understood if its grounding in the Old Testament is not established from the outset.

A lack of explicit attention given to the New Testament, however, does not mean that it is inconsequential for this study. On the contrary, it will have an indirect but decisive influence. As will be explained below, this study's methodology includes a self-imposed requirement that the final constructive theology be *congruent* with the Nicene Creed. As a result, its constructive theology will be fully in keeping with what the early Church took to be the heart of the gospel conveyed by the New Testament. This will be further reinforced by the influence of Augustine on this study, for he surely was deeply informed by what he found in the New Testament scriptures. An examination of the New Testament similar to Chapter III's examination of the Old will have to wait for another time, but the final proposal will be no less congruent with scripture as a result.

The order of chapters is not meant to imply that Augustine's texts are given priority over Biblical ones, which is expressly not the method of this study. The progression from Augustine to the Old Testament is solely for convenience of reading and ease of comprehension. For this study, the Old Testament is more challenging source material than Augustine's writings, because, unlike them, the Old Testament does not engage in explicit and sustained alethiology. It does, nonetheless, speak frequently and at length about truth and divinity. We saw at the outset of this chapter that alethiology lies implicit within epistemology and scholarship, that is to say, pursuits

of truth and knowledge. Since the Bible deals with matters of truth and knowledge, it necessarily has implicit elements of alethiology. I have devised a methodology to discern them for the purposes of constructive theology, and will apply it to both biblical and Augustinian texts. The first key concept for this methodology is the topic of the next section.

Conceptual Parameters

This study is a work in constructive theology, not historical theology. Hence, Chapter IV will present an 'Augustinian' and 'biblical' view of God as truth, not 'Augustine's view' or 'the Bible's view'. The aim is not to lay out precisely what Augustine or the biblical authors and community thought about truth (though that is a study eminently worthy of scholarly attention). It is instead to explore how, by drawing on Augustine's thought extensively alongside the core features of the Bible (identified with the eyes of modern scholarship), these may then be renovated and extended for present-day application.

I do this with the aid of a mechanism that is, in its specific working, novel, although I believe deeply in keeping with the logic of creedal Christianity. This is the mechanism of 'conceptual parameters':

Conceptual parameters, as they are defined in this thesis, differ from concepts in that conceptual parameters set out boundaries or essential traits for what are acceptable and unacceptable approaches when treating a given topic, whereas concepts treat a given topic by specifying its content, meaning they go further than conceptual parameters by fully detailing the topic.

Conceptual parameters may accordingly themselves be concepts, but they do not amount to a complete conceptual schema for the matter at hand. Allow me to illustrate the distinction with the concept of a very concrete activity: doing the dishes. One *conceptual parameter* for the topic *how to do the dishes* is 'At the end, all cutlery and crockery must be free of food and grease.' This specifies criteria which must be accounted for by any concept of doing dishes. If one wanted a specific *concept* of the topic *doing the dishes,* it could be 'Stack the dishes by the sink; Fill the sink with hot soapy water; Wet a sponge; etc. . . .' Another equally viable

possibility of a *concept* is 'Stack the dishes in the dishwasher; add detergent; etc. . . .' The concepts of washing dishes by hand and of running a dishwasher are non-identical, but each satisfy the conceptual parameters for giving an account of *doing the dishes*.

A more theological example of how conceptual parameters function involves the Nicene Creed.[107] One could say that the Nicene Creed provides conceptual parameters for one's concept of the Trinity, without specifying the full metaphysical content of that doctrine. For instance, from the creed, one may draw the conceptual parameter that any Trinitarian-concept must hold that there is one God (developed from the text 'we believe in one God, the Father almighty') and a second parameter that the Father and the Son must each be considered to be God as well (developed from the text 'and in one lord Jesus Christ … begotten of the Father … very God of very God'). The Nicene Creed does not provide a concept for how to satisfy these two parameters and gives no theologically rigorous account of Trinitarian relations. Augustine's *The Trinity* is one theologian's attempt to give a theologically rigorous account of the Trinitarian relations. Karl Rahner's *The Trinity*[108] is another attempt, one which differs significantly from Augustine's. Despite their differences, both intend their constructive theological proposals to remain within (what I call the conceptual parameters of) the Nicene Creed. It is a task of constructive theology to propose an approach to Trinitarian relations which is theologically rigorous and congruent with the creed's conceptual parameters. Just as there is some variety among orthodox Trinitarian theologies, so too there may be multiple theological accounts of truth which accord with the conceptual parameters developed from Augustine's corpus and biblical texts. My final conceptual schema will be one possibility.

Note that discerning conceptual parameters is *in itself* a constructive act. Discerning conceptual parameters from ancient texts is *not* an exercise in reconstructing ancient biblical or theological concepts *per se*. The latter is a historical project. Establishing the concepts held by historical individuals or peoples should involve investigating their entire context, not simply their texts, including personal, social, cultural, and political contexts. For instance, attempting to establish what the individuals present at the Council of Nicaea had in mind is a historical question while attempting to establish what guidelines or essential traits it provides for constructive Trinitarian theology is another. Of course, one may consider the historical context as

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[107] From the First Council of Constantinople (381), also called the Niceno-Constantinopoltan Creed, as distinguished from the Creed adopted at Nicaea in 325.
[108] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

one develops conceptual parameters, but this is not the same as determining precisely what conceptual schemas were on the mind of ancient authors and worshipping communities. Clearly, Augustine and Rahner's mature works conceptualise the Trinity differently from the Nicaean delegates, in that they implement conceptual schemas (such as Rahner's well-known comparison of the economic and immanent Trinity) which are highly unlikely to have been explicitly discussed at Nicaea. Nevertheless, both are congruent with the Nicene Creed. Discerning Nicene conceptual parameters is a constructive theologian's attempt to determine what it would take for any future constructive theology to be congruent with the Nicene Creed.

How one discerns and develops conceptual parameters from a given text depends upon the theologian's question or topic of inquiry as well as upon the nature of the text under consideration. In this study, there are two distinguishable sources for conceptual parameters: *textual meaning* and *sense relations*. Textual meaning is taken from the interpretation of individual passages themselves. For example, if we consider again the Nicene Creed, one textual-meaning based parameter is 'There is one God', a parameter derived from the textual meaning of the opening phrase 'I believe in one God'. Multiple passage may corroborate a single content-based parameter. Developing conceptual parameters from textual meaning requires one interpret the relevant passages.

Sense relations are the boundaries and relationships among different senses of terms in a given text. For instance, if the English word 'bank' cannot simultaneously mean both a riverside and a financial institution in a single utterance, this indicates that there is a complete division between these two senses, meaning that they are conceptually distinct. Sense relations supply parameters as well because they are essentially conceptual boundaries, which are a form of conceptual parameter. Parameters based on sense relations are determined from the meaningful content of multiple passages taken together. In this way, they are inductively gathered from the textual meaning. While textual meaning is explicit, sense relations are usually implicit in a text and are identified after the textual meaning of many passages has been interpreted. To develop the Nicene example, Jesus Christ is said to be 'eternally begotten of the Father' and 'the only Son of God . . . God from God.' If Father and Son are distinguished such that one is 'begotten of', 'of', and 'from' the other, the meaningful content implies that there is a distinction in *sense* between the Father and Son. Thus, one has the conceptual parameter that any concept of the Trinity must distinguish between the Father and the Son, rather than fully conflate them, despite

their both being called 'God' and even 'of one being.' 'Sense relations' is a term I have borrowed from cognitive linguistics, a field on which I draw extensively in my study of the Old Testament, whose benefits will be explained in Chapter III.

Our Augustinian conceptual parameters will be developed from textual meaning whereas our biblical conceptual parameters will be developed from both textual meaning and sense relations in the Old Testament. Historical theology, biblical scholarship, and cognitive linguistics will be consulted as appropriate where this thesis interprets the textual meaning and sense relations of a given text. There are further discussions of the specific approach to Augustine's texts and the Bible at the beginning of their chapters (II and III). Similarly, the question of how multiple conceptual parameters may be combined into a constructive theological proposal will be addressed at the beginning of Chapter IV, which endeavours to do just that. For now, allow me to note that for clarity and ease of comprehension, the conceptual parameters developed in Chapters II and III will each be given a letter and loose title (e.g. (a) *understanding God as truth*; (b) *the human apprehension of divine truth*, etc.). They are designated with letters rather than numbers to indicate that the order in which they are developed does not indicate any priority, sequence, contingency, or other relationship among them. The order in which I have chosen to introduce the conceptual parameters (and indeed the placement of the chapter on Augustine ahead of the chapter on the Old Testament) is merely meant to facilitate ease of comprehension in the reader, not to indicate anything further.

One benefit of employing *conceptual parameters* is that it enables a theologian to clarify when s/he is speaking historically and when s/he is speaking constructively. It is not uncommon for a theological treatise to begin with historical theology and then gradually, seamlessly, transition into constructive theology, with minimal indication of when the explication of a past theologian's position has ended and the elaborations of the present theologian, the extrapolation of its relevance, and applications for current thought or practice have begun. This can elide the distinction between, for instance, Augustine's view and an Augustinian view. Some otherwise brilliant theological insights have been harshly criticised because they were presented as if historically accurate to another (usually long-departed) theologian and scholarly colleagues found this untenable. It would be better to say that theology is congruent with or informed by the work of predecessors than to elide it with one's own constructive proposals.

Employing conceptual parameters also addresses the troublesome distinction between biblical studies and theology. The challenge has been widely recognised and numerous proposals made to address it.[109] What is called 'biblical theology' has been widely criticised by text scholars as inappropriately pre-critical. While the question has not been settled once and for all, this study would hope to reclaim a critical 'biblical theology.' Any theological engagement with the Bible should be able to give an account of its own understanding of the relationship between biblical studies and 'biblical theology' thus construed. Simply put, the view of this study is as follows. No biblical author could have had the entire Bible in view, but a responsible biblical theology attempts to take it entirely into account. Thus, the conceptual schema presented by biblical theology cannot be identical to the conceptual schema of any given biblical text. If 'biblical theology' understood itself as theology in keeping with conceptual parameters drawn from the Bible, the distinction between the two pursuits is more readily apparent. For most of is history, Biblical studies has aimed to answer historical questions about the biblical texts. The theologian may use these insights from biblical studies (and others from hermeneutics) as s/he develops conceptual parameters from the biblical text. A responsible biblical theology is then the development of these conceptual parameters into a constructive theological proposal.

Constructing Christian Theology through being Congruent and Informed

This study intends to outline a Christian theology of truth in Chapter IV. A theory of truth that is influenced by Christian sources, however, is not necessarily one that is itself Christian. Loosely speaking, non-theistic Western philosophy, Mormonism, and Islam are each (in different ways) informed by Christianity, but they are not congruent with Christian faith as articulated in the Nicene Creed. This study's methodology is designed to ensure the final proposal is defensibly Christian. To that end, I distinguish between being *informed* by a given text and being *congruent* with it. The theology of truth proposed by this study is Christian, not in the sense of being the one and only Christian theology of truth, but rather, in the sense that it is arguably congruent with both the Bible and the Nicene Creed and it is informed by the Christian tradition.

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[109] e.g. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (London: SCM, 1992).

In my formulation, a scholarly proposal is *informed* by a source text when it has incorporated into its proposal some number of conceptual parameters developed from the source text. Becoming *informed* by a source text is a selective process, in that the scholar may reject, omit, or overlook aspects of the source text. A proposal may be informed by a source text while still disagreeing with it in some regards. If a scholarly proposal is *congruent* with a source text, however, it is not only *informed* but also *limited* by the source text (which is not the same as being *identical* with the source text). A scholarly proposal is *congruent* with a source text if it can present a case that it has not contravened the source text; that is to say there is at least one plausible reading of the source text with which the scholarly proposal is not in opposition. One of the strengths of using the mechanism of *conceptual parameters* in constructive theology is that it facilitates transparency in the process of showing how a scholarly proposal is informed by and/or congruent with source texts. The burden of proof for congruency is not to demonstrate the scholarly proposal is identical with the source text; one need only show that it is in accord with conceptual parameters derived from the source text.

I propose that, first of all, a constructive Christian theology should be congruent with the Bible. In this way, the congruent/informed distinction honours the special status given within Christianity to Scripture. The biblical conceptual parameters will *inform* in that they will contribute to the content of the final truth-theory. They will also *limit* it, curbing the possibilities of its shape, ensuring that the final truth theory remains *congruent* with the biblical text. In this way, being congruent with a source text entails being informed by it.

Remaining congruent with our biblical conceptual parameters does not in and of itself ensure that our final constructive theology of truth will be a *Christian* one. Biblical congruence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition as is readily apparent by the many theologies and spiritual practices in the course of ecclesial history which have been deemed heretical despite their proponents' intention to be biblically based. Many have attempted constructive theology, only to find subsequently that they have gone astray in one way or another. Early Christological and Trinitarian controversies are recognisable examples. In response to these and other disputes, the on-going life of the Church has developed additional guidelines for what may or may not be considered orthodox Christianity. Broadly speaking, we may refer to this as the Christian

'tradition'.[110] A Christian theology should also be congruent with the Nicene Creed. I present the criterion of being creedal, in the sense of arguably congruent with the Nicene Creed, because it is an ecumenical creed, widely accepted by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The final part of the standard for a Christian theology (after being *congruent* with the Bible and Nicene Creed) is to be *informed* by the Christian tradition. To that end, conceptual parameters may once more be adopted from a chosen theologian, liturgical practice, historical event, polity, and so on. One may, however, be selective and need not make use of everything. The selection of which part of the tradition to draw upon will, of course, depend on the matter, question, topic etc. at hand. This means that there is no demand to be congruent with all aspects of the Christian tradition, which is likely to be impossible in any case. For reasons explained above, I have selected three of Augustine's theological writings to inform my constructive theology of truth. The Augustinian conceptual parameters we adopt will *inform* our constructive theology of truth, but we will *not* be limited by them; that is to say, the constructive theologian is free to differ with Augustine on various points, based on her/his own theological judgment. Most forms of Christianity allow for such selectivity and the diversity of options that results in that they designate certain Christian teachings as *adiaphora* or recognise differing spiritualities such that multiple spiritual disciplines (even mutually exclusive ones) are acceptable.

In this way, constructive theology may be non-identical with its source material, bringing together elements from multiple sources, without compromising its Christian character. This project is *constructive* theology—rather than historical theology or biblical studies—because the ultimate aim is to provide a *contemporary* theological account. This means it will be informed by multiple ancient sources without being identical to any one of them.

Responsible Interdisciplinary Theology

Constructive Christian theology is naturally inter-disciplinary because it cannot forego engaging other disciplines, e.g. biblical studies, language study, ethics, intellectual history, ecclesial history, hermeneutics, philosophical categories, liturgical and social practices, and so

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[110] NB: The Christian tradition's normative role is already implicitly present in the demand for biblical congruence, because the biblical canon is determined by tradition.

forth. In this study, our goal is to excavate, as much as possible, *ancient* conceptual parameters. This thesis has no intention of drawing contemporary meanings from deracinated phrases in modern translations, thereby ignoring their linguistic, textual, and historical context.

Biblical scholarship working in a historical mode or historical theology would simply aim to explicate the precise *historical* understanding of God as truth at the time when various biblical texts were composed or when Augustine wrote his treatises. Reconstructing a historical concept *per se*, as held by ancient individuals and communities, requires investigating their broader historical context and the extra-canonical record, as biblical scholars and classicists regularly do. My constructive theology, on the other hand, intends to provide a contemporary theological account which is not identical to but *congruent with* the biblical text and *informed by* Augustine's corpus. For this, we do not need to reconstruct entire historical conceptual schemas from our ancient sources, but rather need to derive *conceptual parameters*. We are drawing directly only from the texts (not from other ancient texts, historical context, etc.) but our reading of the texts is historically informed.

This may not be a work of historical theology, or of biblical studies, but it would be irresponsible (given our research question) not to make use of these disciplines. Relevant disciplines should be consulted while determining the conceptual parameters of an ancient text, but because we do not aim to determine the *historical* concept *per se*, we are justified in not drawing from sources beyond the biblical and Augustinian canons. This means, all the more, that the constructive theologian must engage in responsible interdisciplinary scholarship.

To discern biblical conceptual parameters regarding understanding truth and divinity, two disciplines besides theology will prove invaluable: biblical studies, for its examination of biblical texts, and cognitive linguistics, which is uniquely well-suited for detailing the relationship between concepts and language use.[111] To discern conceptual parameters when we turn to Augustine, historical theology should inform the reading of Augustine. See the opening of Chapter II and III for further detail on the engagement with historical theology (etc.) and biblical studies/cognitive linguistics.

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[111] This study's attention on the Bible and language use for theological ends is not in itself unique. (Its contribution is its method for doing so.) For instance, volume I of Katherine Sonderegger's *Systematic Theology Volume I* and David Kelsey's (systematically unsystematic) *Eccentric Existence* both make extensive use of scripture. In British theological sources, Janet Soskice's *Metaphor and Religions Language* and Rowan Williams' *The Edge of Words* are two stand-out works that reflect on the use of language and its impact on theology (see bibliography).

Because theology, by its nature, interacts with a multiplicity of fields, a competent theologian appropriately consults other fields when they are relevant to the theological project at hand. To be a scholar, not a dilettante, with non-native fields, I hold that a theologian must: (a) have demonstrable knowledge of the field's basic concepts and controversies; (b) have a clear methodology for one's constructive theological project and maintain/respect disciplinary boundaries; (c) consistently engage relevant non-native scholarship rather than cherry-pick support; and (d) limit oneself to drawing insights which are, if not beyond debate, at least respected alternatives within the non-native field. The opening of chapters on Augustine and the Old Testament cover (a) and (b) by presenting a clear methodology with disciplinary boundaries and an adequate awareness of the non-native field's basic concepts and controversies. These chapters consistently apply the methodology described and live up to (c) and (d).

Setting out conceptual parameters is the beginning of constructive theology, since it is already re-articulating the import of ancient texts in our own idiom. If our final theory is in line with ancient conceptual parameters, it may take a form that never occurred in the ancient world while yet also being congruent with the Bible and informed by Augustine. In this way, I will perform a retrieval, a *ressourcement*, a contemporary constructive theology that recovers and re-articulates an *ancient Christian* approach to God as truth.

Chapter Conclusion

Chapter I has completed the preparatory work necessary to develop a constructive theology of God as truth. It will be primarily a work of alethiology, which is distinguishable from works of epistemology or scholarship which presume that questions of truth's nature or qualities have already been settled. This thesis asks whether the ancient Christian approach to God as truth may be recovered for today, and will answer in the affirmative with its own proposal in Chapter IV. This approach is visible in the longstanding tradition of divine names in Christian thought, where naming God as truth is apparent in the works of major theologians and cardinal New Testament passages.

This proposal enters an area of vigorous debate, since 'truth' has become a lively topic in philosophical circles over the past long century, both analytic and continental, resulting in a growing uncertainty over the nature and attainability of truth which has reached the public sphere

and religious discourse. Strains of Christian thought and practice have responded to renewed pressures to justify the truth claims and practices of the faith, but most have not approached God as truth, as can be seen in the disparate examples of fundamentalism, reformed epistemology and postliberal theology. There are three notable exceptions to the modern forgetfulness of truth as a divine name—Balthasar, Marshall, and Pickstock and Milbank—each with their own distinctive methodology and markedly different conclusions. This study shares their intuition as to the key importance of Truth as a divine name for Christian thought and practice (and perhaps even secular philosophy as well), but pursues a different route by foregrounding two ancient sources for its constructive proposal: selections of Augustine's corpus and the Christian Old Testament. Furthermore, it has developed a distinctive methodology to engage in the unavoidably interdisciplinary nature of its project. The result is that this study's contributions will be threefold: its methodology involving conceptual parameters offers a novel instrument for theology to constructively and respectfully engage with historical texts and adjacent fields; its analysis of Augustine and the Old Testament inquires into the understanding of God as Truth to an unprecedented extent, yielding fresh insights; and its final constructive theology of truth is a unique proposal among the alethiological debates in theological and philosophical spheres today.

Chapter II: Augustine

The previous chapter covered the context of this study's research question ('Can the ancient Christian approach to God as truth be given a contemporary articulation?') and also presented its novel methodology. This chapter deploys that methodology upon three of Augustine's compositions. Its result is five Augustinian conceptual parameters for understanding truth and divinity. These parameters will be instrumental in Chapter IV's constructive theology of truth.

The first section (II.1) relates the methodology from Chapter I to Chapter II's specific task and it previews the conceptual parameters advanced in this chapter. We turn to Augustine before the Old Testament because the conceptual parameters drawn from Augustine are more straightforward than those from the Bible; examining Augustine first does not give his texts priority ahead of the biblical canon. Sections II.2, II.3 and II.4 develop these conceptual parameters from examinations of *On the Free Choice of the Will*, *The Confessions*, and *The Trinity* respectively.[112] First, II.2 considers Augustine's proof of God's existence in *Free Will*, which argues that the mind's apprehension of truth in principles of mathematics and wisdom serve as the foundation. In II.3, truth's role in the narrative portion of the *Confessions* comes to the fore—in other words, how the quest for truth undergirds Augustine's search for God—in three key episodes: his reading of *Hortentius* (Cicero's lost work), his vision in Milan after reading certain Platonist books, and his vision of the heavenly life with his mother Monica in Ostia. These latter two moments are visionary and yet also deeply intellectual, as his quest for God is also one for truth. Finally, II.4 delves into Augustine's great work *The Trinity* (which vies with *City of God* for the title of his *magnum opus*), and here find his mature articulation of God as Truth and implications for the human pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. This study's Augustinian conceptual parameters will be developed incrementally as each text is examined, accruing insight from multiple passages for each parameter. The last section II.5 draws together the findings of this chapter, clarifying what has gone before and solidifying its conclusions before Chapter III's consideration of the Old Testament.

II.1 Constructive Method and Augustine

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[112] Abbreviated as *Free Will*, *Confessions*, and *Trinity*.

Section I.5 set out our methodology's key terms and principles, including the nature of *conceptual parameters*, the distinction between being *informed by* and *congruent with* a source material, and guidelines for responsible interdisciplinary engagement. This section treats how these methodological elements apply to its engagement with Augustine of Hippo, including: our choice of texts within Augustine's corpus; a preview of the conceptual parameters this chapter develops from these texts; in what sense the conceptual parameters developed here are *Augustinian*; and how being informed by Augustine's *The Trinity* enables this study to be *congruent with* the Nicene Creed.

From Augustine's expansive corpus, this study examines *Free Will, Confessions,* and *The Trinity.* These texts were chosen because they explicitly treat both God as Truth itself and the human pursuit of truth.[113] Furthermore, they represent a variety of genres and they range from his early to mature thought. As we shall see, understanding God as truth has a notable role in Augustine's corpus. His early composition *Free Will* recognises the divinity of eternal truth, with far reaching metaphysical implications. Augustine repeatedly names God 'Truth' in his most well-known work *Confessions*. For him, 'Truth' is a divine name used in prayer and supplications. The mature work *The Trinity* treats at length the relationship of 'Truth' to other divine names, including the Trinitarian names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Despite its pre-eminence, this study passes over *City of God* because it does not have extended explicit discussion of relevant issues. Likewise, though *On Lying* and *Against Lying* may appear relevant due to their titles, they too are not included because they treat the morality of lying rather than the nature of truth and falsehood.

This chapter's analysis of Augustine's three compositions will yield five conceptual parameters. These conceptual parameters do not indicate categories through which the text was analysed. Instead, they were developed inductively from my engagement with Augustine's text and secondary literature. Parameters were categorised and delineated subsequent to textual analysis. For clarity, I will refer to these conceptual parameters by loose titles and also letter them (a) to (e). By the end of the chapter the following five will have been developed:

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[113] Since Augustine explicitly treats God and truth at great length, this chapter will look almost exclusively at textual meaning. Because there is notably less explicit alethiology in the Old Testament, Chapter III relies more heavily on analysis of word-senses and sense-relations.

The first conceptual parameter (a) covers what it means *to understand God as truth*, by characterising the truth of God as mathematical, wise (encompassing wisdom), and personal. *The human apprehension of this divine truth* is considered in (b), which portrays divine truth as apprehensible (without being subjected to the knower) yet incomprehensible to human beings, whose apprehension is limited, fallible, diverse, and variable. Conceptual parameter (c) finds that *the human pursuit of truth* may be characterised as benefitting and engaging the entire human person, constituting an on-going process of pursuit which continues, though in a changed manner, when God, who is revealed in Christ, is taken as truth. These first three conceptual parameters are developed from readings of *Free Will* and *Confessions.*

The final two conceptual parameters are developed from *The Trinity.* The fourth, (d), concerns *the Trinitarian implications of understanding God as truth*, in that it delineates the divine name 'Truth' as a substantive name that applies to all three divine persons as well as the Godhead and is convertible with other substantive divine names. Our final conceptual parameter from this chapter, (e), delineates *the relationship between wisdom and knowledge*, such that human wisdom and knowledge have distinct objects (the divine and the created, respectively) and yet always develop in tandem, because neither is humanly possible without the other. Currently, these conceptual parameters no doubt appear abstruse, but their clarity will increase over the course of this chapter with the detailed study of Augustine's corpus and the careful development of their content.

In this study, the Augustinian conceptual parameters are meant to be closely tied to a reading of Augustine's texts which scholars of Augustine would respect. In a word, this chapter's conceptual parameters should be clearly *Augustinian*. 'Augustinian' is, of course, a loaded term that means different things to different people in different discourses. For this study, it merely means that a given conceptual parameter is developed from engaging with Augustine's corpus. It does not necessarily mean that certain classic positions of Augustine's thought have been taken on board, or that it is in keeping with a particular school of 'Augustinian' thought. The constructive theology of truth in Chapter IV is meant to be only *informed* by Augustine rather than *congruent* with his entire corpus. For this reason, one may neglect aspects of Augustine's corpus or be at times in demonstrable disagreement with his thought, while yet being informed and Augustinian. This study permissibly limits its engagement with Augustine's corpus, since it does not reconstruct his full conceptual schema or its changes over time. It is sufficient to

determine texts which have a great deal to say to our questions and stick to them. On a methodological level, this means making recourse to said scholarship while interpreting the selected portions of Augustine's corpus. The *interpretation of Augustine* will be duly informed by disciplines outside of constructive theology; the *development of conceptual parameters* is the act of constructive theology—they do not purport to present 'Augustine's view' on a matter, but one influenced by Augustine.

As already noted, conceptual parameters developed from historical source material are not identical with a historical concept *per se*. Developing a conceptual parameter from a source text is fundamentally an act of the constructive theologian's judgment; it is neither a logical deduction nor a necessary conclusion. Furthermore, it does not claim to be a reconstructed historical concept (which would be the work of classicists, patristics scholars, or historical theologians who attend to historical material beyond the source text in question). It will, nonetheless, be a historically responsible interpretation of the texts in question, in that our reading of these texts accords with scholarship which has taken his other works, historical context, and intellectual influences into account. As a result, it should be clear to the reader that each conceptual parameter is in some sense in keeping with the source text; in a word, they are Augustinian.

A final benefit of deriving Augustinian conceptual parameters is that it will keep our final constructive theology congruent with the Nicene Creed and the New Testament.[114] *The Trinity* is widely accepted by scholars to represent a firm defence of Nicene orthodoxy against the dissenters of Augustine's day. If one were to compare the creed with the proposed constructive theology of truth, their congruence should be readily apparent (though this comparison will not be made in this thesis). Similarly, Augustine's faithfulness to the Christ as revealed in the New Testament carries into his texts, a congruence which the constructive theologian intends to maintain as s/he develops conceptual parameters and ultimately a theology of truth. This study does not independently draw conceptual parameters from the New Testament, but does intend its conceptual parameters and constructive theology of truth to be congruent with it nonetheless.

II.2 Truth and Divinity in *On the Free Choice of the Will*

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[114] Congruent in the sense that every portion or aspect of it arguably in accord with a plausible interpretation of the Bible and the Nicene Creed.

On the Free Choice of the Will[115] is our first of three texts by Augustine whose examination will serve to develop conceptual parameters for a constructive theology of truth. Remarkably, this text includes a proof of God's existence, which Augustine bases upon the existence of eternal truths, beginning with mathematics. Initial forms of three conceptual parameters will be developed from this text: (a) *to understand God as truth* will be illuminated by God's relation with impersonal truths (including mathematical truths, wisdom, and incomprehensible Truth); (b) *the human apprehension of the divine* will receive material from the description of the cognitive dynamic involved when humans understand truth; and (c) *the human pursuit of truth* will be sketched out with characteristics of the ongoing pursuit of truth. These parameters will be further developed later in the next section II.3. A brief consideration of context precedes the textual analysis.

A careful and informed reading of the text in each instance is followed by a clear explication of what conceptual content is extracted from it to form conceptual parameters. Often, a conceptual parameter is developed over time, beginning in an embryonic form with a single notion and then accruing related content from multiple passages. As material is examined with the aid of historical theology, the constructive theologian indicates what conceptual material is drawn out and which conceptual parameter it adds to. This contributes greater transparency to the constructive theologian's engagement with historical texts, clearly distinguishing her/his own judgment calls from those of historical analysis of the text in question. This study applies this approach throughout Chapters II and III.

Historical Context and Divine Illumination

Free Will is one of Augustine's earlier compositions. He wrote Book 1 of *Free Will* in 387-388, shortly after his baptism in Rome, on his way to Africa. Books 2 and 3, however, were not produced until he was priested in 391, possibly with revisions to Book 1 at the same time. The entire composition was certainly completed by 395, at which time we have evidence that Augustine sent a copy of it to a friend.[116] This indicates that the first book was composed and the

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[115] In this subsection, references to *Free Will* appear parenthetically.
[116] Peter King, 'Introduction', in *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. and trans Peter King (Cambridge: CUP 2010), xvii.

others at least begun in Rome.[117] Evodius is not named in the dialogue, but his identity is deduced from letter 163, and identifying the speakers as Augustine and Evodius continues in modern editions of the texts.[118] This work has received greatest attention as Augustine's first extended reflection upon the interaction between God and the human will before his contentions with the Pelagians developed these views into his decisively influential position on divine grace and human action, (though the argument for God's existence in Book 2 has received increased attention in recent centuries).[119] The historical context and genre of *Free Will* as a debate between two individuals presented for general edification will be kept in mind as the text is interpreted.

To anyone familiar with contentious issues in Augustine scholarship, the prospect of investigating Augustine's views of truth, divinity, and knowledge has no doubt brought to mind what many call Augustine's 'doctrine of divine illumination.' How to interpret this 'doctrine' is a topic of intense debate, one which began in the medieval period and continues to the present day. Roland H. Nash describes it saying 'No other important aspect of Augustine's philosophy has proved as difficult to understand as the notion that God in some way illumines the human mind.'[120] For the purposes of this constructive theological study, it is not necessary to take a position on which theory of divine illumination best represents Augustine's historical views on epistemology. The strands of thought this study draws on are ones which others have woven into doctrines of illumination, but this study threads them instead into a theology of God as truth. One distinctive result is that *Free Will*, which tends not to be the source of key texts in discussions of theories of divine illumination, is discovered to have obvious and central relevance for this project.

The Argument for God's Existence

Free Will is essentially a theodicy which justifies God's goodness, the existence of evil notwithstanding, through an account of humanity's free will. Looking past the defence of God's

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[117] Giovanni Capatano, 'De libero arbitrio', in Karla Pollman, Willmien Otten, et al. eds., *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 2 vols. (Oxford: OUP 2013), i, 328.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ronald H. Nash, 'Illumination, Divine,' in Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. eds., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 438.

justice, our focus is on one embedded argument in Book 2; it purports to demonstrate that God exists and its reasoning hinges upon God being truth itself, a thick sense of truth which incorporates both mathematical principles and principles of wisdom. For the sake of clarity, this subsection reviews the proof's full argumentative arc. The subsections that follow perform close readings from which conceptual parameters are drawn.

Augustine's proof of God's existence sits within a larger discussion of evil's existence in the world. Book 1 opens with Evodius asking Augustine 'Please tell me whether God is not the author of evil.' (1.1.1.1). From this opening, their discussions in Book 1 also query 'what is evil?' (1.3.6), and 'whence do we do evil?' (1.2.4), to which they answer that evil is 'turning from divine to temporal things' (1.16.34) and humans do this 'by free choice of the will' (1.16.35).[121] Book 2 concerns itself with whether God should be held morally responsible for the evil that humans do with the free choice that God gave them; it opens with Evodius' request, 'Now if possible, explain to me why God gave human beings free choice of the will. If we had not received it, we surely would not be able to sin.' (2.1.1.1). Augustine offers to answer this question by addressing three distinct issues:

[1] How is it clear that God exists?

[2] Do all things, insofar as they are good, come from God?

[3] Is free will to be counted among these goods? (2.3.7.20)

This study focuses on point [1], Augustine's demonstration of God's existence, summarised below. Book 2 next addresses points [2] and [3], arguing as follows: God is only responsible for granting humans the good of a free will, while it is one's own responsibility for having used one's free will for evil. The evil act itself is inexplicable because evil is an unknowable and inexplicable privation.[122] In this way, Book 2 resolves the crux of theodicy raised by Book 1, leaving Book 3 to answer questions raised by the solution regarding God's foreknowledge and the distinction between necessity and nature.

Augustine's argument for God's existence—that is, his response to point [1]—may be summarised as follows. Evodius, Augustine's friend and interlocutor, says he *believes* that God

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[121] Simon Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical significance of 'De Libero Arbitrio'* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 51.
[122] Ibid.

exists but wishes to *understand*, to see clearly that it is so (2.2.5.12). Together, they establish a burden of proof for demonstrating God's existence. 'I ask you,' Augustine invites Evodius, 'if you find nothing above our reason except what is eternal and unchangeable, will you hesitate to say that this is God?' (2.6.14.55). Evodius agrees, saying 'I will plainly admit that this being, to which we agree none is superior, is God.' (2.6.14.56).

After further dialogue over the nature and relative superiority of various sense perceptions and mental faculties, Evodius proposes that 'the intelligible structure and truth of number' (2.8.20.80) fits their criteria: the truth of number is superior to human reason, eternal, and unchangeable. Augustine elaborates Evodius' idea as follows: an object many people see must exist independently of their visual faculties. By the same logic, number's intelligible structure and truth [*ratio et veritas*] must be independent of the many humans with rational faculties who perceive it. This is apparent because if it were otherwise (e.g. if people each had our own unique individual idea of number) then one person could never persuade another that a mathematical exercise had been done incorrectly by appealing to commonly recognised mathematical truths. Yet, people *can* correct maths homework and settle numerical disagreements, and they do so by appealing to a consistent and commonly available sense of number's truth and structure, something distinct and distinguishable from our own fallible understandings of it. Unlike the changeable things one sees and hears, however, the truth of number appears to be permanent and unalterable: while one can comprehend, conceptualise, and apply numbers with greater or lesser accuracy, the human rational faculty has no ability to alter the nature or properties of number itself. One cannot make 1+1 = 3. It appears that mathematical truth is unchanging and eternal. Thus, Augustine says the truth of number 'remains pure and unchangeable, and is seen in common by all who reason' (2.8.24.93).

Augustine then offers another example of his own, turning to 'the truth' he calls 'wisdom' (*sapientia*), and runs the same line of argumentation. Just as rational minds possess an awareness of number, so too, he says, are minds aware of wisdom (2.9.26.102-3)—by which he means that all people sense that there are ways to live well that seek happiness, and ways to live that neither seek nor attain this end. Evodius at first objects, pointing out that individuals vary greatly in their conception and application of wisdom. He eventually concedes, however, that wisdom does have certain clear principles (for example, that individuals ought to seek justice and that equals should be compared to equals). These principles of wisdom are like mathematical principles—any

rational mind that understands principles of wisdom will recognise their truth (2.10.29.116). For this reason, Augustine concludes that 'just as there are true and unchangeable rules of numbers, whose intelligible structure and truth you declare … so too are there true and unchangeable rules of wisdom'(2.10.29.119).

At this point, Augustine sums up their discussion, saying 'It is certainly evident that [wisdom and number are] each true, and unchangeably true. Consequently, you will not deny that there is unchangeable truth, containing everything that is unchangeably true'(2.12.33.130). Evodius agrees that Augustine has shown that when the human mind makes judgments it regularly appeals to truths of number and wisdom. Such truth is evidently distinct from human reason; human rational faculties are limited, prone to error, and changeable but this truth is unchanging and commonly perceivable. Thus, eternal supra-mental truth exists.

Is this truth God, the divine who has no superior? If human reason appeals to eternal truth when making judgments, then the mind treats such truth as its superior. Augustine and Evodius have agreed that God has no superiors, that human reason is the apex of thinking living things, and finally, that this mind-independent, eternal, unchanging Truth is superior to human reason. Thus, by Augustine's burden of proof, this superior eternal Truth whose existence is undeniable cannot be anything else except God. The only disproof could be demonstrating that there is something yet superior to eternal truth, that would then be God.

Hierarchy and the Eternal God; Augustine's Burden of Proof

The first thought which begins (but does not complete) conceptual parameter (a) is that God is eternal, meaning that God is not limited by time or space, unlike all that is not God, which is limited by time and/or space and thus is changeable (including human reason). This partial parameter is developed from Augustine and Evodius' discussion concerning the burden of proof to prove that God exists.

Even the skeptic who doubts everything, Augustine begins, cannot doubt that s/he exists, is alive, and has understanding even in the midst of doubt. From this triad—existence-life-intelligence (*esse-vivere-intellegere*)—Augustine establishes an ascending hierarchical relation within existence.[123] When asked, Evodius agrees that things which have all three traits—

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[123] Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 178.

existence, life, and understanding—are superior to those which have only one or two (2.3.7.22-4). Hence humans are superior to irrational animals who are superior to inanimate objects.

Augustine next describes a hierarchy of judgment within the human person in which reason/mind/spirit is the apex. Augustine's sense of reason [*ratio*] in *Free Will* is not a narrowly understood notion standing in contradistinction to consciousness, emotion, will, or similar cognitive categories—ones from which it has been distinguished in many of the Enlightenment/post-enlightenment works which condition modern thought on the topic of reason. Augustine says that by reason he means 'something like the 'head' or 'eye' of our soul—or whatever term is more suitable for reason and intelligence—which animal nature does not have'(2.6.13.53). As he explained in Book 1, 'That by which humans are ranked above animals, whatever it is, be it more correctly called "mind" or "spirit" or both — we find both terms in Scripture — if it dominates and commands the rest of what a human consists in, then that human being is completely in order,'(1.8.18.61). Clearly, the identification, specification, and division of the soul is not Augustine's driving concern in this dialogue, so we too shall refrain from placing too much weight on how *ratio* is distinguished from mind and spirit. It is imperative to note, however, a) that while reason is not bodily it is still temporal, which is to say, changeable (2.6.14.55), and b) that reason's superiority does not result from its ability to understand; the object of understanding is not necessarily inferior or subject to the mind. O'Daly succinctly explains the significance of these two principles:

> Augustine stresses the principle that understanding need not be superior to that which is understood, as well as the mutability of reason, because he wishes to demonstrate that the divine eternal immutability is both superior to human reason and yet can be known by it, or . . . that something higher than our reason necessarily exists, i.e., God.[124]

Following O'Daly's reading, Augustine's burden of proof for God's existence builds upon the supposition that something which is not subject to time (it is eternal and unchanging) is superior to that which is; the constancy of eternal things is superior to the changeability of temporal things. Having established reason (broadly construed) as the apex of human existence (superior

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[124] O'Daly, 179.

to one's brute life and dumb materiality), Augustine proceeds to outline his burden of proof for the existence of God.

Specifically, if one were to show something to be reason's superior, then it would be higher than all else in creation, which would be what one calls God, superior to all. Augustine explicitly takes up immutability as a mark of superiority:

> Suppose that reason sees something eternal and unchangeable through itself, without recourse to any bodily organ … Reason must then admit itself to be inferior, and the eternal and unchangeable being [that it sees] to be its God. (2.6.14.56)

Augustine asks Evodius, 'If you find nothing above our reason except what is eternal and unchangeable, will you hesitate to say that this is God?' (2.6.14.55). Evodius agrees to this burden of proof, saying 'I will plainly admit that this being, to which we agree none is superior, is God.' (2.6.14.56). As Harrison summarises, 2.6.14 has established a sufficient condition for demonstrating God's existence: 'show that there is something (eternal) superior to our reason. Either this is God, or this implies God as its superior.'[125]

Augustine clarifies his argumentative goal with an analogy (2.7.15.9—2.7.19.72) between the senses' perception of sensible objects and mind's perception of something superior to itself (what are later called eternal truth). King neatly draws out the importance of Augustine's comparison of our sensory perception of objects beyond our bodies with our awareness of number and wisdom:

> Just as we believe that a sensible object exists because it is publicly accessible to our distinct individual senses – you and I can both see it – so too we should conclude that an "intelligible" object exists because it is publicly accessible to our distinct individual minds, in that you and I can both conceive it. … Mathematical truths are true whatever we may think about them, no matter how much we might want them to be otherwise. Augustine thus concludes that truth is "higher" than

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[125] Harrison, 157.

our minds. Hence something higher than our minds exists, which either is or is a part of God.[126]

That which remains commonly perceptible and unassimilated must exist in itself without being made subject or rendered inferior. For this reason—they seek something superior to human reason rather than assimilated and subjected to it—Evodius and Augustine ask themselves, 'Do we find anything that all reasoning beings, each one using his own reason or mind, see in common? That is, something that is present to all, but is not changed into the [private] use of those to whom it is present … it remains incorrupt and intact whether they see it or not' (2.8.20.79). In this way, their understanding of creaturely hierarchy and the eternal God generates their burden of proof for God's existence.

Before proceeding further with our close reading, let us gather up what will be an embryonic element for conceptual parameter (a) (which will come to be called *understanding God as truth* in due course). Specifically, this details a fundamental distinction between God, who is eternal, and all of creation, which is bodily and temporal (bounded by time and space). Two ideas in our close reading speak to this.

First, we have seen the dialogue elaborate a hierarchy among created things: that intelligence is superior to unintelligent life which is superior to mere existence and also that reason reigns supreme within the understanding. Second, a distinction was designated between God and all that is not God: non-divine things are changeable, bodily and/or temporal, limited by time and/or space, while God is eternal, everlasting, constant, unchanging. These two principles complete each other but they are not inextricable. One may maintain that the eternal, everlasting God who is not subject to time or space is thereby superior to all creation (which is by definition temporal and bodily) *without* then proceeding to hierarchically categorise reason above other mental faculties or understanding above mindless life and mindless life above life-less existence.

It is the constructive theologian's prerogative to select which elements of a text inform her/his conceptual parameters. I intend to develop the first element of conceptual parameter (a) based upon the second of these two positions—that God's superiority consists in not being subject to time or space while the cosmos is—leaving aside Augustine's characterisation of

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[126] King, 'Introduction', xxi.

hierarchy within creation.[127] In my view, Augustine's proof is equally effective without positing a hierarchy among created things. Having seen that the eternal is superior to the temporal and bodily, the eternal God is thereby superior to all created things, regardless of their interrelations. Thus if *eternal* truth is established, it is on the divine side of the eternal/changeable distinction. Its existence is (or implies) God. For this reason, the first embryonic element of conceptual parameter (a) is this: God is eternal[128], meaning that God is not limited by time or space, unlike all that is not God (including human reason), which is limited by time and/or space and thus is changeable.

The Eternal Truth of Number

Returning to our close reading of *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine has promised Evodius a demonstration of God's existence. To that end, he sets Evodius the task of identifying something that is superior to human reason, as shown by its eternality and common accessibility. Evodius responds by proposing 'the intelligible structure and truth of number' as a candidate (2.8.20.80). As O'Daly explains, the intelligible structure and truth of number [*ratio et veritas numeri*] includes 'mathematical propositions such as '7+3=10' and … concepts such as the idea of absolute unity, but also .. systems of addition and subtraction.'[129] Evodius presents his reasons as follows,

> The intelligible structure and truth of number [*ratio et veritas numeri*] is present to all reasoning beings. Everyone who calculates tries to apprehend it with his own reason and intelligence. Some do this with ease; others with difficulty. Yet it offers itself equally to all who are capable of grasping it. It is not changed and converted into its perceiver when anyone perceives it, the way food is. Nor is there a flaw in it when anyone makes a mistake; it remains true and intact while the person is all the more in error the less he sees it. (2.8.20.80)

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[127] This move is legitimate because the study aims to be *informed* by Augustine rather than *congruent* with his work. There *may be* something like hierarchy within the cosmos—I do not exclude that possibility—and at times it may have elements that Augustine describes, but our final truth theory will not indicate one way or the other on the matter (in this way, it is not contradiction Augustine, but only refraining from making instrumental use of this thought).

[128] God's eternality is also treated from an Old Testament perspective in Chapter III.

[129] O'Daly, 180.

In this passage, Evodius has justified his choice by observing that the structure and truth of number is commonly available to all minds which make use of numbers, though some have a greater talent for arithmetic than others. The truth and intelligibility of number remains the same even when someone makes an error in their mathematical judgments, indicating it is independent of the mind—like a visible object grasped by sight, rather than something incorporated into the mind, like edible food tasted and taken into the body.

Augustine and Evodius further substantiate that the truth of number is eternal rather than bodily and temporal by together building an argument that sensory experience alone cannot furnish the mind with its awareness of number. In their view, sensory objects are by definition changeable and mutable.[130] Though people do perceive numbers in sensory objects (e.g. by counting), it is only a person's internal sense of number which allows him/her to prove a mathematical error (e.g. that the counting has gone wrong) (2.8.21.82-3). Furthermore, unlike the object of our sense perceptions which are changeable, the truth of number does not alter: 'seven and three are ten not only at the moment, but always; it never was and never will be the case that seven and three are not ten'(2.8.21.83).

To further substantiate the point that the *ratio et veritas* of number which our minds perceive cannot be entirely explained by our sensory perception (contra the view that one learns addition from, e.g. adding three apples to seven apples for a total of ten), Augustine points out that there are laws of mathematics which people are aware of, but which cannot be directly observed. As Hill helpfully translates from 2.8.23.89-91 into modern algebra, 'the "law" is that for any number n, the nth number after it is its double, 2n.'[131] Though one might be able to observe particular instances of this law—that the third number after 3 is 6, which is twice 3—it is manifestly impossible to observe that the law holds true for *all* numbers *n*. The universality of this 'law' could only be extrapolated (my term), not observed, and that extrapolation is only possible because of an awareness of the non-sensory numerical truth (2.8.23.92). Thus, while sensory experience is not alien to observations of number, it is insufficient to explain our perception of incorruptible and eternal numerical truths.[132] Harrison agrees that by 2.8.21-4, Augustine has refuted the theory that sensory perception gives rise to knowledge of numbers,

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[130] Ibid.
[131] *Free Will*, fn35, p48.
[132] Cf. *Confessions* X.12.19.

having shown both that 'the *ratio* of numbers is infinite, and therefore known only by reason' and also that 'One cannot be perceived, and so is prior to perception of unity.'[133]

For these reasons, Evodius and Augustine readily agree as follows: 'the intelligible structure and truth of numbers does not pertain to the bodily senses. It remains pure and unchangeable, and is seen in common by all who reason.' (2.8.24.93) They have identified a truth which is eternal, commonly available to all rational minds, and which is unerring even as minds err, indicating its superiority to the mind which perceives. An eternal truth has been identified.

The embryonic conceptual parameter (a) (which will eventually earn the title *understanding God as truth*) so far involves an eternal God unlimited by time and space. Now it can be developed to include a second component: the eternal truth of number. Mathematical truths are eternal, or rather, the single truth by which we judge our articulation of individual mathematical truths is eternal. It does not change and is not curtailed by time or space. It is apprehensible by human mind, but also superior to it as the mind may err but the truth of number does not itself waver.

Subsequently, the relationship between the eternal truth of number and God will be delineated. But first, an additional type of eternal truth will be considered. The intelligibility and truth [*ratio et veritas*] of number is a special case. When Evodius first proposed it as something superior to human reason, he introduced it by saying that 'there are many! It is enough to mention just one' (2.8.20.28). What else might be superior to reason, eternal, and commonly accessible? Augustine proposes, wisdom.

The Eternal Truth of Wisdom

Augustine next turns to 'the truth' he calls 'wisdom' (*sapientia*), and runs the same line of argumentation. The younger interlocutor, however, at first objects to this example. Augustine has proposed that there could be wisdom 'common to all so that the more someone participates in it the wiser he becomes?' (2.9.25.96). Evodius' objection is that it is unclear what is meant by 'wisdom' since there are numerous interpretations of wisdom: 'I do not yet know what you mean by "wisdom," for I see that people have various views about what is said or done wisely,'

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[133] Harrison, 158.

(2.9.25.97).) He explains his position, observing that some people pursue a good life through military service, others find farming superior; some pursue money, others shun temporal things to find eternal truth, and still others counsel and conduct human individuals and society—and yet each person holds his/her own choice in life to be a wise one (2.9.25.97-98).

Augustine responds by agreeing that people pursue differing and at times mutually exclusive goods, but argues that this does not mean wisdom itself is changeable. He begins by clarifying what they agree upon: 'You do think wisdom is the truth in which the highest good is recognized and grasped, do you not? All the people you mentioned, who follow different things, pursue good and avoid evil' (2.9.26.100). As Harrison aptly interprets, Augustine has here defined truth as that 'truth in which the supreme good is seen and possessed.'[134] Augustine explains that different people may select many different goods whilst yet judging by the same singular truth of wisdom. O'Daly explicates the position, saying

> such a diversity of goods (Augustine is clearly now thinking, not of purely subjective fantasies about what is good, but of plausibly demonstrable goods) need not entail a corresponding plurality of wisdoms, for wisdom need be none other than the insight into the diverse nature of the good. To that extent, wisdom may be one, and so common to all men.[135]

To illustrate the point, Augustine compares it to people viewing the world by the same sun; individuals may choose different things to look at and enjoy whilst yet all receiving the same illumination (2.9.27.108). At this point, Evodius concedes that this is *possible*, but maintains that it remains to be demonstrated that wisdom's truth isn't itself variable (2.9.27.109).

Augustine makes two points to complete his case that the truth of wisdom is unified, common and consistent despite variations in its application. First, he argues that all humans seek to be happy, which implicitly is a search for wisdom (wisdom having been defined as 'truth in which the supreme good is seen and possessed'), thus showing that the existence of wisdom is implicitly known by all humans, all of who seek happiness. Second, he argues that a number of principles of wisdom are clearly true to all who consider them (much like mathematical

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[134] Ibid.
[135] O'Daly, 181.

principles). His conclusion is that the truth of wisdom is eternally true and commonly available to human understanding, just like the truth of mathematics.

Augustine concludes the first of these two points in the following passage.

> Thus, just as we have had stamped on our minds the notion of happiness before we are happy, for it is through this notion that we know and confidently declare without hesitation that we want to be happy, so too we have had stamped on our mind the notion of wisdom before we are wise; it is through this notion that any one of us, if asked whether he wants to be wise, will reply without the shadow of a doubt that he does. (2.9.26.103)

He clearly holds that even though humans choose many means by which to seek the happiness of a good life, all such choices betray a pre-existing intuition that there is such a thing as a good happy life *and* that there exists wisdom in how to live it. Otherwise it could not be sought. Wisdom is commonly perceptible and pursued.

His second point bolsters his first, in that it identifies a number of principles or beacons of wisdom that any rational person would recognise. These include such chestnuts as 'one should live justly,' 'equals should be compared to equals,' and 'that the incorrupt is better than the corrupt' (2.10.28.113-4). Evodius concedes that such truths are 'present and common to me, to you, and to all who see the truth' (2.10.28.113). It follows that these commonly recognised truths are not particular to each mind, but rather independent and unchanging. Augustine calls these commonly recognised truths the 'rules and beacons of virtue'. They are 'true and unchangeable, and they are present, whether singly or collectively, for the regard of those who are capable of recognizing them, each by his own mind and reason.' (2.10.29.116). Furthermore, these few principles of virtue (of which there are many more) must also be principles of wisdom: 'everything we called "rules and beacons of the virtues" pertains to wisdom. The more someone uses them in living his life and lives his life in accordance with them, the more he lives and acts wisely.' (2.10.29.118) O'Daly again sums up Augustine's conclusion (in 2.10.29.119):

> A single instance of truth (*unum verum*) perceived by two individuals can be said to be common to both. … There seem to several commonly accessible principles

or rules (*regulae*) of this kind … Insight into the rules qua rules is none other than wisdom, i.e., perceiving, choosing and acting wisely. It would appear that such truths are no less objective and constant than rules of number.[136]

Thus we see that Augustine has guided Evodius to agreement that there are at least two kinds of eternal truth which they are indubitably aware of: wisdom and number. Both have met the criteria of being independent of the human mind and unchanging.

The time has come to add another conceptual element to the embryonic conceptual parameter (a) (*understanding God as truth*). It already stipulates God as eternal and that the human apprehension of mathematics indicates an eternal truth (the truth of number) is commonly available to rational minds. Now it additionally states that the human pursuit of a good life indicates that another eternal truth, one called wisdom, is commonly available to rational minds even as there is variability among individual articulations and applications.

One Mystical Vision and a Proof of God

Having identified two sorts of eternal truth—principles of number and principles of wisdom—Augustine and Evodius wonder whether they are ultimately the same or thoroughly distinct. Perhaps unexpectedly, Augustine does not advance another argument, but instead describes his nearly mystical experiences contemplating the truth of number and wisdom:

> when I reflect on the unchangeable truth of numbers and their lair (so to speak) and their inner sanctuary and realm — or any other suitable name we can find to refer to the dwelling-place and residence of numbers — I am far removed from the body. Perhaps I even find something to think about, but not something I could put into words. Eventually I return in exhaustion to familiar things, so that I am able to say something or other, and I talk in the usual way about the things right in front of me. This also happens to me when I think as carefully and intently as I can about wisdom. (2.11.30.122-3)

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[136] O'Daly, 181-2.

Though he cannot demonstrate it, Augustine's intuition is that number and wisdom are united, like the heat and light given off by fire. He says, 'the brightness and the heat in a fire [are] "consubstantial." Yet the heat affects only what is moved close to it, whereas the brightness is diffused far and wide' (2.11.32.128). Analogously, as many understand math (perceive light) but few people are truly wise (feel the heat). Augustine admits that the point is obscure, but nonetheless is convinced that the truth of number and wisdom is the same, or, as O'Daly puts it, they are 'of one and the same kind (*una quaedem eademque res est*), even if numbers are commonly regarded as of less value than wisdom'.[137]

There appears to be a unity to eternal truth, but it is at the very limits of human ken to apprehend the number, wisdom, or their unity in themselves. At the end of their dialogue on these topics, Augustine expresses his dissatisfaction with everything he has said: 'the truth which we have discussed at length without saying anything adequate' (2.19.52.196). An apophatic limit has been reached before the unity of eternal truth can be comprehended.

The apophatic limit notwithstanding, Augustine has demonstrated that eternal commonly perceivable truth exists[138] and from this he concludes that God is either this eternal truth (or something superior still, since the apophatic intuition of their unity cannot be used in the demonstration of God's existence). Augustine begins the final demonstration with a review of the findings so far, saying,

> There is unchangeable truth, containing everything that is unchangeably true. You
> cannot call it yours or mine or anyone else's. Instead, it is present and offers itself
> in common to all who discern unchangeable truths, like a light that is
> miraculously both public and hidden. (2.12.33.130-131).

Next, he shows that this eternal truth is superior to reason, the apex of human understanding. (Recall that reason's ability to understand is not what makes it superior. Rather, its superiority consists in the ability to cast judgment, to rule, and determine over the rest of the human person.) While reason may apprehend principles of number and wisdom, it cannot judge them as their superior; on the contrary, reason deploys its sense of eternal truth in order to make

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[137] O'Daly, 182-3.
[138] Harrison, 158.

judgements regarding worldly things. For instance, one's sense of numerical truth guides one in correcting arithmetic. Hence, something above the mind has been found: eternal truth itself. Augustine declares the resounding conclusion,

> something more exalted than our mind and reason. Here you have it: the truth itself! Embrace it if you can and enjoy it; 'Take delight in the Lord and HE will give you your heart's longings' [Ps. 36.4 (37:4 RSV)] What do you long for more than to be happy? And who is happier than one who enjoys the unshakeable, unchangeable, and most excellent truth? (2.13.35.137)

His obscurity over the precise relationship of number and wisdom does not impede the argument, for the burden of proof for God's existence only required the demonstration of something superior to reason and the mind.

Augustine concludes, 'There is a God who truly is, in the highest degree. This we now not only hold free of doubt by faith, I think. We also reach it by a form of understanding that, although as yet very slight, is certain' (2.15.39.155). He does not purport to comprehend God of divine existence but merely to understand as well as believe that God exists. As O'Daly puts it, Augustine has demonstrated

> that God exists, whether God the truth or superior to the truth. He does not choose between the latter alternatives, merely recalling that the name 'father of wisdom' is given to God, but that the son, the 'wisdom' born of the eternal father, is equal to the father. We may infer that in knowing wisdom we also know God.[139]

Once the proof is complete, Augustine launches into a lengthy panegyric in praise of this truth, exalting in the many goods it brings those who embrace it and its many illustrious qualities. But before following him there, a conceptual parameter will take form.

This study's first embryonic conceptual parameter (a) will shortly take on its rightful title *understanding God as truth* because of the developments to it in this subsection. (NB: This conceptual parameter will be further developed in light of *Confessions*.) Thus far, (a) includes:

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[139] O'Daly, 184.

God's distinction from all that is not God as that which is eternal in comparison to all non-divine temporal and bodily creatures; and that the eternal truth of both number and wisdom is commonly available to rational minds, even as their apprehension and application varies. From this subsection, the constructive theologian chooses to take on Augustine's intuition that there is a single eternal truth which guides human apprehensions of both number and wisdom, that their unity is at the mystical limit of human understanding, and that this eternal truth is God godself.

Taking these four elements together, I will now constructively elaborate the theological content of (a) *understanding God as truth*. When God is named truth, it means that God is the standard and measure by which humans judge the world's truths and realities, from theoretical mathematics to the wisdom of various life-style choices. This is possible because despite the mind's inalienable limitations and tendency towards error, it has some awareness, however imperfect, of the eternal unchanging reality of number and wisdom, which is divine. God encompasses the governing principle of both the purely logical/mathematical truths and the wisdom of a good life. Briefly put, divine truth is eternal, accessible to the rational mind but above and superior to it, which is to say, it does not alter though the mind's apprehension can wax, wane, or err.

Limitation, Fallibility, Variability, and Diversity

This subsection develops a second conceptual parameter from the material examined in the previous three subsections. It regards *the human apprehension of divine truth* (b) and specifies that while humans may apprehend divine truth, their understanding remains limited, fallible, variable, and diverse.

First, I draw on Augustine's description contemplating the truth of number, finding it beyond his comprehension. Second, I note that, nevertheless, the eternal truth of number is not entirely beyond his and Evodius' understanding. After all, their sense of the eternal truth of number enables their mathematical judgments. Re-articulating this as a conceptual parameter, I would put forward three points. First, divine truth is *apprehensible*, in that it can be understood to some extent, but also that it is *incomprehensible*, in that it cannot be understood in its entirety. The existence of this divine truth was held to be indubitable, but at the same time mystical, knowable to a *limited* extent though not subject to human scrutiny or comprehension. Second,

human apprehension of divine truth is clearly fallible, as people often make erroneous judgments, both mathematical errors and unwise decisions. Recall, human cognitive fallibility was instrumental to Augustine's proof that eternal truth is superior to the mind; truth is not altered by human misunderstandings. This furnishes the third point, that apprehension of divine truth is highly variable; humans may be corrected and increase their understanding or they may make fresh errors.

Finally, the human apprehension of divine truth is diverse, at times to the point of mutual exclusion. The absolute quality of God as Truth does not carry over to all human apprehension of divine truth. This diversity appears in Evodius' example of individuals judging different mutually exclusive goods to live by (leading to incompatible life-choices). Augustine showed that they nonetheless judged by the same sense of wisdom. Book 1 of *On the Free Choice of the Will* provides a further example. Here, Augustine states that all temporal laws, humanly devised and enacted, are only just if they are derived from the 'supreme reason' of the 'eternal law' (1.6.15.48-1.6.15.49; 1.6.15.50). Two temporal laws can both be just but nonetheless contradict each other; what is just under one circumstance is not just in another. The contradictory just laws both obey the eternal law, but in different manners under different circumstances (1.6.14.47-48). Augustine describes humanity's common awareness, saying 'the notion of eternal law is stamped on us', a similar image to the common awareness of wisdom and number (1.6.15.50).[140] Even though the truth of God never changes, the human interpretation and application of it may differ, and even take mutually contradictory forms, in different times, places, and circumstances.

From these passages, I develop conceptual parameter (b) on *human apprehension of divine truth*: humanity cannot comprehend divine truth, but it may apprehend it even though its apprehension is marked by limitation, variability, fallibility, and diversity. To elaborate, divine truth remains incomprehensible, but humans may have some understanding (apprehension) and grow in their understanding (hence variability). Furthermore, though some disagreements among those who seek truth are due to error (hence fallibility), others are due to the diversity in human apprehensions of divine truth. For example, Euclidian and spherical geometry, which ascribe contrary properties to parallel lines. In Euclidian geometry (on a plane) two parallel lines will never meet (like railroad tracks) whereas in spherical geometry (as if on a globe) two parallel lines will sometimes meet (as longitudinal lines are perpendicular at the equator but meet at the

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[140] Cf. *Confessions* (3.7.13-14).

poles). The ultimate *veritas et ratio* of number has not altered, but informs the judgments that support both forms of geometry. When, however, considered in different circumstances, under different axioms, what the human mind judges, grasps, and articulates to be true differs. This diversity to the point of contradiction does not result in excluding the possibility of error; sound mathematical judgments are still made by geometers. Humans can still adjudicate regarding the interpretation of divine truth in these different circumstances. Hence, human apprehension of divine truth is limited, fallible, variable, and diverse.

Universal Accessibility

Conceptual parameter (b) now receives further development from an analysis of the accessibility of divine truth; to whom is it accessible and where may it be found? To all people and in all places, comes Augustine's answer; truth is available and faithful and common to all (2.14.37.145). Below, he explains that anyone who wills will find eternal truth will find it lovely, lasting, and available:

insofar as the will to enjoy it is steadfastly present, the beauty of truth and wisdom … does not pass with time or change places; nightfall does not interrupt it and shadows do not obscure it; it does not depend on the bodily senses. It is close to all the people in the whole world who take delight in it and have turned themselves to it; it lasts forever for all; it is never absent from any place; outwardly it counsels us and inwardly it teaches us. (2.14.38.151-152)

Clearly, divine truth is everywhere to be found.

Note that though Augustine has said truth 'does not depend on the bodily senses,' it would be misleading to state his position as saying that wisdom and divine truth can never be discovered in the created world (which is bodily and temporal). This is misleading, because his actual position is that one cannot discover wisdom and divine truth from bodily things *alone*.

One instance he provides of finding wisdom in the world is the act of recognising beauty; this aesthetic recognition requires judgments which are made with wisdom (2.16.41.163). All existence is full of numbers, (2.16.42.164), whether in the skill of craftsmen, the rhythm of

dancers, or the proportion of sculpture, to name a few, 'All the loveliness of creation is an indication of you' (2.16.43.168). Even non-living things metaphorically 'live' by the eternal truth because they are subject to the principles of number (2.17.46.176). One cannot grasp and make sense of the material bodily perishable world around us without some appeal to these eternal truths.

Augustine certainly holds that the created world constantly indicates its creator. One never encounters bodily things in isolation, apart from one's sense of divine truth. The human awareness, however dim, of the eternal true God always is present in one's encounter with temporal and bodily things. Here, Augustine describes how the truth which is God leaves its trace on everything that is created. Wisdom is not only available to all minds, but it can be found anywhere and everywhere.

> Therefore, if either with bodily sense or with the mind's consideration you cannot get hold of whatever changeable thing you are looking upon, unless you grasp some form of numbers (without which it would lapse back into nothing), do not doubt that there is some eternal and unchangeable form! As a result, these changeable things … run their courses through time, with measured movements and a distinct variety of forms, like poetic verses. This eternal and unchangeable form is not contained in and spread out through space; nor is it extended and varied in time. But through it, all [changeable] things are able to be given form, as well as to fulfill and carry out the numbers pertinent to the times and places appropriate to their kind. (2.16.44.171-172)

For our purposes, the pervasive character of eternal truth, that it is apparent to the human mind in all aspects of creation, helps Augustine to balance out his point above that eternal truth is not apprehended through the bodily senses. Clearly, it means that it is not apprehended through the bodily senses *alone* but also through perception of the eternal.

From this examination of *On the Free Choice of the Will,* I offer a further augmentation to conceptual parameter (b) *human apprehension of truth*: in addition to human apprehension of divine truth being limited, fallible, variable, and diverse, it is also available to all people and all

places, being an implicit contributor to human understanding of sensory perceptions, which one may choose to consider, enjoy, and contemplate in its own right.

Benefits of Truth

The final point to which I draw attention in *On the Free Will* is in Augustine's rapturous praise of wisdom, when he has completed the proof of God's existence. Augustine waxes lyrical about how much happiness is possessed by those who embrace the eternal truth that is God. The pursuit and attainment of truth is not an indifferent or purely cognitive matter. It conveys happiness, all goods, freedom, and security. Augustine compares it with making love, being fed and watered, melodious music, and the beauty of gems and heavenly bodies (2.13.35.138-140). Furthermore, truth reveals all other creaturely goods.

Naturally, one benefit of apprehending divine truth is that one grows in wisdom. This cognitive element may involve an increase in knowledge, but it is mainly that one more fully apprehends the eternal truth by which one understands all other things. As Augustine says,

> No one passes judgments on [wisdom/truth], and no one passes judgments rightly without it. And from this it is clear beyond a doubt that it is more valuable than our minds, each of which becomes wise by this one thing and passes judgment, not on it, but on other things through it. (2.14.38.152)

The appreciation of truth itself is the highest and greatest good. Additionally, the person that focuses on truth finds that all other goods are delivered to her/him as well. Augustine exhorts Evodius,

> since the highest good is known and possessed in the truth, and this truth is wisdom, let us recognize and possess the highest good in it and enjoy it completely, since anyone who enjoys the highest good is happy. This truth reveals all true goods, which people elect for themselves to enjoy — either one or many of them — in accordance with their capacity for understanding. (2.13.36.141)

Focusing in delight on eternal truth does not diminish one's delight in the various temporal, bodily, finite, created goods: 'holding fast to it as though it were unmindful of the others, it enjoys them all together in the truth itself. For whatever is agreeable in the other truths is surely agreeable in virtue of the truth itself,' (2.13.36.142). Full devotion to divine truth, which is the highest good, enables one to truly appreciate all lesser goods.

Freedom and security are both gifts that follow from this focus on eternal truth. Augustine argues that freedom is gained because the God who is truth frees the individual from their sins and death: 'Our freedom is this: to submit to this truth, which is our God Who set us free from death — that is, from the state of sin. Truth itself, speaking as a human being among others, said to those believing in Him: [John 8:31-32]' (1.13.37.143). Augustine's argument appeals to scriptural support, but his conceptual schema also explains how it is that divine truth sets one free from sin, establishing the truth-seeker in joy, freedom, security, and life. For, divine truth is the seat of wisdom, which guides one into a good life, which by definition is free from sin and its deathly effects. Divine truth also grants security to those who prioritise it. While all creaturely things are perishable and may be lost, only the eternal truth is imperishable. It can never be lost. Augustine explains that the freedom and security together increase the happiness gained from truth: 'The soul does not enjoy anything with freedom unless it enjoys it with security. Now nobody is secure in goods that can be lost against his will. Nobody loses truth and wisdom against his will,' (2.13.37.143-4). Harrison nicely simplifies Augustine's points, saying that *'Happiness = enjoyment of truth*,' and '*Freedom = subjection to truth* / Truth cannot be lost against will / Truth is common, beautiful.'[141]

From these observations, I draw the beginning of a third conceptual parameter (c) *the human pursuit of truth*. The attainment of truth is not merely intellectually beneficial; it establishes the truth-seeker in joy, freedom, security, and life, freeing one from uncertainty, sin, and death. This result obtains because seeking divine truth involves the pursuit of wisdom which is essentially the pursuit of what it means to live a good life. Thus, eternal truth releases the human person from error and moral failing, which is itself freedom. It grants security because eternal things are infinitely dependable, in contrast to temporal and bodily creation which only offer limited security.

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[141] Harrison, 158.

Conclusion

Through its examination of *On the Free Choice of the Will*, this section developed initial articulations of three conceptual parameters, accruing material to them gradually. All three will be further developed in the next section, being informed by an examination of *Confessions*. This concluding summary articulates their current unfinished state.

(a) *understanding God as truth* finds that there is a hierarchical relationship between God and that which is not God, in that all creation is temporal and bodily while God is not limited by time or space, being eternal. When God is named truth, this means God is the eternal standard and measure by which humans judge the truths of mathematics and wisdom.

(b) *the human apprehension of such divine truth* stipulates that eternal truth is available to all rational minds in all places. It is an implicit contributor to human understanding of sensory perceptions, but apprehendable and enjoyable as distinct from sensory experience. This human apprehension is always limited, in that it cannot amount to full comprehension. The human apprehension of the incomprehensible does not make divine truth its subject. It is also fallible, in that one may make errors in judgements or apprehension of truth, and variable, in that one can be corrected in one's errors and grow in wisdom. Additionally, there is a diversity of genuine articulations of the eternal truth, some of which conflict with each other.

(c) *the on-going pursuit of truth by humans* presents this pursuit as far from being of purely intellectual benefit. Seeking truth brings joy, freedom, security, and life because it involves an increase in wisdom, not merely in a series of accurate facts. One is freed from moral errors as well as inaccuracies, which contributes to living a good life. One's freedom is also secure because it is founded on truth which is itself eternal, and thus utterly reliable.

II.3 Augustine's *Confessions*

In the course of further developing conceptual parameters, this section attends to multiple aspects of Augustine's most famous work: *Confessions*.[142] After briefly situating our analysis within the broad reception that *Confessions* has received, the examination begins with general qualities of Augustine's search for truth: his vocative prayerful address to Truth and all-

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[142] In this subsection, references to *Confessions* appear parenthetically.

encompassing pursuit of truth. Next, this study examines the content of two visions, one in Milan and one in Ostia. Finally, Augustine's portrayal of creation as proclaiming God, especially in the latter books, receives attention. Conceptual parameters (a), (b), and (c) will each be modified gradually, their developments noted at the close of each subsection. Ultimately, it will include the insights for (a) that 'Truth' is a personal name, for (b) that divine truth conditions the very possibility of the human search for truth, and for (c) that the human pursuit for truth never ceases but qualitatively changes when one accepts divine truth (who is manifest in Christ) as one's God.

Reception and Continuity

Today, Augustine's *Confessions* is his most read and best known work. It has been praised as the first autobiography, the most complete account of an ancient man's inner life, and the first example of the modern human person; it has also been condemned for allegedly individualising the journey of Christian faith and denigrating the body (especially sexuality). It is the main source material for historical reconstructions of Augustine's early life and intellectual development, though some doubt its reliability. It was written once he became a bishop and received immediate attention, giving it popularity and prominence which has never abated, extending beyond those interested in Christianity or the ancient world such that it is not controversial to name *Confessions* as 'world literature.'[143] Books 1-10 describe his life's faith journey from infancy through his conversion, baptism, and resolve to return to Northern Africa from Italy. The final four books reflect on the current state of his soul, the nature of time, and the interpretation of Scripture, with specific attention to Genesis' opening verses. The sudden shift in genres that many perceive, from narratival auto-biography to discursive theological reflection, has received much comment and attempts to identify either a unity to the text or a reason for the rupture in continuity.

Our interest in *Confessions* is neither historical nor chronological, attending neither to Augustine's historical personage nor his intellectual development over time. As such, questions of the text's accuracy as a depiction of Augustine's youth do not bear on our inquiry; *Confessions* is presumed to accurately describe Augustine's perspective on and theological evaluation of his

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[143] Dorothea Weber, 'Confessiones', in Karla Pollman, Willmien Otten, et al. eds., *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 2 vols. (Oxford: OUP 2013), i, 167.

younger days at the point of composition. This study explores his understanding of *truth* as it appears and is worked out in the text of *Confessions*. This topic is not a common focus of scholarly attention, but there is a no small amount of relevant material in *Confessions*. Truth could reasonably be described as the text's unifying object, in that: first, Augustine pursues God (who is truth) and the truth about God throughout the autobiographical portions; and second, in discursive latter books Augustine continues pursuing truth through scripture and intellectual reflection. 'O Truth!' is a frequent address to God on his lips, and truth makes a central appearance in the pivotal visionary epiphanies he has in Milan after reading Platonist philosophy and in Ostia while in conversation with Monica his mother. The work is thus fertile ground for material contributing conceptual parameters to our final constructive theology of truth.

Vocative Truth

Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine addresses God directly as 'Truth.'[144] For instance, he prays, saying 'O Truth' (10.40.65), 'you are Truth itself' (1.5.6), 'God, you who are Truth' (4.16.31), 'you, who are truly the Truth,' (3.6.10), and 'O Truth, *in whom there is no variation, no play or changing shadow*' (3.6.2). To some 'Truth' might be an abstract and impersonal name, but for Augustine it infuses his personal relationship with a personal God. He seamlessly calls out the appellation while lamenting in his personal and intellectual struggles and rejoicing in gifts of grace.

Nor does addressing God as 'Truth' render God into an object of study for Augustine. This practice entails an awareness of God's presence as Creator to his creatures: he addresses 'Truth, who is artificer of creation' (5.3.5), declares 'truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made' (7.10.2), and prays 'in the light of present truth, the Truth which is yourself' (9.10.23). God's truth is mysterious and elusive as God is the eternal unfathomable creator.

Addressing God as Truth is not an abstraction but an expression of relationship, which is to say, it is only ever expressed in the economy of the creature-God relationship. In *Confessions,* for Augustine to personally vocatively address what others might consider a divine attribute is

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[144] There are obvious precedents for Augustine's use of 'truth' as a divine name in the New Testament, for instance John 8.31.

not unusual. For instance, when answering 'What are you, then, my God?' he situates God's characteristics within the creaturely experience of God:

> You, my God, are supreme, utmost in goodness, mightiest and all-powerful, most merciful and most just. You are the most hidden from us and yet the most present amongst us, … ever enduring and yet we cannot comprehend you. You are unchangeable and yet you change all things. You are never new, never old, and yet all things have new life from you, (1.4.4).

As this passage continues, Augustine expresses divine traits such as omnipotence, omnibenevolence, eternity, and immortality, all from a creature's relational and experiential point of view of God. For instance, God's immortality is known through the life God gives and God's omnipotence is known through God's support, protection, nourishment, and diminution of the proud. Augustine's understanding of God as truth itself is no different – Truth is to be addressed, to be spoken to, sought after, longed for, and prayed to.

Augustine's prayerful address of God as 'Truth' may be taken to modify conceptual parameter (a) *understanding God as truth*. 'Truth' is not an impersonal name for an abstract entity, but instead a personal name which one may use repeatedly to pray, invoke, entreat, and praise one's God. To the Christian, 'Truth' is a personal name, intelligible through the creature's relationship with the steadfast reality of its creator.

Truth the Sought-After

Closely related to Augustine's depiction of vocative truth in the *Confessions* is the theme of seeking after truth. The young Augustine's search for truth drives the plot forward and unifies the autobiography with the later books' reflections. Augustine's description of his varying states of distance and estrangement from God, and God's own activity in searching for and securing Augustine, also colour his search. Augustine's writing on these matters will add greater detail to conceptual parameters (b) *the human apprehension of truth* and (c) *the human pursuit of truth.*

To begin, the search for divine truth is never-ceasing. This is readily apparent in *Confessions*' plot. Augustine summarises his early years, saying 'In this lay my sin, / that not in

him was I seeking pleasures, distinctions and truth, / but in myself and the rest of his creatures'(1.20.1). His first turning point is the decision, after reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, to abandon vanity and seek wisdom (3.4.1). Unfortunately, he then falls in with the falsehoods of the Manichees, and only after many years learned to distinguish between eloquence and truth (5.3.3). Seeing the Manichean teachings disproven and Christianity as yet 'unconquered, but not … the conqueror' (5.14.24), he drops into a deep despair over whether he would find truth before he found death; 'I had been delivered from falsehood, even if I had not yet found the truth' (6.1.1). At this point, he develops faith in the Christian teachings, though he does not yet comprehend them or hold them with certainty. However, as we see in Book 7, reading Neo-Platonist texts resolves his intellectual uncertainties, and in the following book, after an intense struggle of the will, he turns himself fully to God. Then in Book 9, Augustine and his mother Monica have a joint spiritual experience, results of their joint contemplation of God as truth (9.10.23-25). The apex of Augustine's recorded spiritual experience is that of God as Truth itself, sought after and longed for.

If one sees the search for the truth which is God as the narrative's driving arc, then the arc of books 1-9 continues until the end of Book 12. Book 10 mainly consists of Augustine's self-reflection on the state of his soul. Only by entering into God's truth is he able to know the truth about himself. He says 'what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me,' (10.5.7). Likewise, Books 11 and 12 are more than exegesis; they treat the continuing pursuit of divine truth through scripture within the church community. Even at this point long past conversion, Augustine the bishop still seeks divine truth while reading the Bible in prayer and in community. Indeed, the composition's final passage indicates the continuing centrality of his search:

> What human can empower another human to understand these things? What angel can grant understanding to another angel? What angel to a human? Let us rather ask of you, seek in you, knock at your door. Only so will we receive, only so find, and only so will the door be opened to us. Amen. (13.38.53)

Thus, the search for truth continues indefinitely in this life, even after the acceptance of God as 'Truth' and Christ as Truth-incarnate.

Metaphors of distance while seeking divine truth become nicely complicated here. The search for divine truth is not simply a matter of closing the spatial distance between the seeker and the sought-after, as if one is a hunter approaching one's quarry. Even when God allows Augustine to wander far like the prodigal son, the distance between them is both painfully real and illusory. God permits him to depart, and stumble, and take himself far away from God. Simultaneously, Augustine maintains, God is with him (within him even) (1.1.2). Additionally, from his subjective experiential point of view, Augustine tells the story of his own search for truth and portrays God as being the more faithful seeker, enticing him to return to God. Because God is both the sought-after truth and the creator/sustainer/enticer of the searcher, divine truth is never a merely a sought-after object. God also searches and Augustine is sought-for, at times simultaneously far and incredibly near.

That the search for truth never ends, however, does not mean there is no significant change in one's relationship to truth. There are both heights of genuine insight and depths of ignorance and confusion. For instance, compare his Platonist-induced epiphany and his vision with Monica to his ensnarement in Manichean falsehoods and despair once disillusioned. His meandering approach towards the Truth has watershed moments, as when he fully gives himself over to God in the garden. Once Augustine is won over by Christ, the Truth-incarnate, his relationship to the Truth undergoes a revolution and the pursuit continues in a qualitatively different manner. No matter the heights he reaches, his search for Truth never ceases, even once it is found. The significance of these conversion points is not that they complete his search, but that having found Truth he may continually rest in God while also seeking to live evermore truthfully into the faith while further unfolding God's teachings. The Truth is never fully disclosed because the full Truth can only be spoken to, not about, and then only addressed as God. The seeking never ends, though there is a distinct difference between the pre and post-conversion seeking. I would compare it to the change marriage makes to love between partners; the lover does not cease to ardently pursue the beloved once they are wed, but rather, continues to pursue intimacy in love now within the security of their union.

Augustine's search for divine truth in *Confessions* provides this constructive theologian with material for both (b) *the human apprehension of truth* and (c) *the human pursuit of truth.*

For (b), it reinforces the theoretical point from *On the Free Choice of the Will* that divine truth is not subject to the mind with an experiential articulation of the same notion. God, 'Truth',

is sought but God also seeks Augustine and is close even when the distance between them increases, reaching for Augustine. Divine truth is not an object subjected to human pursuit—it seeks one out and is the *condition of possibility* for any human search. Unlike many theories of knowledge where the object of thought is always subjected to the knower (as subject), God is not an object or discoverable fact.

As for (c) *the human pursuit of truth*, the search for truth never ceases, a notion that dovetails well with divine truth's incomprehensibility. This does not, however, mean that the search for truth is always of the same character; it may wax and wane, and there is a categorical shift, a watershed moment when one accepts this divine Truth as one's God with all one's heart, soul, and mind. Hereafter, one abides in truth. It has not become one's possession, but rather, is one's very life.

The Holistic Search

In addition to the intellectual struggle and problem solving, Augustine's search for truth involves the engagement of his desires, emotions, body, vices, and virtues. Certainly, the intellect is crucial, as more than once Augustine laments that his failure to grasp a particular became an obstacle to faith. Nevertheless, when he ponders whether God is to be sought through memory or desire (10.20.29), desire prevails because desiring happiness drives one towards God who is truth itself. All people seek joy, he says, and would prefer to found their joy on truth:

> Now the happy life is joy in the truth; and that means joy in you, who are the Truth, O God who shed the light of salvation on my face, my God. Everyone wants this happy life, this life which alone deserves to be called happy; all want it, all want joy in the truth. (10.23.33)

Augustine's search for truth involves not only desire, but the entirety of his humanity; health, life, peace-of-mind, and virtue ensue from embracing the Truth whereas falsehood brings with it disease and death, psychologically, physically, and morally speaking. A painful aching longing for wisdom fills Augustine until, at the end of Book 8, he finds 'no sooner had I reached the end of the verse than the light of certainty flooded my heart and all dark shades of doubt

fled.' (8.12.29). Likewise, his affect transitions from being wracked with doubt and anxiety to joyfully discussing truth (with his friends) and serenely contemplating truth (as with Monica). Even the intellect can suffer from corruption as the body does, when one is beset by falsehood. 'so too, if the rational mind itself is vicious, errors and wrong-headed opinions can corrupt our life,' (4.15.25). These repercussions extend to his physical life too. It is not a mere coincidence that he was beset with illness at the end of his time as a rhetorician and healed following his full conversion. In his own words:

> But I,' says the Word of God, 'shall I depart to any place?' Fix your dwelling there, my soul, lay up there for safe-keeping whatever you have thence received, if only because you are weary of deceits. Entrust to Truth whatever of truth is in you, and you will lose nothing; your rotten flesh will flower anew, all your diseases will be healed, all your labile elements will be restored and bound fast to you … binding you to the ever-stable, abiding God. (4.11.16)

Seeking truth well demands certain virtues and, by the same token, particular vices obstruct one's search. A passionate interest and a sound intellect on their own are insufficient. Vain curiosity and pride are detrimental vices when one wishes to find truth. If one searches for knowledge without worth, simply to satisfy curiosity or securing needless proofs, this becomes wasteful and even sinful (10.35.54). For this reason, humility is indispensable. Furthermore, Augustine observes to God 'Only to those whose hearts are crushed do you draw close. You will not let yourself be found by the proud, nor even by those who in their inquisitive skill … trace the paths of planets,' (5.3.3). Charity is also indispensable for seeking Truth; Augustine presents this as the crucial teaching of Christ (7.10.26), who is the Truth incarnate, 'Truth in person' (7.19.25). As a whole human being who seeks after truth, the search and Augustine's relationship with the Truth at any given point is borne in his desire, emotions, body, vices and virtues.

With this in mind, I develop conceptual parameter (c) *the human pursuit of truth* to reinforce its stance that seeking truth is not merely an intellectual affair. In addition to the hard-minded element, pursuing and finding truth yields health, life, and peace of mind. The search incorporates all of one's being: intellect, emotions, psyche, virtues, and life itself.

Augustine's vision in Milan followed after his reading of certain platonic books and took place before his famous conversion in the garden. It furnishes rich material regarding his understanding and experience of God as truth, covering the coincidence of divine truth with love and eternal being, the nature of its existence, and its distinction from creaturely truths.

From its beginning, Augustine describes his holy vision as encountering the transcendent God who is Truth, Love, and Eternal. He describes turning inward first and that, with divine help, he saw an 'incommutable light far above my spiritual ken, transcending my mind', one not to be mistaken for normal light, for it was the 'very light [that] made me, and I was below it because by it I was made. Anyone who knows truth knows it, and whoever knows it knows eternity. Love knows it.' (7.10.16). Augustine recognises and names this light calling it 'O eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night,' (7.10.16).[145] In his visionary prayer truth, love, and eternity are not isolated attributes; they inextricably qualify each other, such that truth is eternal, love is true, eternity is beloved. One cannot be understood apart from the others.

At this point, Augustine finds the vision overpowering ('I trembled with love and dread' (7.10.16)). Before turning away he asks God his most pressing question and receives an answer:

> I said, 'Is truth then a nothing, simply because it is not spread out through space either finite or infinite?' Then from afar you cried to me, 'By no means, for *I am who I am*.' I heard it as one hears a word in the heart, and no possibility of doubt remained in me; I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made. (7.10.16)

When Augustine encounters the divine, his urgent question is whether eternal truth exists, since he realises that it cannot have a bodily form but cannot imagine non-bodily existence. God's reply brings truth and divine existence into a correspondence of identity; they are one and the

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[145] Note, at the beginning of his account of the Milan vision, Augustine names God as Love, Truth, and Eternal, which closely resembles the Old Testament language for God examined in Chapter III (Yahweh, ḥesed and ʾĕmet).

same. Through his ardent longing for God and Truth, Augustine has come to see that in the divine truth *is* God's being.

Later, Augustine clarifies what this encounter taught him. He recounts advancing beyond a material understanding of God which he learned from the Manichees, that a divine substance pervades the cosmos (7.14.20). He becomes certain that God exists in that God 'is infinite but not spread out through space either finite or infinite, and that [God] exist[s] in the fullest sense because [God] have always been the same [cf. Psalm 101:28(102:27); Hebrews 1:12], unvarying in every respect and in no wise subject to change.' (7.20.26). The greatness of God's existence is not being the biggest or most extensive or most pervasive of all things (even infinitely so), but rather, God's being is God's constancy, eternality, and invariability.

Finally overpowered by the vision, Augustine turns his attention to created existence, and remarks on its distinction from God's existence: 'they do not in the fullest sense exist, nor yet are they completely non-beings: they are real because they are from you, but unreal inasmuch as they are not what you are. For that alone truly is, which abides unchangingly' (7.11.17). Creaturely existence derives from God's existence but is not fully like God's, who alone is marked by constancy without diminishment or alteration. Such creaturely existence, though lesser than divine existence, is a non-neutral phenomenon; it is *good* and such goodness decreases as a created thing is destroyed. Augustine puts it succinctly: 'Hence if [created things] are deprived of all good, they will be simply non-existent; and so it follows that as long as they do exist, they are good.' (7.12.18). Upon this groundwork of creaturely existence and goodness, Augustine builds an account of creaturely truth:

> I turned my gaze to other things and saw that they owe their being to you and that all of them are by you defined, but in a particular sense: not as though contained in a place, but because you hold all things in your Truth as though in your hand; and all of them are true insofar as they exist, and nothing whatever is a deceit unless it is thought to be what it is not. (7.15.21)

All things are sustained by God's Truth and are themselves true insofar as they exist. Thus, just as creaturely existence is less than Godly existence, so too is creaturely truth limited by comparison. In sum, the existence, goodness, and truth of creatures are all derivative of and

dependent upon God's existence, goodness, and truth, and furthermore. These characteristics naturally coincide with each other, and (unlike God) they can be variable or destroyed in creatures (e.g. perishing, evil, and deception).

As the vision ends, note that Augustine does not describe it as a direct unmediated vision of God, but rather: 'Then indeed did I perceive your invisible reality through created things, but to keep my gaze there was beyond my strength.' (7.17.23) Even though God is in some sense 'seen' (metaphorical sense of light, as he makes clear at the beginning of the vision), the divine is decidedly beyond Augustine's comprehension, or even sustained contemplation. The encounter in all its fullness does not last, but the memory of it and the understanding he gained remains.

Augustine's Milanese vision can augment parameter (a) regarding *understanding God as truth*. It adopts Augustine's conviction that the reality of God and of Truth are one and the same. The greatness of God's existence is not in being the biggest or most extensive or most pervasive of all things (even infinitely so), but rather, God's being is Truth: constancy, eternality, and invariability. Furthermore, the love, truth, and eternal are not independent divine attributes; they inextricably qualify each other. This can be used to specify the significance of saying God alone *is* Truth, in distinction from creaturely truths. All things derive their existence from God, but their existence differs in that it can be diminished, altered, and is limited by time and space. Likewise, creaturely existence is true but its truth is limited compared to God's. Thus, for our parameter, I would say that the Truth which *is* God is non-identical with the (shall we say) lower-case-t 'truth' of the created world. Created truths are limited in time and space (being temporal and bodily) while the eternal Truth of God is infinite and the source of all created little-t truths.

The Vision in Ostia

The second vision this study draws on focuses on the afterlife, inquiring into the life, health, happiness, and joy of the saints. Augustine's final and climactic vision in *Confessions* is one which he shares with his mother Monica in Ostia, shortly before her death. According to Augustine's autobiographical narrative, a great deal has changed since his vision in Milan. Since then, he has become convinced that a mediator is necessary, that Christ is the mediator, and after much inner turmoil, turned himself over to God (with God's help) in the famous *Tolle Lege* scene in his Milanese garden (8.8.19-8.12.30). He left his profession, retired to Cassiciacum for a few

months with relatives, friends, and students, returned to Milan for catechesis and baptism under Bishop Ambrose, and finally set out to return to Thagaste with his mother and companions.

Just as in the earlier vision, Augustine begins by naming God 'Truth.' He introduces the Ostian episode with the phrase 'we inquired between ourselves in the light of present truth, the Truth which is yourself, what the eternal life of the saints would be like,' (9.10.23). From there, the vision commences with a sense of worldly bodily enjoyments, to the celestial heavens, reaching up from there to the height of their minds, and reaching beyond towards *'That Which Is'*. At the height, they find the life of heaven is Wisdom, who is the unmade God and made all things

> Life there is the Wisdom through whom all these things are made, and all others that have been or ever will be; but Wisdom herself is not made: she is as she always has been and will be forever. Rather should we say that in her there is no "has been" or "will be," but only being, for she is eternal, but past and future do not belong to eternity. And as we talked and panted for it, we just touched the edge of it by the utmost leap of our hearts; … and returned to the noise of articulate speech, where a word has beginning and end. How different from your Word, our Lord, who abides in himself, and grows not old, but renews all things. (9.10.24)

A rapturous passage follows, where Augustine describes what he might have said if words did not escape him (9.10.25). He wonders what it would be to hear the Word speak without mediation, or touch Wisdom in a vision without the tumult of the world at hand,

> touch that eternal Wisdom who abides above all things;
>> if this could last,
>> and all other visions, so far inferior, be taken away,
>> and this sight alone ravish him who saw it,
>> and engulf him and hide him away, kept for inward joys, (9.10.25)

This is Augustine's glimpse of eternal life.

But what do the joys of eternal life have to do with truth? Everything, as far as Augustine is concerned:

> Now the happy life is joy in the truth; and that means joy in you, who are the Truth O God who shed the light of salvation on my face, my God. Everyone wants this happy life, this life which alone deserves to be called happy; all want it, all want joy in the truth. (10.23.33).

He explains that a happy life is joyful in the truth, because joy in the truth is inherently superior to joy in falsehood (10.23.33). But truth that lasts and cannot be lost is only found in eternal Truth of God. In this way, God is the life of the soul just as the soul is the life of the body: 'You are the life of souls, the life of all lives, the life who are yourself living and unchanging, the life of my own soul' (3.6.10) and again later 'but your God is to you the life of your life itself,' (10.6.10). The reason people fall short of a happy life is they select a lesser truth than God to be the ultimate object of their love (10.23.33).

Recalling the Milanese and Ostian visions together, conceptual parameter (b) *the human apprehension of truth* maybe reinforced. Specifically, the apprehensible but incomprehensible nature of divine truth can site support in Augustine's inability to comprehend the divine reality on both occasions. That visions nonetheless occurred supports that divine Truth may be apprehended, learned, discovered, abided in, held in faith, brought into understanding.

(c) *the human pursuit of truth* may also be strengthened. The Ostian vision again shows the pursuit of truth is of more than intellectual benefit. Joy is incomplete, is insufficient, until it rests in divine truth, making it the object of one's love, a source of delight, and one's animating life. Since joy is greater when it is in what is true/real than what is false, and it is greater when its source cannot be lost, God the eternal Truth above all truths is the only sure source of happiness.

Creation Proclaiming the Divine

Overall, Augustine's view in *Confessions* is that creation proclaims God and refers one to God and the truth and wisdom of God—which is made apparent by the created wisdom and truth

of creation. Conceptual parameter (c) *the human pursuit of truth* may usefully draw on these views.

A common refrain is that everything in creation cries out about the existence of God (to those who have ears to hear it). For instance in Book 10 Augustine declares his love for God, and that everything in the earth and sky tells him—indeed they declare to everyone—that one should love God (10.6.8). Their proclamation is perceptible from their mere existence (which they could not have given to themselves) and from their beauty, which takes its form from God.

> Your creation sings praise to you so that we may love you, and we love you so that praise may be offered to you by your creation. Created things have their beginnings and their end in time, their rising and setting, their growth and decline, their beauty of form and their formlessness; and thus they have their morning and evening, though sometimes this is hidden, sometimes plainly seen. (13.33.48)

Augustine holds that it is manifest from their limited beauty and existence (that they have beginnings and ends) conveys that they could not have made themselves. This directs human attention towards God.

He acknowledges that not all people hear creation proclaiming God in this way. He allows that creation 'speaks to all, but only they understand who test the voice heard outwardly against the truth within. Truth tells me, "Neither earth nor sky nor any bodily thing is your God." Their own nature avers it.' (10.6.10) One must consider creation with one's awareness of divine truth, senses within oneself, to recognise its praise of God.

What Augustine means by the 'truth within' becomes clearer in Book 11. He recounts how the Word 'speaks to us' that believers may 'seek him within themselves and find him in the eternal Truth where he, our sole teacher, instructs apt disciples' (11.8.10).[146] *Confessions* presents divine Truth as instrumental to learning what the created world declares about God. As he puts it, 'when some changeable creature advises us, we are but led to that stable Truth, where we truly learn as we stand still and listen to him, and are filled with joy on hearing the Bridegroom's voice,' (11.8.10). The Bridegroom is the eternal Word, who is God's Son, Power, Wisdom, and

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[146] This passage has much in common with the view he advances in *The Teacher*, which after a long discussion of the nature of language, uses a similar analysis to advance the view that one can never recognise a truth (and thus can never learn) without appealing to one's inner sense of Truth which is actually God and Christ.

Truth, who made heaven and earth (11.9.11). The inner awareness of eternal truth contrasts with the sensory experience of the changeable created world; recognising the contrast indicates the superior glory of the eternal Truth, God, who creates and sustains the cosmos. From these passages, we can see that even though Augustine has consistently indicated that appealing to bodily senses and the created world alone will not give one knowledge of divine Truth or God, he does believe that bodily senses and the created world can provide assistance in the search.

These views are taken to augment (c) *the human pursuit of truth*, adding detail as to how creation may enable one to attend to God. God is involved from the beginning. The existence and beauty of all things is marvellous, and to those who already recognise the eternal truth who is God, it is clear that creaturely things could not have created themselves or given themselves form. Their limitation and dependence always points beyond themselves, and those who recognise that God's unwavering existence is beyond changeable creation can see that God is the beyond which creation points towards. Realising one always implicitly has a sense of eternal truth, in every sensory perception, is crucial. Surely, one cannot come to know God purely through created things, but (done properly) they may assist and direct one towards God.

Conclusion

This section has examined *Confessions* and from its findings further develops the conceptual parameters (a), (b), and (c) gleaned from *On the Free Choice of the Will*. They do not receive greater definition in the following section, which develops two new conceptual parameters ((d) *the Trinitarian God as truth* and (e) *the relationship between wisdom and knowledge*.) For this reason, we will articulate the fully developed form of conceptual parameters (a), (b), and (c) here. Their Augustinian quality should be apparent from the preceding two sections, in that they are clearly drawn from his work, but the constructive theologian is speaking now in her own voice.

(a) *understanding God as truth* holds that God godself is eternal truth, that of which all humans have an awareness when judging matters of mathematics and questions wisdom necessary for a good life. This God, however, is also personal, a Truth one may invoke, pray to, confide in, confess to, and so forth. God's names include 'Truth' as well as 'Love' and 'Eternal', each qualifying the others rather than standing independently. Hence, the reality of God and

eternal Truth are one and the same: the greatness of God's existence is not in being the biggest or most extensive or most pervasive of all things (even infinitely so), but rather, God's being is Truth: constancy, eternality, and invariability. God is the source and sustainer of creaturely existence and truth, hierarchically superior to creation which is temporal and/or bodily and thus liable to diminish and alter. The lower-case-t 'truth' of the created world is inherently limited and therefore utterly unlike divine Truth. A precise articulation, or definition of God as truth, however, is not possible because comprehension of divine Truth is not humanly possible (as we shall see in conceptual parameter (b)).

(b) *the human apprehension of divine truth* stipulates that God as Truth itself is beyond human comprehension. It may be learned, discovered, abided in, held in faith, brought into understanding, but it is never comprehended in this life. Eternal truth is available to all rational minds in all places, and human apprehension of divine truth is limited, fallible, variable, and diverse. It is an implicit contributor to human understanding of sensory perceptions, but distinguishable from sensory experience. The result is an apophatic realist position, such that God is mysterious and incomprehensible while yet being knowable and nameable as 'Truth.' Additionally, the sought-after divine truth never becomes an object, subjected to the searcher, but rather, it is the condition of possibility for one's search. When one seeks for the truth of God, it is already present and closer than one is to oneself.

(c) on *the human pursuit of truth* develops in multiple ways. First, it becomes clear that the search for divine truth never ceases (in that comprehension is never achieved) but there is nonetheless at least one watershed moment, when one recognises divine truth as one's God and accepts God with all one's heart, soul, and mind. (The divine Truth is none other than the God who is incarnate and revealed in Jesus Christ.) This relates to a further emphasis that the pursuit of truth is not limited to the intellect; it involves emotions, volition, patterns of life, virtues etc.. Likewise, its benefits are not merely cognitive but include health, life, peace of mind, and virtue. To explain, one is freed from moral errors as well as inaccuracies, which contributes to living a good life. Furthermore, happiness is incomplete until it delights in eternal truth. One's freedom and happiness are secure because they are founded on eternal truth which never fails. Finally, those who recognise divine truth, having not confused God with creation, they can realise that creation proclaims the beauty, truth, and being of God; creation refers one to the creator.

These three conceptual parameters have reached their final forms before being deployed in Chapter IV's constructive theology of truth, leaving the remainder of Chapter II to develop two more Augustinian parameters.

II.4 '*The Trinity'* and Truth

Valuable conceptual guidelines for this study's theology of truth have been stipulated by parameters (a), (b), and (c) as developed in the previous two sections. Some important questions remain, however, such as 'how does naming God 'Truth' intersect with the doctrine of the Trinity ?' and 'what are the consequences of divine truth for the pursuit of non-divine truths?' Examining *The Trinity*[147] will provide material to form conceptual parameters treating these issues.

To that end, this study first lays out Augustine's semantic principles for articulating divine names in accordance with the Trinity. The impact of these Trinitarian semantics for naming God as Truth will then be made apparent, including its relation to other divine names. From this investigation, material will be formed into parameter (d) *the Trinitarian God as Truth*, stating among other things that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each Truth. The second half of this section examines Augustine's account of how humans successfully pursue wisdom and knowledge. From this material, conceptual parameter (e) is developed to treat *the relationship of knowledge and wisdom*, specifically their distinguishing traits and complementary relationship.

The Semantics of Trinitarian Language

First, let us consider naming God as Truth in relation to the Trinitarian names. This is an important question because this study's methodology aims to produce a distinctly *Christian* theology. As such, it should not only be congruent with the Bible, but also congruent with the Nicene Creed and informed by subsequent Christian tradition. An advantage of using Augustine to inform our theology is that he post-dates the agreement reached over the Nicene Creed (in the First Council of Constantinople, 381) and *The Trinity* defends and illuminates the Creed.[148] By

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[147] In this subsection, references to *The Trinity* appear parenthetically.

[148] Edmund Hill, 'Introduction,' in *The Trinity*, by Augustine of Hippo, trans. Edmund Hill and ed. John E. Rotelle (2nd ed., New York: New City Press 1991), 48-9.

developing conceptual parameters from views of his that are congruent with the Nicene Creed, this study ensures that its constructive theology of truth is congruent with the Creed as well as informed by Augustine. Specifically, this study incorporates his explication of the semantics of Trinitarian names and other names for God, as outlined below.

In *The Trinity,* Augustine spends Books 5-7 parsing out the proper Trinitarian semantics for speaking of and naming God. He begins by observing that when one tries to speak of the Trinitarian God, it is a task at which one will repeatedly fail:

> From now on I will be attempting to say things that cannot altogether be said … when we think about God the trinity we are aware that our thoughts are quite inadequate to their object, and incapable of grasping him as he is; even by men of the calibre of the apostle Paul he can only be seen, as it says, *like a puzzling reflection in a mirror* (1 Cor 13.12). (5.1.1)

That said, despite being unequal to the task one cannot simply sit in silence—ceasing and refusing to speak of the Trinity—because the human creature should always contemplate, praise, and bless God. For this reason, Augustine asks his reader to acknowledge that whatever he writes about the Trinity—'about the unchanging and invisible nature, that supreme and all-sufficient life,'—that these pronouncements and insights 'cannot be measured by the standard of things visible, changeable, mortal and deficient.' (5.2). Recalling conceptual parameters (b), regarding the ultimate ineffability of God, we can take this prolegomena of humility to be another nod to God's incomprehensibility, like that encountered in Augustine's mathematical, Milanese, and Ostian visions. Thus, even as Augustine embarks on providing greater conceptual clarity/delineations for Trinitarian thought than ever before, he does so with the firm view that whatever clarity they contribute, they will remain deficient.

Second to linguistic humility, another key aspect of Augustine's semantics regarding the Trinity is that any description of God in Godself does not attribute a trait to God. Properly speaking, this language refers to God's very substance or being although without delineating it. Here, Augustine does not appear to be stringent about which terms are used for God's being; he prefers that the notion of God's existence is understood correctly to having strict terminology. He

provides multiple Latin and Greek words, presents linguistic analogies, and invokes Exodus 3, all to indicate the sort of divine existence he means to indicate:

> There is at least no doubt that God is substance, or perhaps a better word would be being; at any rate what the Greeks call *ousia*. Just as we get the word "wisdom" from "wise," and "knowledge" from "know," so we have the word "being" from "be." And who can more be than he that said to his servant, *I am who I am,* and *Tell the sons of Israel*, *He who is sent me to you* (Ex 3:14)? (5.2.3)

Augustine does not seek to strictly define God's 'being' but rather evokes a sense of it. He then notes that most substances, things, as we encounter them have 'modifications' [*accidentia*] or accidents—notable aspects which may change as their substance remains through the change, undergoing the change. In contrast to the changeable substances, the constancy and eternality of God means that God does not perish, diminish, or change. As a result, whatever is said about God's being always treats God's substance, God's very self, and not some changeable aspect or trait of God's being. There are no such changeable aspects.

Additionally, when God is said to be 'good', or 'great', or any other term that speaks to God's very substance, these words (good, great, etc.) have a different sense than when used to speak of created things. While temporal and creaturely things are called 'great' in reference to a sense of greatness which is beyond themselves, God is called Great without reference to any greatness other than the greatness of God. In Augustine's own words,

> [God] is great with his great self because his is his own greatness. The same must be said about goodness and eternity and omnipotence and about absolutely all the predications that can be stated of God, because it is all said with reference to himself, and not metaphorically either or in simile but properly—if anything, that is, can be said properly about him by a human tongue. (5.10.11)

From this, it is apparent that in addition to God being free from changeable accidents, the character of God's being or substance is also complete unto itself, without reference to other

greatness, goodness or what have you. Substantive names all speak directly to God's substance without further referential context.[149]

Classically, Aristotle described nine categories of accident that a substance may have, a conceptual schema with which Augustine was familiar. Again, how God may be understood in terms of these categories is not entirely within human comprehension. In a passage thought to touch upon all nine, Augustine says,

> Thus we should understand God, if we can and as far as we can, to be good without quality, great without quantity, creative without need or necessity, presiding without position, holding all things together without possession, wholly everywhere without place, everlasting without time, without any change in himself making changeable things, and undergoing nothing. (5.2)

Hill attributes these descriptions to the nine categories in the following order: 'quality, quantity, relationship (that, I think, is what he is referring to when he says "creative without need or necessity"), position, *habitus* (which I translate as possession, but which usually refers to clothing, for reasons best known to Aristotle), place, time, action, and passion.'[150] All nine categories of creaturely attributes are 'substantive' for God, with one exception: relationship. Our next point justifies the exception.

Our third key contribution of Augustine's Trinitarian semantics is that relational divine names do not speak exclusively of God's substance, unlike names drawn from other categories of classical attributes. Augustine makes the astute observation that, of these categories, they all speak in reference to the being under consideration (e.g. changeable qualities it has or has not), except for the category of *relation*, which speaks in reference to something else (e.g. 'friendships, proximities, subordinations, likenesses, equalities,')(5.6). A being may undergo a change of relationship without altering its very existence. It may also have opposite relationships simultaneously; 'above' and 'below' are opposite characteristics, but something may be

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[149] One might contend that epistemically one must know goodness in worldly things before one can recognise the goodness of God. Augustine would quibble with the 'before.' He holds that worldly goodness is unrecognisable unless one already has some sense of divine goodness (making itself) available to the intellect. Certainly, he holds that the good things of this world can aid one's comprehension of divine goodness, but they are never instrumental in and of themselves—only when understood in light of the Good (the True, etc.).
[150] *Trinity*, fn2 p190.

simultaneously 'above' and 'below' if each is taken as treating different relations (usually to different things). God may be named 'Creator' in relationship to the cosmos God creates. Augustine designates the Trinitarian divine names (e.g. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as *relational* names, naming their relationships to each other, and thereby solves a number of Trinitarian conundrums (e.g. if God is one, how can both the Father and the Son be God without the Father and Son being one and the same?). Because relations may differ without a difference of substance, one may say different things about the relations of God the Father compared to the relations of God the Son without thereby implying that there is any difference between their substances; they remain equally God (5.6). Augustine sums up the essentials in this way,

> The chief point then that we must maintain is that whatever that supreme and divine majesty is called with reference to itself is said substance-wise; whatever it is called with reference to another is said not substance- but relationship-wise; and that such is the force of the expression "of the same substance" in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, that whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up all three to a singular and not to a plural. (5.8.9)

Do note, however, that the relationships of the Trinity are not changeable. The insight regarding relationships being changeable without altering a thing's substance was merely to illustrate that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may be spoken of differently (be non-identical in how they relate to each other), while yet still being of the same substance (5.6).

Trinitarian names are not God's only relational names. Some divine appellations relate God to creation. The same principle applies, in that God's relationship to creation may change without the substance of God changing. Augustine makes this point explicitly, saying

> Thus when [God] is called something with reference to creation, while indeed he begins to be called it in time, we should understand that this does not involve anything happening to God's own substance, but only to the created thing to which the relationship predicated of him refers (5.16.17).

For instance, God is said to be Creator in relationship to creation, but this is not an aspect of God's very being. Likewise, if God is the 'friend' of someone, say a biblical character, Augustine explains,

> It is however said by way of a modification of that with reference to which God begins to be called it. That a just man begins to be called the friend of God means that he changes. But it is unthinkable that God should love someone temporally, as though with a new love that was not in him before, seeing that with him things past do not pass, and things future have already happened. . . . So too when he is said to be angry with the wicked and pleased with the good, they change, not he; just as light is harsh to weak eyes, pleasant to strong; but it is the eyes, not the light, that change. (5.16.17)

In this way, looking forward to the Old Testament in the next chapter, one could say, Yahweh's apparently changing disposition towards Israel, from expressing fearful judgment or loving deliverance, is not a change in Yahweh's character or being, but rather, a change in God's relationship to Israel as a result of Israel's changeableness.

To recap, we have identified three important aspects of Augustine's Trinitarian semantics: first, the humble acknowledgment that our language always falls short of God's glory as we attempt to speak of the divine Trinity. Second, anything that is said of God's very self refers properly to his substance, (even though we can only apprehend and not fully comprehend what that might be), and not to a secondary additional trait, and that these refer only to God and not implicitly to any other. Third, the Trinitarian names are relational names, and since relationship may differ while substance remains the same, so Father, Son, and Spirit may differ relationally while being equal in their being. God may also have relational names which are said in relation to creation, and these names or relations may change as creation changes (whereas the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as unchanging spoken in relation to God Godself).

Having set out this much, Augustine finds that a particular passage of scripture appears to trouble his framework. 1 Cor 1:24 states that *Christ* is *the power of God and the wisdom of God*. This worries Augustine because it could be seen to imply that the Father is only Wisdom or Power (wise and omnipotent) by virtue of the Son he has begotten (7.1.1). Were this the case,

then the Father would not be powerful or wise in his own right, but only in relationship to the Son (7.1.1). Given the convertibility[151] of the non-relational divine names, if the Power and Wisdom of God turned out to be relational names, then all of God's similarly substantive names would be relational. (7.1.1 and 6.2).

Augustine spends all of Book 7 exploring potential attempts to reconcile 1 Cor 1:24 with his Trinitarian semantics. It takes a Creedal phrase to escape the conundrum. The Nicene Creed calls Christ 'God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God' and Augustine uses this precedent to say that Christ may also be Wisdom from Wisdom, Power from Power (6.2). They remain substantive names while standing in relation to each other. The name 'Word', however, is a relational name (a word originates from the one who utters it) leading Augustine to designate it as only applicable to the Son. This example allows Augustine to clarify his thinking:

> Son is not Word in the same way as he is wisdom, because he is not called Word with reference to himself, but only in relationship to him whose Word he is, just as he is Son in relationship to the Father. . . (for Word is to be understood relationship-wise, wisdom being-wise) let us take it as being the same, when it is called Word, as if it were called "born wisdom" and as such it can also be Son and image. (7.2.3).

Thus, all three divine persons are properly called wisdom.

At the beginning of Book 8, Augustine summarises his conclusions from the previous three chapters' inquiry into the semantics of divine names. To be clear, the impact of Augustine's divine name semantics for the Trinity are as follows. Relational names are properly said of the Trinity—meaning each of the persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and anything said of the person itself (rather than relationally) is also said of the other two singly and of them as one (e.g. the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God, and there is only one God). Just as all three are one wisdom, the three are also light and one light (7.6). Furthermore, equality is always maintained among the persons and with the Godhead (the Father and Son are not together greater than the Holy Spirit, nor the Father less great than the Trinity itself), with the caveat that 'person' does not imply a 'diversity of being' but only a placeholder signifying the three 'whats' the

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[151] God's power is God's wisdom, is God's greatness, is God's very being etc. This principle is explicated below.

relational names distinguish (8.1). Having set forth Augustine's Trinitarian semantics, we may now consider how they bear on naming God as 'Truth,' but first a provisional conceptual parameter is devised.

From this discussion, I stipulate conceptual parameter (d) on *the Trinitarian God as truth*, asserting that it adopts Augustine's Trinitarian semantics: the insufficiency of all god-talk, the nature and distinction between relational and substantive divine names, the equality of divine persons and the unity of God. This will not only serve us when it comes to expounding upon Truth as a Trinitarian divine name, it will also ensure that our constructive theology remains congruent with the Nicene Creed.

God as Truth Itself

With Trinitarian semantics in place, this study wishes to examine the divine name 'Truth'. Remarkably, this is also Augustine's next move. Immediately upon completing Books 5-7 treatment of divine names generally, Augustine begins Book 8 by contemplating God as Truth. This subsection draws on multiple passages to show that Truth is a substantive divine name which is convertible with all other substantive divine names.

Augustine implores his reader to beseech God for assistance, to 'open our understanding … so that our minds may be able to perceive the essence or being of truth, without any mass, without any changeableness' (8.1). He bids us

> come and see it if you can—God is truth. … Do not ask what truth is; immediately a fog of bodily images and a cloud of fancies will get in your way and disturb the bright fair weather that burst on you the first instant when I said "truth." Come, hold it in that first moment in which so to speak you caught a flash from the corner of your eye when the word "truth" was spoken, stay there if you can. (8.3).

Because God is truth, and all God's attributes are also God's substance, Augustine naturally observes that 'in the essence or being of truth to be true is the same as to be' (8.2). This almost mystical passage and Augustine's semantics of a Trinitarian God, provide our final conceptual

parameter: Truth is, in its essence, being. Thus we see that for Augustine, it follows from his belief that God exists and is truth, that ultimately Truth and Being are one. But more than this, Augustine warns, is difficult to articulate, for God's being is not to be confused with the creaturely existence to which we are accustomed: 'A flesh-bound habit of thought . . . while it perceives as far as its powers extend true things that have been created, it cannot gaze upon the truth itself which they were created by.' (8.1.2). Yet, this divine truth is beyond our comprehension, if not beyond our acquaintance. Specifically, one may say that God's being is Truth, and that Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each Trinitarian person is truth, as they all share in the same substance.

We have already seen Augustine say that in God, truth and being are one. The coincidence of these two divine names applies not only to them, but to all non-relational names of God. The point is made while pursuing the Trinitarian semantics:

> God however is indeed called in multiple ways great, good, wise, blessed, true, and anything else that seems not to be unworthy of him; but greatness is identical with his wisdom (he is not great in mass but in might), and his goodness is identical with his wisdom and greatness, and his truth is identical with them all; and with them being blessed is not one thing, and being great or wise or true or good, or simply being, another. (6.6.8)

This is a point that recurs throughout *The Trinity*, and one which is founded on God's simplicity, unity, and unchangeability. For instance, when Augustine explains why all three persons are Wisdom but only the Son is Word, he explicitly says that God's simplicity means that wisdom is the same as being (7.2). Likewise, earlier in the text, the point comes out more poetically, where Augustine has each of three central traits describe each other: 'For God's essence, by which he is, has absolutely nothing changeable about its eternity or its truth or its will; there truth is eternal and love is eternal; there love is true and eternity true; there eternity is lovely and truth is lovely too.' (4.1). Here, God's will is correlated to God's love and he weaves God's Truth, Eternal being, and Love together, as we saw in *Confessions*.[152]

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[152] Augustine's triad of Eternal, Love, and Truth for divine names bears a striking resemblance to *yhwh*, *ḥesed*, and *ʾĕmet* in the next chapter.

Note, however, the complete identity of being and truth, and other substantive names in God does not obtain in creation. Augustine can observe that while greatness and truth are the same in God he notes that greatness and truth do not coincide perfectly in creation (8.1.2). He offers gold and man's spirit as examples, by which he means that what makes each of these great is not the same as what makes them true: 'In both cases the reason is that the essence of being of body and of spirit is not the being or essence of truth; but the trinity is, which is the one, only, great God, true, truthful, truth.' (8.2.3).[153]

The most magnificent display of the unification and convertibility of substantive divine names comes in the final book of *The Trinity*. After completing a grand summary of the previous fourteen books, Augustine wonders if it is possible to see the Trinity through understanding as well as faith. In the process, he describes the reducibility of all substantive divine names. To this we now turn.

The first salient point is that God's immortality is the same as God's unchangeableness, for perishing is its own form of change. Augustine expands upon this coincidence, saying, 'therefore one and the same idea is being said, whether you say God is eternal or immortal or incorruptible or unchangeable; and again' he continues 'whether you say he is living or understanding, which is the same as wise, the same thing is being said.' (15.5.7). To drive the point home that all substantive divine names are convertible with each other, he then carefully takes nine things one would say about God, that God is 'Eternal, immortal, incorruptible, unchangeable, living, wise, powerful, just, good, happy, [and] spirit' (15.8) and shows how they may all be reduced to 'wisdom.' To begin, while among these terms, only 'spirit' is substantive and the rest are attributive, because in God all attributes are God's very being, each should be treated substantively. Then, he argues that 'eternal, immortal, incorruptible, unchangeable' may all be conveyed under the heading 'eternal'. Likewise, 'living, wise, powerful, [and] beautiful' are categorised under 'wise'. So too, 'just', 'spirit', 'happy', and 'good' may be subsumed by 'happy.' Finally 'eternal, wise, [and] happy' may be expressed with the single word 'wisdom.' Any substantive name, he adds, could sum up them all. Augustine's aim is show that none of these triads are identical with the Trinity, but for our purposes this underlines the complete

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[153] As O'Daly points out, Augustine adumbrates his view 'The true I consider to be what is' in *Soliloquies*, and makes similar points in numerous other compositions (O'Daly, 186-7).

convertibility of the substantive divine names. Succinctly put, God's 'wisdom is not one thing and his being another, seeing that for him to be is the same as to be wise' (15.6.9).

Our examination of Augustine on the divine name 'Truth' may now inform and complete (d) *the Trinitarian God as truth*. It holds that 'Truth' is a substantive name for God, identical with God's eternal being. Furthermore, in God all substantive names coincide and are reducible to any other substantive name. This coincidence does not hold in created things, though some general association of the substantive names of God with each other does carry through. Involved with this, are the corollary points that God as Truth itself continues to be beyond human comprehension, but not acquaintance.

Knowledge and Wisdom: Their Distinction

The final Augustinian conceptual parameter draws from Augustine's understanding of the relationship between wisdom and knowledge, to which we now turn. In current-day English, 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' are commonly used as if they mean something similar but belong to different registers, comparable to how we use the words 'light' and 'lustre'. One may study light with scientific rigour, but interjecting a mention of lustre would be incongruous, as if one joined a debate about whether light is a particle or a wave, by interjecting a bit of verse, saying, 'the lustre of facility / increases with humility.' 'Light' and 'knowledge,' in this common view, are the more basic terms and ones suitable for technical registers, while 'lustre' and 'wisdom' are secondary derivative terms, at once evocative but imprecise. This contemporary presumption about the centrality of knowledge and the woolly marginality of wisdom, is evident in the centrality of epistemology within philosophy and the relative lack of scholarship on the nature of wisdom.

Augustine, however, would consider this a misapprehension. *The Trinity* treats knowledge and wisdom as two terms within the same register, and uses them to precisely designate two mental phenomena which are distinct and yet intrinsically-related. *Scientia* and *sapientia* signify two complementary forms of knowledge, distinct rational functions maintaining a 'helpful partnership' 'embraced in the one nature of the mind' (12.3.3). Rather than relating like lustre and light, he describes the wisdom-knowledge dynamic as like that of 'understanding and activity, or counsel and execution, or reason and reasonable appetite' (12.3.3). Knowledge

and wisdom differ, however, in what each focuses on: 'wisdom [Augustine says] is concerned with the intelligible cognisance of eternal things and knowledge with the rational cognisance of temporal things' (12.25, cf. 12.2.2, 12.3.3). In this view, knowledge focuses on what is bodily and temporal as perceived through the senses, while wisdom attends to what is eternal. Bodily and temporal things, as already discussed, categorically belong to creation; hence, all divinely created existence falls under the purview of knowledge. The eternal is unchanging and transcends both time and space; this is divine truth, encompassing mathematics, wisdom, and God.

Augustine adopts these two terms from 1 Cor 12:8, which names wisdom and knowledge as two distinct gifts of the Spirit. He does not mean to imply that these two terms always have or ought to have the meaning he ascribes to them. *Scientia* and *sapientia* are not absolute terminology; they are meant to explicate a real distinction he perceives between reason's dealings with what is eternal and its dealings with what is temporal. Augustine also refers to these dealings as 'higher reason' and 'lower reason' respectively, but is firm in pointing out that higher and lower reason are not two different things but two different functions of the same reason (12.4.4).

To clarify Augustine's distinction I will elaborate an example drawn loosely from *On the Free Choice of the Will*. Wisdom is the cognisance of eternal things and knowledge is cognisance of temporal things. For instance, all countable things are potentially a focus of *knowledge*, while *wisdom* concerns number itself. The category 'countable things' covers both material and immaterial created phenomena, including physical objects, historical events, musical rhythm and spiritual beings like angels. One gains awareness of these through the senses. But in addition to its awareness of countable things, the mind also possesses an awareness of *number itself* — of individual numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4 *et cetera*, and, more fundamentally, of *numericality*. If a mind had no awareness of *numericality,* or, as Augustine would say, of 'number' it could not interpret the sound of the syllables 'wun', 'too', 'thrree', as signifying sequential integers*:* rational awareness of number is necessary for anyone to count or quantify anything. Augustine goes further, however, arguing that number itself is mind-independent because while one can comprehend, conceptualise, and apply numbers more or less accurately, one's rational faculty has no ability to alter the nature or properties of number itself. The truths of mathematics are eternal, and persist apart from the mind or any material instantiation of number in countable things. For this reason,

number is unchanging and eternal. Applying these criteria elsewhere — to things of which we have a mental awareness, but whose truths persist unchangingly and independently of our minds — Augustine holds much else to be eternal as number is, such as goodness, truth, power, and beauty, even as we encounter them in temporary bodily instances. Furthermore, he holds that what is eternal is *ipso facto* divine. Thus, to put it simply, knowledge concerns creation, and wisdom attends to God.

Wisdom's engagement with the divine does not render it non-rational or mystically intuitive. Augustine insists that reason is preserved and engaged in wisdom. Both knowledge and wisdom, he maintains, are rational functions of the mind — wisdom being a higher function of reason and knowledge being the lower function of reason (12.1.1-12.4.4). Augustine justifies knowledge and wisdom's joint rationality in that they are not separate faculties; they are the same reason attending to different objects. Furthermore, they are neither separate nor independent of each other, for in the human mind, knowledge is impossible without some measure of wisdom, and wisdom is impossible without some substance of knowledge. Augustine explains,

while [knowledge] is carried on with sensible things and with what the consciousness has imbibed from them through the senses of the body, [it] is nonetheless not without its share in reason, and so is not common to man and beast. But it pertains to the loftier reason [wisdom] to make judgments on these bodily things according to non-bodily and everlasting meanings [in Latin, *rationes*]; and unless these [the everlasting meanings] were above the human mind they would certainly not be unchanging, and unless something of ours were subjoined to them we would not be able to make judgments according to them about bodily things. But we do make judgments on bodily things in virtue of the meaning of dimensions and figures which the mind knows is permanent and unchanging. (12.2.2)

This passage brings into focus the intimate relationship between wisdom and knowledge. As Augustine has just observed, awareness of the 'non-bodily and everlasting meanings' enables our rational faculty to make judgements about bodily temporal things.

He illustrates this with a thought experiment. Calling to mind a beautiful architectural arch, he notes its material proportions and qualities and finds that more than pure sensory awareness is engaged when he enjoys the memory. He explains,

> but with the mind I observe something else, in terms of which I take pleasure in this work of art, in terms of which I would put it right if it displeased me. Thus it is that we make judgements about these things according to that form of truth, and we perceive that by insight of the rational mind. … our shaping the images of bodies in our consciousness or our seeing bodies through the body is one thing; quite another is our grasping by simple intelligence the proportions, the inexpressibly beautiful art of such shapes, existing above the apex of the mind. (9.11)

Remembering and appreciating the arch simultaneously involves sensory knowledge of the arch's bodily existence and wisdom's awareness of its beauty. Thus, through wise awareness of the eternal, one can make knowledgeable judgements about the temporal. There can be no knowledge without at least implicit wisdom. One cannot judge a quantity without a sense of unchanging number and measure. One cannot judge the truth of statements without having a sense of what it would mean for something to be true or false, that is, without having an apprehension of 'truth' itself. One cannot make moral judgments without an awareness that there is 'goodness' in some sense. In this way, Augustine believes that all human knowledge, all awareness of temporal and bodily things, depends upon wisdom's awareness of the eternal.

The reverse, that knowledge is necessary for wisdom, is also true, because as bodily temporal creatures human beings cannot directly encounter the eternal. Augustine believes that attempting to understand the eternal objects of wisdom apart from bodily and temporal form is practically impossible for human beings. In his own words, 'Few have the acuteness of mind to reach these ideas, and when someone does manage as far as possible to attain them he does not abide in them, because his very acuteness of mind gets blunted so to say and beaten back, and there is only a transitory thought about a non-transitory thing' (12.23). As in the case of mathematics, he says, 'The non-bodily and unchanging idea of a square body, for example, may abide for ever the same; but a man's thought does not abide in it in the same way, if that is to say

he could ever attain to it without a spatial image.' (12.23). As embodied mortal beings, humans can only encounter what is eternal through what is temporal.

To summarise, Augustine calls knowledge the rational apprehension of what is bodily and temporal, and he calls wisdom the rational awareness of what is eternal. Knowledge requires wisdom because wisdom's eternal meanings (*rationes*) are necessary for making judgements regarding the created world. *Vice versa*, wisdom requires knowledge because humans cannot conceive of that which is non-bodily apart from bodily terms.

This study draws this material into conceptual parameter (e) *the relationship of knowledge and wisdom* as follows: human wisdom is the rational cognisance of eternal things (which is to say, God), while knowledge is the rational cognisance of bodily and temporal things (which is to say, creation/creatures). Humans cannot advance in their understanding of one without the other, for the world is unintelligible apart from the eternal truth which is God (their maker in whom trace indications of their origin are inalienable; also, remember that God's Truth includes number) and humans in their bodily, temporal, finite, fallen state are not capable of gazing upon divine truth directly, but need the assistance of bodily temporal creation to come to know divine truth more truly.

Knowledge and Wisdom: Their Relationship

Having established the distinction between knowledge and wisdom, their relation to the divine truth will be examined from both a metaphysical and a practical standpoint. Knowledge and wisdom are distinct functions of the rational mind, focusing on creation and the eternal respectively, and as we have seen, one function never takes place in isolation from the other. Metaphysically, the explanation for this is that as God's creation, all bodily and temporal things are related to God such that they can declare God's existence and glory. We already encountered this view in *Confessions*, when Augustine spoke of all creation declaring God's existence and praising God. It reappears in *Trinity* Book 11. Here, worldly triads have once again fallen short of depicting the divine Trinity's dynamic relations, but nevertheless, Augustine finds they are not entirely dissimilar. He comments that the triad in question 'is not altogether unlike God' and takes the opportunity to explicate creation's likeness to its creator:

Is there anything, after all, that does not bear a likeness to God after its own kind and fashion, seeing that God made all things very good for no other reason that the he himself is supremely good? Insofar as anything that is good, to that extent it bears some likeness, even though a very remote one, to the highest good, and if this is a natural likeness it is of course a right and well-ordered likeness; if it is faulty, then of course a faulty and perverted one. Even in their very sins, you see, souls are pursuing nothing but a kind of likeness to God with a proud topsy-turvy and, if I may so put it, a slavish freedom. (11.8)

As this passage indicates, Augustine sees that even in limited (bodily and temporal) things, there is similarity to God. Moreover, some similarity remains even when creatures are fallen, that is, faulty, sinful, and/or perverted.

The similarity of all things to their Creator illuminates why wisdom enables one to see suggestions of God in worldly things. In Book 12, Augustine describes how one 'must get accustomed to discovering the traces of spiritual things in bodies' so that one then 'turns upward from here and starts climbing with reason as his guide in order to reach the unchanging truth itself *through* which these *things were made* (John 1:3)' (12.5.5). This metaphysical explanation further corroborates the epistemic point above (involving the arch) that the human encounter with bodily and temporal things also involves an (at least implicit) wisdom, which is a human awareness of the eternal. Knowledge and wisdom, within the human mind, are collaborative functions of the rational faculty.

Before moving on, one final metaphysical point needs to be made, so one does not confuse human wisdom with divine wisdom. Augustine views human wisdom as intimately and dependently linked to divine wisdom while also being utterly different and always distinct from it. One sees this, first, in that human wisdom is by definition oriented towards divine wisdom: 'man's wisdom, true wisdom of course which is in accordance with God and is in fact the true and principle worship of him' (14.1.1). God's wisdom is the foundation of genuine human wisdom, but so-called human wisdom can turn out to be 'folly' (see 1 Cor 3:19) when it makes reference only to created things of this world and not to God (14.1.1).

In the lengthy passage below, Augustine goes on to say that human wisdom is in a sense also God's, in that it is only genuine wisdom when it derives from love, understanding, and that

is worship of God, but it is not God's in that God's wisdom in no way relies on anything from humanity or creation at all. This complex, potentially confusing, relationship of wisdoms is clarified by the cognitive linguistic category of 'sense facets', where a word has two ontologically distinct senses that are frequently spoken of at once. To illustrate, the word 'book' has two ontologically distinct senses (the physical tome and the immaterial story) which are so intimately related in reality (immaterial stories are recorded in physical tomes) that frequently 'book' is used to convey both senses at the same time—despite their clear ontological difference. In the same way, 'wisdom' sometimes refers at once to both human and divine wisdom despite their complete ontological distinction. In the following passage, Augustine speaks of wisdom this way while also explaining the metaphysical connection between human and divine wisdom that creates the necessary intimacy for them to be referred to at once (as sense-facets):

> Let [the mind] then remember its God to whose image it was made, and understand and love him … For this is called man's wisdom in such a way that it is also God's. Only then is it true wisdom; if it is merely human it is hollow. I do not mean it is God's wisdom in the sense of the wisdom by which he is wise; he is not wise by sharing in himself, as the mind is by sharing in God. But I mean it in the same sense as we call God's justice not only that by which he is himself just but also that which he gives to man when *he justifies the godless* (Rom 4:5). This is the justice the apostle sets before us when he says of some people, *Not knowing the justice of God and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit to the justice of God* (Rom 10:3). In the same way it could be said of some people, 'Not knowing the wisdom of God and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit to the wisdom of God' (14.15).

Augustine uses the example of justice to explain that human wisdom is truly wisdom when it understands and loves God, who is Wisdom in himself apart from any relations.

Returning to the relationship between human wisdom and knowledge, there is a priority between the two; wisdom ought to always take pre-eminence. The superiority of eternal things to the temporal and bodily makes this obvious to Augustine:

If then this is the correct distinction between wisdom and knowledge, that wisdom is concerned with the intellectual cognizance of eternal things and knowledge with the rational cognizance of temporal things, it is not hard to decide which should be preferred and which subordinated to the other. (12.25)

He also, however, draws on scriptural support, taking Job 28:28 as his emblem of this central principle: '*behold piety is wisdom, while to abstain from evil things is knowledge*' (12.22). This priority of wisdom is not an either/or, but an ordering of two necessary components.

Whether humans give wisdom its rightful pre-eminence affects the character and value of knowledge they pursue. For knowledge and wisdom to flourish, rather than become corrupt, wisdom must always have priority. True knowledge is not merely any trivial fact which a person might know—that would include 'a great deal of superfluous frivolity and pernicious curiosity'— but on the contrary, genuine knowledge is 'anything that breeds, feeds, defends, and strengthens the saving faith which leads to true happiness' (14.3). If love of wisdom is secondary to the pursuit of knowledge, than the resulting knowledge becomes detrimental: 'If you neglect to hold dear in charity the wisdom which always remains the same, and hanker after knowledge through experience of changeable, temporal things, this knowledge blows up instead of building up.' [1 Cor 8:1] (12.11.16). Knowledge is good only when love of eternal things overcomes its blowing-up tendencies—virtues are needed to get to heaven, after all (12.21).

Certainly, this is not to disparage temporal knowledge, which Augustine readily admits is necessary to live one's temporal life. But if temporal knowledge is isolated from attention to wisdom it no longer supports a good life. After all, knowledge's proper goal is to reason about bodily things so that they may be ordered 'to the highest good as their end': when it fails to be used for this purpose knowledge can only provide the 'illusory happiness' of temporary goods. (12.12.17). Wisdom must direct knowledge for it to have good effect. In this way, Augustine describes a view of knowledge which necessarily involves moral value—if one tries to understand the things of this world apart from the good which is their end, sustains them, and created them, then it is not genuine knowledge, but something pernicious.

The priority of wisdom over knowledge brings this examination of *The Trinity* back to our interest in divine truth. Setting one's sights on divine Truth (Wisdom) allows one to better pursue the creaturely little-t truths (knowledge) of the cosmos. It is of instrumental value to

orient one's search for wisdom, truth, and knowledge towards the Truth which one cannot comprehend, or else one cannot even properly know the truths one can comprehend. Augustine ties these themes together as follows,

> It is clear that when we live according to God our mind should be intent on his invisible things and thus progressively be formed from his eternity, truth, and charity, and yet that some of our rational attention, that is to say some of the same mind, has to be directed to the utilization of changeable and bodily things without which this life cannot be lived; this however not in order to be *conformed to this world* (Rom 12:2) by setting up such goods as the final goal and twisting our appetite for happiness onto them, but in order to do whatever we do in the reasonable use of temporal things with an eye to the acquisition of eternal things, passing by the former on the way, setting our hearts on the latter to the end. (12.21)

In this way, humans are meant to know this world while continually also looking beyond this world, it in order to understand this world better and attain what is beyond it. Human wisdom, as we have seen, concerns that which is eternal, what simply is and does not pass in and out of existence with a past present and future, and which likewise is not bodily or limited in space, but rather always present in an unlocalised way (12.23). For God to be Love and Truth means one can never find a fullness or definition of either in this creaturely world; one must always look beyond earthly things. No earthly thing is the standard for what is love, truth, or being.

In practice, the result is a constant mix of activity and contemplation. Augustine explains, 'action by which we make use of temporal things differs from contemplation of eternal things, and this is ascribed to wisdom, the former to knowledge' (12.22). His ideal life does not remove oneself from the world, but is to live in it even better, through a combination of action and contemplation: 'So we have been looking for a kind of rational couple of contemplation and action in the mind of everyman, with functions distributed into several channels and yet the mind's unity preserved in each' (12.19). In this way, the distinction between wisdom and knowledge can be seen to have robust metaphysical underpinnings as well as practical implications for the human pursuit of knowledge and life more generally.

In conclusion, conceptual parameter (e) *the relationship of knowledge and wisdom* takes on the following additional points: it is the likeness of creation to Creator that enables the mutually informing relationship between human wisdom and knowledge. Furthermore, human wisdom is so intimately inseparable with divine wisdom that they are often spoken of at once, though upon reflection they are entirely ontologically distinct and divine wisdom is utterly independent. In order for these two functions of the single rational mental faculty to develop properly, wisdom (that is, the devotion to God, to divine truth) must always be preeminent above knowledge—otherwise both become warped. The incomprehensible God who is Truth and Wisdom ultimately grounds all activity and contemplation that human wisdom and knowledge give rise to.

Conclusion

From this study's scrutiny of *The Trinity*, two final Augustinian conceptual parameters have been developed. In the next chapter, biblical conceptual parameters will be developed, but first, the most recent Augustinian ones in their final form.

(d) *Trinitarian God as truth* stipulates the three principles identified in Augustine's approach to speaking about the Trinity. First, is the humble admission that all attempts to speak of the Holy Trinity are insufficient. Second, divine names which appear to attribute a particular trait to God always describe God's very substance and being rather than a changeable or separable trait. Third, the exception to the substantive name principle are relational names that name God in relationship to Godself or something else. Relational names include both the names of the divine persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the divine names that relate God to creation (e.g. Creator). One great benefit of this conceptual parameter to constructive theology is that abiding by it ensures that the theological proposal will be in keeping with the Nicene Creed. Within this framework, our parameter continues, God is called 'Truth' as a substantive name, in that God is Truth in God's very self. As a substantive name, it is also convertible with all other substantive divine names, such as Love, Goodness, and Being. This means that in God, divine Truth, Goodness, and Being are one and the same, and they are God Godself, even though in creation these traits do not always coincide.

(e) *the relationship of knowledge and wisdom* articulates a distinction between human wisdom and knowledge, where knowledge is rational awareness of temporal and bodily things (i.e. creaturely things and the cosmos) whereas wisdom is rational awareness of eternal things (i.e. divine things, God). Humans cannot advance in either wisdom or knowledge without the other (for the world is unintelligible apart from the eternal truth which is God), a situation explained by the resemblance of creation to its Creator. Creation's dependence and resemblance to its Creator while yet being utterly ontologically distinct is especially apparent in the intimate relation between human wisdom and divine wisdom. When the pursuits of human wisdom and knowledge are properly integrated, wisdom ought to always take priority. Incomprehensible divine Wisdom and Truth which is God must be given pre-eminence or else genuine knowledge (let alone wisdom) will not be found.

II.5 Conclusion

This chapter has succeeded in drawing five conceptual parameters suitable for constructive theology regarding the relationship between truth and divinity from historically-sensitive readings of three compositions by Augustine of Hippo. The first three, which are detailed at the conclusion of II.3 were developed from *On the Free Choice of the Will* and *Confessions*. They concern (a) *understanding God as truth*, (b) *the human apprehension of truth*, and (c) *the human pursuit of divine truth.* The final two Augustinian conceptual parameters were derived from his tome *The Trinity*, and they treat (d) *understanding the Trinitarian God as truth* and (e) *the relationship between wisdom and knowledge*.

In the course of developing these five conceptual parameters, this chapter has also demonstrated the application of its methodology. A responsible interdisciplinary engagement with historical theology has been employed. The judgement of the constructive theologian has been displayed in the articulation of conceptual parameters that are intelligibly related to the historically-sensitive reading of the texts. The goal of being *informed by* rather than *congruent with* Augustine's corpus has been apparent when aspects of his thought have been selectively omitted from the conceptual parameters that are developed. The development of a single conceptual parameter from multiple texts has also been on display. In this way, this chapter contributes to demonstrating the viability of this study's methodology.

It would be possible to elaborate here the connections and implications of these conceptual parameters for a constructive theology of truth, but this study will delay their synthesis and elaboration until Chapter IV for the following reason. To begin the process now before developing the biblical conceptual parameters would impede the integration of the two sets, as it would develop two separate systems that would then need to be related, rather than taking a number of conceptual parameters together on equal standing with each other and then subsequently develop them into a coherent theology of truth.

Additionally, this chapter has shown that the topic of approaching God as truth is a lively one for Augustine. In three of his cardinal works, we have found extensive explicit treatment on God in relationship to eternal truth, recurrent practice of naming God 'Truth', and detailed discussion of its significance and metaphysical particulars. In this way, the contribution of Augustine's work to the Christian understanding of truth has received attention that has not previously been accorded in contemporary debates over the nature of truth. This uncovering of a previously under-utilised resource for theological considerations of truth and divinity is in itself a contribution to the field. Clearly, naming God as truth has thick metaphysical content to Augustine's mind, as well as epistemological consequences. He squares it with Trinitarian orthodoxy in a theoretically sophisticated manner while also displaying its potent use in devotion and mystical encounters with God. It is also decisive in the proof he offers for God's existence, indicating potential apologetic and philosophical significance of this divine name. All this indicates that considering God as truth is a robust vein of thought in Augustine's work, and thus a fruitful area worthy of further more detailed treatment, by historical as well as constructive theologians.

Chapter III: The Old Testament

This thesis intends for its constructive theology of truth to be based upon an ancient Christian practice of naming God as truth. For that reason, we will examine and discern conceptual parameters from the most ancient, central, and authoritative texts in the Christian tradition: those codified as the Bible.[154] Some parts of the Old Testament appear to convey a sense of God as truth. If one adopted the King James Version, prime examples would be Exodus 34.6 when Yahweh self-identifies to Moses as 'abundant in goodness and truth,' (34.6 KJV[155]) and the Psalms' praise and invocation God's truth, e.g. 'thou has redeemed me O LORD God of truth' (Ps 31.5 KJV).[156] From these verses alone, one could attempt to develop conceptual parameters regarding God as truth. But this thesis has no intention of drawing contemporary meanings from deracinated phrases in modern translations, thereby ignoring their linguistic, textual, and historical context. Our goal is to excavate, as much as possible, *ancient* conceptual parameters.

In order to discern conceptual parameters about the nature of truth and divinity in the biblical text, this thesis will draw on biblical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, historical criticism, and do so within a historical canonical approach to scripture. This will produce five conceptual parameters, whose letters and titles are as follows. Parameter (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin* indicates that that 'truth' includes the senses 'faithfulness', 'reliability', and 'firmness/solidity' alongside a thin sense of truth as 'veracity.' Parameter (g) *that all existing things may be truth bearers* states that all things, persons, and actions may bear truth. Parameter (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* articulates that Yahweh's truth is normative, constant, and united with God's active presence, steadfast love, and faithfulness. Parameter (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*, portrays that that the truth one bears may pertain to one's substance and/or in relation to another, and that truth may be transferred from one truth bearer to another. Finally, parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth* presents that divine truth cannot be understood apart from divine law, word, and wisdom. As in the previous chapter,

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[154] NB: Chapter III begins afresh with the Old Testament, bringing no Augustinian lens to its analysis.

[155] Quoting the KJV here shows how deracinated English translations exhibit apparent relevance.

[156] The versification of the Hebrew Bible frequently differs from English translations, e.g. Ps 31.5 KJV/NRSV is 31.6 in the Masoretic text. Due to this chapter's interest in the Hebrew text, throughout Chapter III, when the versification differs, the English chapter and verse is followed by the Hebrew one in parenthesis.

these parameters will be gradually developed over the course of our examination of the Old Testament.

This process of examination will have six stages. Following the presentation of method and interdisciplinary considerations (III.1), this chapter then considers the many senses associated with the Hebrew word ʾĕmet (III.2) and draws its first conceptual parameter (f). From here, the chapter considers what is described as ʾĕmet in the Old Testament, developing parameter (g) from this analysis. Next it elucidates the relationship ʾĕmet has with its cognates and other associated terms (III.4 and III.5), noting the implications for parameters. The final two analytic sections (III.6 and III.7) consider three contexts in which ʾĕmet is used (devotional, legal, and wisdom contexts) and then what are the domains of thought in which the use of ʾĕmet is couched in the Old Testament, focusing on the use of language, God, the word of God, and wisdom. The chapter concludes with III.8 which summarises the six conceptual parameters that are developed through its analysis.

III.1 Method and Interdisciplinary Considerations

Before turning to the Old Testament itself, we need to consider several important methodological principles regarding the role of textual meaning, sense relations, biblical studies, cognitive linguistics, and the development of conceptual parameters from variegated texts. In order to develop conceptual parameters from sense relations and textual meanings, we will have to employ two additional fields of inquiry: biblical studies and cognitive linguistics.[157] This chapter will set forth the rationale for our engagement with each of these disciplines (as per the responsible interdisciplinary method outlined in I.5). In order to discern conceptual parameters about the nature of truth and divinity in the biblical text, this study will draw on biblical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, historical criticism, and do so within a historical canonical approach to scripture, as will shortly be explained.

Textual Meaning and Sense Relations

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[157] This study's main source regarding cognitive linguistics is William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

The first chapter named two sources of conceptual parameters: textual meaning and sense relations (I.5). Whereas the development of Augustinian conceptual parameters only examined the textual meaning of various compositions, both sense relations and textual meanings will be examined in the Old Testament for the following reasons.

Developing conceptual parameters with the Old Testament as their source material is a more complicated task than it was when Augustine's compositions served as source material. Augustine explicitly treated the topic of God as truth at length on multiple occasions, and often in a highly nuanced theoretical manner. With the assistance of historical theologians and other scholars, it was straightforward for a constructive theologian to interpret the *textual meaning* of relevant passages. On the other hand, while the Old Testament includes passages that relate an intimate connection between God and truth, the topic of *God as truth* does not receive the same explicit, sustained, and academically amenable attention as Augustine's compositions provide. Fortunately, explicit examinations and lengthy treatments are not the only forms of alethiology. As was explored in I.1, alethiology is implicitly embedded in all discussions of the nature of knowledge (epistemology), which in turn is implicitly embedded in all pursuits of truth (scholarship). Similarly, the biblical canon contains implicit understandings of truth. For instance, by seeing what things are described as 'true' we can determine what are truth-bearers (to borrow an analytic term) in the biblical text. This is essentially a sense-relation. The relationships among different senses of different words are essentially conceptual boundaries, which is a form of conceptual parameter. Sense relations can be inductively gathered from linguistically sensitive examination of texts. Textual meaning is taken from the interpretation of passages themselves. Clearly, sense relations and textual meaning are distinguishable but not separable: each helps to constitute the other. As a result, considering both textual meaning and sense relations together will yield a more thorough account of truth and divinity in the Old Testament than if we only attended to textual meanings.

A second challenge adds to the usefulness of attending to sense relations in the Old Testament. This further challenge arises because *ʾĕmet*, the ancient Hebrew word which is most acceptably translated as 'truth', is also frequently translated as 'faithfulness.' Because English translations vary in their judgment as to how *ʾĕmet* ought to be translated, it is not immediately apparent which Old Testament passages are relevant to this study (since they treat 'truth') and which ones are of less or negligible importance (since they treat 'faithfulness' instead of 'truth').

The impact of this translation conundrum is that the various senses of ʾĕmet must be investigated in order to determine the relevant biblical passages for this study. Furthermore, determining the various senses of ʾĕmet and how they relate to each other will also indicate conceptual distinctions in how truth is understood and spoken about in the Old Testament, which will itself provide material for conceptual parameters. For this additional reason, both textual meaning and sense relations will be considered.

Biblical Studies

Interdisciplinary engagement with biblical studies for the purposes of developing conceptual parameters from biblical texts requires sufficient awareness of the field's basic concepts and controversies and a clear methodology to delineate the boundaries between it and constructive theology (see I.5). To this we now turn.

Biblical studies includes, among many other things, biblical linguistics, hermeneutics, and the historical-critical method, all three of which bear upon our development of biblical conceptual parameters. From the nineteenth into the mid-twentieth century, establishing a biblical concept was considered straightforward: a biblical linguist identified the relevant word, determined its etymology, and thereby revealed the core concept. The terminal shortcomings of this approach were persuasively demonstrated by James Barr in his highly influential book *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.[158] His central contention is that *sentences*—not words or lexemes—are the primary bearers of theological meaning.[159] Significantly for our purposes, Barr excoriates Herbert's explication of ʾĕmet (often translated 'truth') and T. F. Torrance's accounts of *dābār* ('word' or 'thing') and *alētheia* ('truth'). Barr criticises them and others for (a) conflating diachronic semantic development with synchronic semantic meaning (i.e., confusing the origins of a word with its current significance); (b) presuming that words and concepts exist in a one-to-one correlation, such that each word conveys a single concept and each concept is conveyed by a single word (leading to a confusion of linguistics with theology) and (c) over-emphasising supposed contrasts between Greek and Hebrew thought and language. Accepting

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[158] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1961).
[159] If one were to use Saussure's distinction, this would be to say that instances of *parole*, not the particularities of *lange*, bear theological meaning.

and building on these critiques, scholars such as Silva,[160] and Cotterell and Turner[161] have accordingly rehabilitated biblical linguistics. Instead of explicating biblical concepts purely through linguistic study, they work to clarify the relationship between concepts, words, and sentence-utterances.

If *interpreted sentences*, not individual words, are the primary conveyors of theological meaning, then hermeneutical questions, regarding how to interpret texts, become inescapable. Consequently, over the course of the twentieth century's final decades, interest in biblical linguistics waned while biblical hermeneutics waxed, a shift which built on scholarship originating with Schleiermacher and coincided with the hermeneutical turn in certain philosophical and literary circles. Today, biblical hermeneutics proliferate, including Hans Frei's narrative hermeneutics, John Barton's re-development of historical criticism, Brevard Child's canonical criticism, or Anthony Thiselton and Andrew Louth's invocations of philosophical hermeneutics within theological discourse[162]—not to mention, of course, the huge strides in feminist, queer, post-colonial, and reader-response hermeneutics.[163]

Which immediately raises the question, how does this thesis intend to determine the textual meaning of biblical passages? The choice of hermeneutics is determined by the nature of our question: Can the ancient Christian approach to God as truth be given a contemporary articulation? In order for *ancient* conceptualisations to inform a contemporary truth-theory, the biblical text's historical context must remain in view. This is in keeping with the values of biblical linguistics and cognitive linguistics, both of which hold that it is imperative to consider, as far as possible, authorial intent, her/his context, the broader textual context, and the situation of the anticipated reader when interpreting pericopes.[164] This aspect of our question rules out interpretations based on reader-response theory and other hermeneutics which consider the 'meaning' of a text apart from its historical context. As John Barton acknowledges, historical criticism has come under a cloud of late;[165] nevertheless, its distinguishing trait among

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[160] Moisés Silva, *God, Language and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1990); Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).
[161] Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK 1989).
[162] Jens Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2015) 96-7.
[163] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) provides an insightful overview.
[164] Croft, 98; Cotterell, 68.
[165] John Barton, 'Historical-critical approaches,' in J. Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 9.

hermeneutics—interpreting texts within their original context as far as possible—is indispensable for our aim.

There is additionally a *canonical* element to our investigation, because we are not reconstructing an ancient concept *per se*—for which many non-biblical texts, archaeological considerations, and so forth would of course be relevant—but rather discerning *biblical* conceptual parameters. We seek to discern what conceptual parameters are possible when the Old Testament texts are considered together, as a whole. For ecumenical reasons, we consider the 'canon' to be those texts on which Protestant, Roman, and Eastern churches agree. In effect, this is the Protestant canon, as it is the most restricted. Deutero-canonical books will not make unique contributions to our conceptual parameters, though we occasionally note when they augment or support points made regarding the canonical texts. Deutero-canonical and non-biblical texts (e.g. Philo) do of course inform historical criticism's interpretations of particular canonical passages, which accord with our commitment to understanding these passages in their historical context. Extra-canonical texts, however, do not directly inform the *biblical* conceptual parameters, i.e., they are omitted from the set of interpreted biblical texts from which we derive conceptual parameters. Thus, questions of external influence or conceptual origin are immaterial. This distinguishes our inquiry from much biblical scholarship on ʾĕmet and *alētheia*, which delineates 'Greek' and 'Hebrew' views of truth and then surmises their influence upon various biblical texts. For us, if canonical utterances evince particular conceptual parameters, that is all that matters.

For these reasons, deploying *historical criticism* within a *canonical* approach is uniquely well suited to further our inquiry. By a canonical view, we do not mean to imply that we are adopting the principles of Childs' canonical criticism. Rather, by 'canonical' this study means it will only consider passages from texts codified in the Protestant Bible, and it will interpret their textual meaning with the aid of historical criticism. Taking a canonical view of which texts to consider is most appropriate given our aim of being congruent with the Bible specifically. Consulting historical criticism when we determine textual meaning is the most hermeneutical approach because of our aim to develop conceptual parameters from an ancient approach to truth.

Cognitive Linguistics

To develop conceptual parameters from the biblical texts, this study will inquire into sense relations implied by biblical texts, drawing inferences about conceptual boundaries and distinctions. Of all linguistic disciplines that could aid in this endeavour, this study employs cognitive linguistics because it is the most applicable to our study's aims. Since cognitive linguistics presumes that language, as a mental faculty, is fundamentally conceptual and not innately distinct from other faculties (contra the Chomskian school of linguistics, i.e. generative grammar), it has increasingly refined its description of the relationship between a word and its senses and those of other words, which is to say, of concepts and their relation to words. This proves useful for determining conceptual parameters of a given set of texts, such as the Bible. Cognitive semantics was developed in opposition to 'truth-conditional semantics', proposing an alternative understanding of grammar as 'conceptualisation.' As a result, it usefully does not require that natural language be altered before it can be analysed. Of special importance to our study is that cognitive linguistics does not presume a particular theory of truth (as formal semantics does); if it did, that could undesirably prejudice our inquiry. Its rejection of truth-conditional semantics does not entail rejecting correspondence theories of truth. An utterance whose meaning is understood in terms of cognitive linguistics could nonetheless have the veracity of its meaning evaluated according to a correspondence theory of truth. By implementing its insights, we do not adopt its philosophical presuppositions regarding the nature of language, but rather, mean to make use of its insight into the relationship between words and concepts in natural language. Finally, cognitive linguistics agrees with key tenets of historical criticism, e.g. the relevance of textual context, historical/cultural context, authorial intent, the interpreter's frame, and working with the original language rather than exclusively translations. For these reasons, we will make use of cognitive linguistics to supplement the insights already gleaned from biblical linguistics post-Barr.

Because there is no universal agreement on linguistic terminology, this sections also explains the significance of several key terms for cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics aims to describe the relationship between concepts and words as they are used in natural language, concurrently refining descriptions of the relationship in natural language between a word, its senses, and the senses of other words. This means that certain terms such as 'denotation' and

'reference' which connect language use and meaning to the extra-linguistic world do not play a significant role (which is well suited to our study because it is examining the meaning of a text to determine conceptual parameters, not to determine the text's referents or their accuracy). We will most closely attend to meaning, sense, and purport—as understood below—and also engage some of cognitive linguistics' more refined distinctions between sense relations, such as full sense-boundaries, facets, micro-senses, and types of opposites.

Important work has been done to define and when necessary distinguish words, lexemes, word forms, types, and tokens. The level of specificity needed for this study is not so great as to need all these. We will use 'word' interchangeably with 'lexeme' to indicate a linguistic symbol or sign, (e.g. 'run') including its various morphemes (e.g. 'runs,' 'to run,' 'running,' 'ran,' etc.). Each and every word has a purport. We use 'purport' to signify the entire 'body of conceptual content' that is associated with a word, which is another way of saying that a word's purport is the set of all the senses associated with that word.[166] What we call 'purport' Barr presents as one way to understand the 'meaning' of the word, describing it as the 'total series of relations in which the word is used in the literature.'[167] For instance, the purport of 'bank' includes the senses of a riverside, a financial institution, the building housing a financial institution, and so forth. Purport is a cloud of primordial potential-meaning associated with a given word before its use in a particular utterance determines which sense(s) are invoked. Croft and Cruse describe purport as an *ingredient* for meaning, like an egg in an omelette or flour in bread.[168] A word's purport is not its most abstract sense but rather encompasses all its senses at once.

Turning to '*sense*,' a dictionary's numbered entries beneath a word intend to designate senses, but they are rarely so codified in practice. When a word is used in a sentence, usually only some of its purport (one sense), is relevant to the sentence's meaning; some senses of purport apply in some contexts, others in others. Sometimes a word can have senses which are mutually exclusive, such as *bank* in the sense 'financial institution' and *bank* in the sense 'the edge of a stream or river.' At other times senses overlap without being identical, as with *love* in the sentences 'I love my husband' and 'I love my dog.' Cognitive linguistics has made impressive strides in distinguishing different types of sense relations, a few of which will be mentioned below, and will be instrumental in discerning sense relations in the biblical text.

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[166] Croft, 100).
[167] Barr, *Semantics*, 218.
[168] Croft, 101.

As our use of the phrase 'textual meaning' has already shown, 'meaning' indicates the overall import of a specific text, passage, or utterance, rather than that of individual words. With this terminology, if I state 'Lloyds is my bank' then the *sense* of 'bank' is of a financial institution, and the *meaning* of the *sentence* is that I conduct my personal financial dealings with the financial institution Lloyds. The *meaning* of the word 'bank' is Lloyds while its *sense* is a financial institution. The word only has meaning within the meaning of the sentence, not as it exists abstractly within a lexicon; there it only has a purport (its collection of senses). Thus, sentences have meanings while words have purports and senses.

With these terms so defined, this study fully acknowledges both Barr and Croft and Cruse's insistence that sentences, not words, are the primary bearers of meaning. As Barr says, 'It is the sentence (and of course the still larger literary complex such as the complete speech or poem) which is the linguistic bearer of the usual theological statement, and not the word (the lexical unit) or the morphological and syntactical connection.'[169] The context in which a sentence is made intelligible can extend to the passage, whole text, the cultural and historical context and beyond to include all of existence, or at least the view of it. Croft and Cruse make this clear, saying 'Above all, many word concepts cannot be understood apart from the intentions of participants or the social and cultural institutions and behavior in which the action, state or thing is situated.'[170] This attention to the impact of context (including historical context) is part of what makes cognitive linguistics amenable to use alongside historical criticism, as this study uses textual meaning and sense relations to develop conceptual parameters.

Finally, cognitive linguistics' distinctions between types of sense relations will aid us as we gather the biblical utterances and their scholarly interpretations, as we attempt to discern what are the conceptual categories that can be gleaned from their meanings. There distinctions include: dividing polysemy into full sense boundaries, facets, microsenses, ways of seeing; hyponymy, taxonymy and meronymy; the profile-domain distinction; metaphor; and sub-categorisations of opposites. Rather than fully delineating all these here, each distinction will only be explained if and when it becomes relevant to the discussion at hand. This vast typologising of sense relations greatly expands the constructive theologian's repertoire from a classic threefold distinction of univocity, analogy, and equivocity.

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[169] Barr, *Semantics*, 263.
[170] Croft, 11.

Method

In order to develop conceptual parameters about the nature of truth and divinity in the biblical text, this study will draw on biblical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and historical criticism, and do so within a canonical approach, in that it only attends to texts within the biblical canon. Conceptual parameters will be developed both from textual meaning and from sense relations. Biblical linguistics and scholarship will be depended upon to substantiate any points made regarding the ancient languages, Hebrew and Greek. Biblical studies (in the school of historical criticism) will furnish interpretations of specific passages' textual meaning. As this study seeks to determine the purport and senses of key terms based upon sentence-level meaning, it will consult biblical scholars' analysis of word-senses and concepts. Where agreement is lacking, the principles from biblical and cognitive linguistics may determine the point. Additionally, historical criticism and descriptive forms of biblical theology will provide the theologian with relevant historical factors and biblical frames of thought. Based upon these findings, the theologian articulates what conceptual parameter s/he discerns from the biblical text, that is to say, what conceptual guidelines and limits have been determined.

In order to focus our search, we will begin with the cardinal terms translated as 'truth' in the Old Testaments: ʾĕmet. Though we shall examine the use of ʾĕmet in the Old Testament our approach will not be a narrow linguistic word-study of the kind Barr anathematises. In his attack on word-studies in the pursuit of theological concepts, Barr specifically alights on God as Truth to exemplify this approach's failings.

> The reason for this attempt is a confusion about the units of thought. To the word 'truth' there may presumably correspond a mental or psychological reality of 'concept' of 'truth'. To the sentence 'God is truth' there also corresponds a mental or psychological reality. But these are different kinds of thing. The 'inner thought-world' of the early Christians would be formed in the main by notions of the 'God is truth' type. But notions like 'God is truth' cannot be lexicographically handled, in the way which words like 'truth' can be listed and handled. They are not linguistic functional units but formulations; they are not interchangeable like

words, and do not fit freely into contexts as words do. It is a presupposition of doing any lexicography at all that words differ in this way from formulations such as 'God is truth' or 'Christ is risen.'[171]

Now, how will these adjacent fields/disciplines and key terms discern conceptual parameters, within the biblical text, without devolving into an outdated word-study? Fundamentally, there are two sources of conceptual parameters: textual meaning and sense relations. Identifying sense relations is more involved than gleaning textual meaning. Sense relations occur within a single word's purport as well as among different words' purports. The purport of a word is the sum of sense associations so far given to it in context. As Croft and Cruse tell us, 'Purport is some function of previous experiences of (construed) occurrences of the word in specific situations. As such, it is continually developing: every experience of the use of a word modified the word's purport to some degree.'[172] Using his own terminology to express the same idea, Barr says that 'meaning' is the 'total series of relations in which the word is used in the literature.'[173] It follows that determining a lexeme's purport in a given discourse is an inductive process—rather than deductively derived from etymological and morphological analysis—such that one gathers the many individual meanings of the word used in context. From these one may infer the conceptual content which is the word's purport, including its sense relations, a task for which the typology of sense relations provided by cognitive linguistics will be especially illuminating. Thus, the meaning of numerous Old Testament utterances must be considered.

Thus, from attention to relevant passages, I develop conceptual parameters based on both the content of individual passages and the sense relations inductively drawn from numerous passages. Textual-meaning and sense relations mutually inform each other, and are not entirely separable, but we shall focus our attention mainly on one, and then the other, dividing our inquiry into stages III.2-6. In this way, we attend to sense relations and textual meaning in the Old Testament, informed by cognitive linguistics and biblical studies, in order to develop our conceptual parameters, their final articulation being a matter of judgment on the part of the constructive theologian. Rather than being objects of a linguistic word study, the appearance of

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[171] Barr, *Semantics*, 245-6.
[172] Croft, 101.
[173] Barr, *Semantics*, 218.

the word ʾĕmet directs our attention to relevant passages. This study interprets the meaning of these passages with the support of biblical scholarship. Our inquiry will always turn on the content of entire sentences, as we develop conceptual parameters from sense relations and textual meaning.

The Question of Conflict, Congruence, and Coherence

Additional care has to be taken because this study aims to be *congruent* with the biblical text, not merely *informed* by it as it was with Augustine, as shall shortly be explained. To review, being informed by a source text only requires that some conceptual parameters were drawn from the source text, making it possible to reject, omit, or overlook aspects of the source text which the theologian judges not to include within the conceptual parameters s/he developed. To be congruent with a source text, on the other hand, one's conceptual parameters are not only *informed* but also *limited* by the source text (which is not the same as being *identical* with the source text). As was explained earlier, a scholarly proposal is *congruent* with a source text if it can present a case that it has not contravened the source text. As a result, the conceptual parameters developed from the Old Testament will be limited as well as informed by the biblical text.

Two new challenges emerge once one wishes to be congruent with rather than merely informed by a source text. The first challenge arises when there is a vast swath of material, especially when much of it permits a variety of interpretations. How does the constructive theologian account for being congruent with the whole source text? One effect is that the judgment to omit and contravene elements of one's source material is no longer appropriate. The constructive theologian should endeavour to either account for all of her/his findings with her/his conceptual parameters, or at the very least, not contravene the source material. To turn to our preferred example, if one were developing conceptual parameters that were congruent with the Nicene Creed, one could not omit elements of the source text such that the parameters contravene elements of the Creed. For instance, one could not omit the emphasis on One God, and instead go in a tri-theistic direction through an emphasis on the unique traits of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The result is that there are fewer sets of conceptual parameters which may be developed that are in congruence with the source text, but this does not mean that

there is only one set of possible conceptual parameters. An open-endedness remains. The development of conceptual parameters is still a judgment call on the part of the constructive theologian, and different theologians may articulate their congruent conceptual parameters differently.

There are multiple ways conceptual parameters can be developed without contravening the source text. The addition of the *filioque* may serve as another example, if one were to consider it as a subsequent conceptual parameter added to the Nicene Creed. To say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* does not contravene the Nicene Creed in its earlier form (though, of course, the Orthodox position is that it does contravene the inherited faith and biblical text). Likewise, to insist that the Holy Spirit proceeds *exclusively* from the Father is an amendment to the original creed, which is congruent with it. With this in mind, the conceptual parameters developed in this chapter from the Old Testament are meant to be informed by the biblical text, limited by it, and not to contravene it, while yet allowing that their articulation is the judgment call of this constructive theologian.

The second challenge arises when there are multiple strains of thought in the source material with notable differences between them. How does one allow the differences to stand without forcing it to be one text, as this would have a distorting effect? Here the method of explicitly drawing out conceptual parameters is helpful, because it distinguishes clearly between the different strands of the text and how the theologian means to make sense of them. The constructive theologian literally *makes* sense. S/he *creates* sense where it did not appear before. Or more precisely, creates an account of how texts can make sense together where there was not a harmonising account before. Like any good harmony, the notes remain distinct but a greater pleasing chord is heard.

The Nicene Creed again provides an example. If the Creed is viewed as an example of constructive theology in its own right, then it can be seen to draw conceptual parameters from the New Testament texts. Early Christians were in great disputes over how to make sense of the various accounts of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, some passages taken to contradict each other, the Nicene Creed is a constructive theological articulation of how the ecumenical council determined to make sense out of the new testament and experience of faith/God of the early church. To many early Christians and their detractors (among early Christian disputes) over Christ's divinity and the nature of God, relationship to the Hebrew Bible

etc. resulted from what were seen to be major discrepancies among different holy texts. The Nicene Creed attempts to make sense, to present guidelines for understanding which purport to harmoniously interpret the various disparate texts. But in order to do this, something new needed to be developed. Likewise with the conceptual parameters. In the same way, the constructive theologian does her/his best to make sense of the at times disparate strands in the Old Testament.

III.2 The Thick Truth of *ʾĔmet*

Now that the methodological approach of this chapter has been laid out, the analysis can begin in earnest. It was mentioned above that one of the challenges to examining how truth is understood in the Old Testament is that the Hebrew word most commonly translated as 'truth' is also often translated as 'faithfulness', which is a distinct concept in English. This challenge is addressed in this section. This variability in translation means we must determine whether or not all passages involving *ʾĕmet* are relevant to our inquiry. By applying criteria set forth by Croft and Cruse to data gathered from biblical scholarship the sense relations of *ʾĕmet* will be established. I will evidence that *ʾĕmet*'s sense of 'thin truth' is associated in the biblical text with its sense of 'faithfulness', *ʾĕmet*'s root word *ʾmn*, and *ʾĕmet*'s cognates (other words with the same root). This allows the conclusion that *ʾĕmet*'s root, its cognates, and senses translated as *faithfulness* or similar are all relevant to its thin sense of 'truth'. From this analysis comes the first biblical conceptual parameter: (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin*, meaning the concept of truth includes senses of faithfulness and reliability as well as the 'thin' sense of truth.

The ʾĕmet Conundrum

It is widely agreed among biblical scholars that *ʾĕmet* is the ancient Hebrew word most appropriately translated as 'truth', correlating to the 'thin' sense of truth as I described it in I.2. Truth in a 'thin' sense is a simple and largely unreflective notion, an idea left unencumbered by philosophical analysis. Piper hits upon this sense, when he says 'To most modern people, truth is the agreement between the intended subject matter of a word or sentence, on the one hand, and

the nature of the fact to which the word or sentences refers on the other.'[174] Quell locates this sense most clearly in the legal circumstances, when *ʾĕmet* describes the 'actual truth of a process or cause' (he glosses Deuteronomy 22.20 as 'if the matter rests on authentic facts').[175] Moberly locates this sense of *ʾĕmet* in the histories as well, where it 'is often used of speaking the truth, as when the Queen of Sheba acknowledges that the report she had heard of Solomon's wisdom was indeed true,' (2 Kgs 10.6).'[176] A volume revised and edited by Moisés Silva finds this sense in the prophets too, noting Jeremiah's complaint "Friend deceives friend, / and no one speaks the truth [*ʾĕmet*]. / They have taught their tongues to lie" (Jer 9.5 (9.4)).[177] That in numerous biblical utterances *ʾĕmet* has a sense of 'thin truth' is uncontroversial.

'Truth', however, is not *ʾĕmet*'s only English translation. For instance, Scott commends 'faithfulness' and 'trustworthiness' as viable translations and Piper expands the list to include 'steadiness,' 'unchangeableness,' 'stability,' 'soundness,' 'faithfulness,' 'constancy,' 'truth,' 'loyalty,' or 'justice.'[178] Furthermore, there is no consensus regarding which passages to translate as 'truth', as 'faithfulness', or as another word. The same variable translation occurred in the LXX, which translates *ʾĕmet* as *alētheia* (truth) 80% of the time, but twelve times as *dikaisunē* (righteousness)[179], and several times as *pistis* (faith).[180] The English translations vary (and do not match the LXX's use of *alētheia*). Some passages that the King James Version rendered *ʾĕmet* as 'truth' have been altered in revised versions to read 'faithfulness' or otherwise (e.g. 1 Samuel 12.24 KJV says 'serve him truth' whereas NRSV says 'serve him faithfully').[181] The question arises, how does *ʾĕmet*'s sense of 'thin truth' relate to its other senses translated as faithfulness, trustworthiness, and so forth?

To answer this, we must first acknowledge distinction between a word's *purport,* its *senses*, and its *translation*. How a word may be translated is not a sure indication of how many

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[174] O. A. Piper, 'Truth,' in George Arthur Buttrick et al. eds., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), iv, 713.

[175] Gottfried Quell, 'A. The OT Term אֱמֶת,' in Gerhard Kittel ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), i, 233.

[176] R. W. K. Moberly, 'אמן.' in eds. Willem A. VanGemeren and et al., *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996), i, 428.

[177] Moisés Silva, rev. ed. 'Ἀλήθεια,' in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (2nd edn, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), i, 228.

[178] Ian W. Scott, 'Truth,' in ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield et al., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006) v, 682; Piper, 'Truth,' IDB, 714.

[179] Piper, 'Truth,' IDB, 714.

[180] Silva, 'Ἀλήθεια,' NIDNTTE, 225.

[181] Piper, 'Truth,' IDB, 714.

senses the word has in its original context, because the purport (the total recognised senses of the word) of two words is rarely identical, even when one is regularly translated as the other. Silva provides instructive examples of the difference between a translation and a sense, and the peril of equating them. The Greek word *amartanō* may be translated as both 'sin' and 'do wrong', but are these, he asks, 'two distinct senses of the Greek verb or, as we have suggested, two possible ways of translating a word that should be regarded as having only one sense?'[182]. Even un-mysterious words whose purports coincide so closely as to be considered equivalents may have discrepancies in their purports, as with the Spanish *tomar* and the English 'to drink': *tomar* is used for soup and ice cream, but an English speaker does not normally 'drink' ice cream or soup.[183] The conceptual maps of different languages are rarely identical, and the concepts associated with a word substituted in translation are unlikely to be identical with the associated concepts in the original language. Therefore, when a foreign word has multiple translatable terms, this does not necessarily imply different senses in the original language. For this reason, stipulating which English words may be used to translate a given Hebrew or Greek word is not equivalent to describing the original word's sense divisions, let alone the full shape of its concept(s) as informed by other related words, texts, and domains of understanding.

Thus, before we can consider the theological meaning of biblical passages about truth, we have to overcome the *ʾĕmet* conundrum: are passages where *ʾĕmet* isn't translated as 'truth' or 'true' still related to the sense of thin truth?

Proposed Solutions: All Truth, All Faithfulness, strict polysemy

There have been multiple attempts by biblical scholars to reconcile contemporary conceptual categories with the diversity of *ʾĕmet*'s senses in biblical texts and its incongruity with English terminology. Some see (what I call) 'thin truth' as *ʾĕmet*'s conceptual core, others see dependability and firmness as the conceptual core, and the remainder say *ʾĕmet* is polysemous such that it has two distinct and fully separate senses.

Some insist that (thin) truth is *ʾĕmet*'s fundamental sense and that all other applications are extrapolations or metaphorical uses derived from this sense. For instance, Scott takes the

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[182] Silva, *Biblical Words,* 174.
[183] Ibid., 175.

fundamental concept of *ʾĕmet* to be the correspondence of words to reality, as when used in true speech, and claims that all uses of *ʾĕmet* accord with this sense. When an action or person is called *ʾĕmet*, this is because their deeds correspond to their words; God is *ʾĕmet* because divine action always corresponds to divine command, promise, covenant, and proclamation.[184]

Wildberger, on the other hand, rejects 'truth' as the essential sense of *ʾĕmet*, looking instead to its Hebrew root *ʾmn*, which is widely taken to have the purport of dependability and firmness. He clarifies that this 'does not mean that [Hebrew] does not have a concept of truth, but that its concept of truth is indissolubly joining with the notion of dependability … understood as truth [*ʾĕmet*] means the dependability of a thing or word. In this sense, only that which corresponds to reality or is fully appropriate to it can be dependable.'[185]

If Scott and Wildberger each attempt to subsume all of *ʾĕmet*'s purport under a single dominant sense (respectively, correspondence truth and firm reliability, e.g. thin truth emphasises truth as correspondence; firm dependability emphasises truth as that which is reliable), Silva is representative of those who instead take *ʾĕmet* to be polysemous; it has two distinct and separate senses, and never implies both at the same time.[186] Though he allows that one may theorise a connection between faithfulness and truth (e.g. the God who speaks truthfully is also faithful), they remain two distinct and separate senses of *ʾĕmet*.

These three accounts not only differ in how they divide up the senses of *ʾĕmet*, they also disagree over whether one should consider *ʾĕmet*'s root *ʾmn* to be relevant. It is apparent that two questions must be answered to resolve the *ʾĕmet* conundrum. First, is *ʾĕmet*'s purport related to its etymological root *ʾmn*? Second, does *ʾĕmet* have multiple independent senses—in which case certain ones will be irrelevant to this study—or are its senses related such that all should be considered? The rest of III.2 will be concerned with these questions.

Linguistic Guidelines for Appeals to Etymology

This thesis accepts as authoritative the insight of Barr and others that a word's purport is synchronically rather than diachronically based—that is to say, the meaning a word in a given utterance is determined by its current linguistic and textual context, rather than its etymological

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[184] Scott, 'Truth', NIDB, 682-3.
[185] H. Wildberger, 'אמן ʾmn Firm, Secure,' in ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, TLOT, i, 153-4.
[186] Silva, Ἀλήθεια', NIDNTTE, 226.

origin or morphology. In some instances, however, the (perceived) etymology or morphology of a word is *synchronically* apparent, meaning that those using the word perceive the origin or form of the word to impinge on its meaning. This perception influences their interpretation of the word. Silva terms this 'transparency,' when etymology is readily perceived, whereas a word is 'opaque' when it origin is not synchronically apparent (apparent to those using the word).[187] For example, 'afterlife' 'watchdog' and 'downstroke' are all transparent to most English speakers, while terms like 'undertaker' 'backwater' 'butterfly' 'pineapple' are comparatively opaque.[188] One might say the etymology and morphology of 'cat' and 'dog' are entirely opaque. If one compares the transparency of 'hangover' and 'overhang' or 'blackbird' and 'ladybird,' it is clear that merely having discernible components does not make a word transparent.[189] As Silva rightly states, 'The priority of the synchronic approach demands that we pay regard to etymology only if it can be shown that the biblical writers intended the word to be taken in its etymological sense.'[190] For this reason, while etymology is not unconditionally exiled from all discussion of semantics and interpretation, the synchronic considerations always determine its relevance. Silva reiterates 'the ultimate importance of context' whether it warrants an appeal to etymology in the sense of the passage at hand.[191] The methodological implications are as follows: the root of *ʾĕmet* is only relevant to its purport if transparency can be demonstrated between it and its morphologically related terms. The next subsection argues that *ʾĕmet* is transparent to its etymological root and cognates.

The Transparency of ʾĕmet to its Root ʾmn and its Cognates

It is well known that in Hebrew all words can be categorised according to a three letter root. It is widely accepted that the morphological root of *ʾĕmet* is *ʾmn*. This particular root family includes five words of significant theological OT use: two verbal forms—*ʾmn* in *hiphil* form, that is *heʾĕmîn* and *ʾmn* in *niphal* form, that is *neʾĕmān* —and two substantive/noun forms—*ʾĕmûnâ* and *ʾĕmet*—and the adverbial *ʾāmēn*. Of these, *ʾāmēn* is undoubtedly the most familiar, as it is still used to conclude prayers today. *Ĕmet* is by far the most frequently used in the Old

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[187] Silva, *Biblical Words,* 48.
[188] Cotterell, 130.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Silva, *Biblical Words,* 34.
[191] Ibid., 50.

Testament, appearing over 121 times[192] which is over twice as often as *he'ĕmîn*, the second most frequent.[193] Is there transparency between *'ĕmet* and its *'mn* root, its verbal cognates *he'ĕmîn* and *ne'ĕmān*, its fellow substantive *'ĕmûnâ*, and the adverbial *'āmēn*? That is to say, does the biblical text deploy these words in sentences where their meaning overlaps with each other? The answer appears to be yes.

Close examination of the use in the Old Testament by biblical scholars has shown that these connection are apparent in the textual meaning. When the appearance of *'ĕmet* in Old Testament utterances is compared to its fellow substantive *'ĕmûnâ*, there is evidence of semantic transparency between the terms. They are both treated as antonyms of *šeqer* (deceit). This leads Wildberger to observe that *'ĕmûnâ* 'must involve the realm we designate as "truthfulness, honesty" (e.g. Jer 7.28),[194] which I argue relates *'ĕmûnâ*'s purport to the *'ĕmet*'s thin sense of truth. Likewise, *'ĕmûnâ* and *'ĕmet* are both frequently used in conjunction with *ḥesed* (steadfast love) in passages with similar meanings.[195] Even beyond *ḥesed* and *šeqer*, 'the word field surrounding [*'ĕmet*] coincides quite precisely with that of [*'ĕmûnâ*]' and their purports 'overlap to a great extent.'[196] This implies transparency between the terms, though *not* synonymity, for *'ĕmet* alone is applied to words.

The use of *'āmēn* overlaps with *'ĕmet*'s thin sense truth. The adverbial *'āmēn*, Wildberger tells us, 'intends to indicate that something which has been said stands firm, is "true."'[197] Taking as examples Deuteronomy 27.14-26 and Nehemiah 5.13, Moberly clarifies that 'The basic sense of [*'āmēn*] is "let it be so," "may it come true."'[198] It is a good example of the nature of religious language as self-involving. To say [*'āmēn*] genuinely is an act of self-commitment, for it implies appropriate action on the part of the speaker.'[199] Thus there is transparency between *'ĕmet* and *'āmēn* regarding a 'thin' sense of truth.

Finally, the verbal forms of the *'mn*, the *hiphal* form *he'ĕmîn* and the *niphal* form *ne'ĕmān*, demonstrate some amount of transparency. *He'ĕmîn* has the sense 'to endure' or to be

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[192] Alfred Jepsen, 'אָמַן 'āman; אֱמוּנָה 'Emûnāh; אָמֵן 'Āmēn; אֱמֶת 'Emeth,' in G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) i, 309.

[193] Wildberger, 137.

[194] Wildberger, 148.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid., 153, 149.

[197] Ibid., 146.

[198] Moberly, 428.

[199] Ibid.

'stable and reliable', and this is plausibly conceptually related to some senses of *ʾĕmet* as faithfulness and reliability, though this does not appear to overlap in a thin sense of truth. The second verbal form, however, does show transparency to sense of 'thin truth': Wildberger explains that *neʾĕmān* is often taken in sense of 'duration,' or 'permanence,' ('the notion of firmness' with 'an element of dependability and faithfulness') and more importantly in the sense "to be true, become true, prove true" because 'the concept of the lie occasionally appears in the world field of [*neʾĕmān*].'[200] He argues further that 'these antitheses establish the affinity of [*neʾĕmān*] for the truth concept: one may translate "true" in many passages' (e.g. Gen 42.20).[201] This is evidence that the OT utterances show synchronic awareness of transparency between *neʾĕmān* and the thin truth sense of *ʾĕmet*.

Jepsen provides a succinct summary of the root *ʾmn* and the cognates' most common senses. He describes the *ʾmn* root as possibly having the purport 'faithful' 'secure' or 'enduring.'[202] As for the cognates,

> [*neʾĕmān*] means "to endure," and thus the participle means "enduring, lasting," and when applied to persons "stable, reliable." Then [*heʾĕmîn*] means "To become stable (steadfast)," "to acquire stability," and is used especially of a person or his word: to build steadfastly on someone, or to rely on his word. From "stability" through "reliability," [*ʾĕmet*] acquires the meaning of "truth," while [*ʾĕmûnâ*] conveys more the idea of "conduct that grows out of reliability," i.e., "faithfulness." Finally, [*ʾāmēn*] has gotten its meaning through a specific function [that of assenting and committing oneself to another's statement or declaration].Thus, in spite of the different ways in which the words derived from [*ʾmn*] developed, generally speaking the meaning of the root was retained throughout.[203]

His analysis provides clear conceptual relations between the senses of these five words.

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[200] Wildberger, 138.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Jepsen, 293.
[203] Ibid., 323.

This brief report on biblical scholarship regarding ʾĕmet's cognates demonstrates that even if ʾĕmet's purport had only the thin sense of truth, one can still demonstrate transparency between it and other words that derive from the same ʾmn root. Specifically, antonyms of ʾĕmet's thin sense of 'truth' (such as šeqer) appear in contrast to ʾĕmûnâ and neʾĕmān, even though these words' purport are predominated by the sense 'stability' or 'firmness'. Likewise, the adverbial ʾāmēn indicates one's giving of assent to the truth of words, which entails a thin sense of truth that is reality being in accordance with verbal utterances. For this reason, even if one adopted Scott's position, that ʾĕmet is always a sense of correspondence construed one way or another, the transparency between ʾĕmet and other words derived from its root is demonstrable. It follows that the sense of ʾmn (root) in terms of firmness, stability, and reliability is be included in the purport of ʾĕmet when used in Ancient Hebrew texts, because its writers would sense that the words are semantically related. ʾĕmet's etymological root and morphological cognates are synchronically transparent, and so are relevant to considerations of its sense relations. Thus, a position which takes all senses of ʾĕmet to derive from a concept of correspondence truth does not appear to be borne out by the text's use of ʾĕmet and its cognates.

Disproof of Strict Polysemy (or Full-Sense Boundary)

Having ascertained the legitimate relevance of ʾĕmet's root and cognates to its purport, we turn to the second question of the ʾĕmet-translation conundrum: are truth and faithfulness separate senses of ʾĕmet, as Silva argues, such that they are distinct and do not semantically entail each other? This is a question about sense relations, which is to say, of how differing senses of a word or words relate to each other. Cognitive linguistics provides the tools to evaluate this question.

When it comes to types of sense-relation, polysemy, synonymy, and opposites are well known. To these Wittgenstein added a 'family resemblance' between senses, such as a deep well and a deep soul, where the sense of 'deep' is neither synonymous nor fully polysemous but remains some connection between the senses of 'deep.' Theology classically distinguishes between equivocal, univocal, and analogical uses of words. Cognitive linguistics has advanced the conversation by detailed multiple types of sense relations which are clearly distinct (e.g. sense-facets, micro-senses, ways-of-seeing, hyponymy, and meronymy) but would be indistinctly

gathered beneath the 'family resemblance' or 'analogical' categories of word-use (in that the sense relation is neither univocal nor equivocal). In their terminology, if there is a 'full-sense boundary' between two senses then they have complete autonomy from each other.[204] If there is a full sense boundary between the thin truth and faithfulness senses of ʾĕmet (as Silva argues) then all passages concerning ʾĕmet as faithfulness would be superfluous to our inquiry into truth. When researching *river* banks one need not be concerned with *financial* banks.

When there is a full-sense boundary, Croft and Cruse say, the two senses are entirely autonomous from each other, to the point of being antagonistic. This means that in any given utterance only one sense can contribute to the meaning of the sentence. Full sense boundaries can be identified by the 'antagonism,' that the two senses exhibit; 'the two units are mutually exclusive foci of attention,' which is to say, in a given utterance the word *cannot* convey both senses simultaneously, and on the rare occasions it does, a pun or zeugma occurs—an exception that proves the rule.[205] Thus, if one can show there are instances where both senses are present in the sentence's meaning, this will disprove that the senses are fully autonomous; some sort of 'family resemblance' obtains, be it sense-facets, micro-senses etc. When we consult biblical scholars, we find them recognising biblical utterances where the meaning of ʾĕmet appears to include senses of truth and faithfulness together.

The entry Silva revised maintains that ʾĕmet means 'truth' in *some* contexts and 'faithfulness in *other* contexts' but he also acknowledges that there are times when both are relevant to a passage's meaning.[206] Take the following, where he says,

> Even in a passage like Exod 34.6, where Yahweh renews his covenant with Moses, declaring himself, indeed pledging himself, to be "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" the context may suggest the idea of truth in the sense of both veracity and integrity, since the next verse sets side by side the promise of mercy for thousands and the warning of punishment for the guilty. But there is no question that, as a rule, the combination of these two terms focuses on loyalty and faithfulness.[207]

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[204] Croft, 113.
[205] Ibid., 112.
[206] Silva, Ἀλήθεια', NIDNTTE, 226.
[207] Ibid.

Similarly, he insists that in many passages *ʾĕmet* takes on the sense of both reliability and factual correspondence, say in Deuteronomy 13.14 (13.15) and 17.4, where the injunction is given to check whether or not the report that citizens have been seduced into idolatry is actually true. Whether the report is reliable depends on whether it accords with fact.[208] Likewise, while Quell divides *ʾĕmet* between legal and religious contexts, he says the word has an 'adaptability to the context' and citing Psalm 31.5 (31.6): 'This passage is one of several in the OT which bring out the supreme significance of [*ʾĕmet*] by linking the legal with the ethical meaning or by going beyond both to make it a mark and goal of the divine action.'[209] Often 'reliability' is used as a bridge term by biblical scholars between senses of faithfulness and truth in *ʾĕmet*, since the faithfulness of a person and the thin truth of a person's speech can both be thought of in terms of reliability.

These examples show that there are simply too many cases where biblical scholars find that both senses are active to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, the two senses (if they even are two distinguishable senses) cannot be entirely polysemous. As Croft and Cruse show, the absence of antagonistic autonomy between senses does not imply that the word in question has a single sense. It is possible for a word's purport to embrace two senses who are semi-autonomous in their relations (e.g. 'book' has the senses of both a physical object and of the immaterial story that appears in many places). If the more finely tuned distinctions of polysemy had been available to Silva from cognitive science, he may well have recognised this himself. But for now, it is clear that instances where one would translate *ʾĕmet* as 'faithfulness' are not categorically irrelevant to our investigation into how the Old Testament treats truth and divinity.

Conclusion

In this section, we have found that *ʾĕmet* is the cardinal OT word translated as 'truth' in the sense of 'thin' truth, but at the same time, the range of 'truth' in contemporary English does not mirror that of *ʾĕmet* (judging by scholarly contemporary English translations), nor does *alētheia* (judging by the LXX). Otherwise, translators would not have felt it prudent at times to

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[208] Ibid., 227.
[209] Quell, 236.

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translate *ʾĕmet* as 'faithfulness' and other words. It was also shown that *ʾĕmet*'s etymological root *ʾmn* and its cognates (the morphologically related words *ʾāmēn*, *ʾĕmûnâ*, *neʾĕmān*, and *heʾĕmîn*) are relevant to our semantic analysis of *ʾĕmet* because there is semantic transparency among them. Since biblical texts evidence an ancient awareness of semantic similarity in the *ʾmn* word group—a root which is taken to have a purport of firmness, steadiness, reliability, constancy and so forth—these various senses are also associated with *ʾĕmet*'s thin sense of truth. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that attributing the strictest form of polysemy to *ʾĕmet* is untenable: since there are numerous utterances in which *ʾĕmet* evokes both 'truth' and 'faithfulness/constancy' they cannot be two distinct separate mutually exclusive senses. To this, scholars often add a sense that bridges the two in English: 'reliability', which we saw in evidence in *ʾĕmet*'s etymology.

These findings directly affect our pool of Old Testament passages. Going forward, utterances where *ʾĕmet* has been taken by scholars to have the sense of 'faithfulness', 'reliability' or similar cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to our inquiry into the biblical understanding of 'truth.' This renders all instances of *ʾĕmet* pertinent to our thesis.

Thus, from an English-language point of view, *ʾĕmet* has at least two centres of gravity in its purport: the senses of truth and faithfulness. To this, from *ʾĕmet*'s transparency to its root and cognates, is added the sense of 'reliability' with connotations of firmness/solidity and enduring constancy. Whether in Old Testament usage these are distinct or unified senses (or something in between) we have not yet determined. They must have some degree of family-resemblance.

From these findings, the first Old Testament parameter of this study is developed. (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin* indicates that the sense of 'thin' truth is insufficient to convey the full significance of 'truth' in our constructive theology. Only 'thick truth' which involves other senses as well will suffice. Truth involves not only 'thin' truth but also 'faithfulness' (including the sense of honesty and trustworthiness) and 'reliability', (involving firmness/solidity and enduring constancy).

III. 3 *ʾĔmet* Bearers

Having determined that all instances of *ʾĕmet* are relevant to our inquiry, not merely those translated as 'truth', this study may examine any and all utterances involving *ʾĕmet* to develop

conceptual parameters about truth and divinity. This section investigates *what ʾĕmet* is used to describe. From scores of instances, this study devises three categories which will now be considered: *ʾĕmet* applied to things (encompassing words and objects), persons (encompassing humans and God), and actions (speaking *ʾĕmet*, doing *ʾĕmet*, and doing an action with *ʾĕmet*). These categories are meant to guide our inquiry not prejudge the boundaries of ancient Hebrew conceptual divisions (e.g. it is purely programmatic at this point to distinguish words and objects, for reasons that become apparent in III.7). This section concludes by developing conceptual parameter (g) *that all existing things may be truth bearers* and indicating the first elements of (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth*.

Words and Objects: the ʾĕmet of Things

The Old Testament refers to objects and things in the everyday world as *ʾĕmet* on multiple occasions. For instance, in Genesis 24.48 Abraham's servant tells Laban and Bethuel that God lead him to obtain their daughter by the *ʾĕmet* path. Jeremiah 2.21 criticises the apostasy of Israel as being like an *ʾĕmet* seed which then grew into a wild vine. Proverbs 11.18 promises that the one who sows righteousness will have an *ʾĕmet* reward. One scholar, Quell, considers these instances to be extrapolations of *ʾĕmet*'s legal sense, that 'truth' is determined by a legal process or cause.[210] On this account the proof of a true path is in the walking, and of a true seed in the growing. Piper disputes the legal basis of *ʾĕmet*'s application to things, arguing that *ʾĕmet* most basically 'designates a property of things' when it is a 'reality which is firm and unchanging,' usually when they are 'right, correct, genuine, moving toward their intrinsic goal.'[211] Jepsen agrees with Piper that *ʾĕmet* may properly characterise objects, but emphasises *reliability* rather than *endurance*. Taking the example of Rahab in Judges, he says she asks for an *ʾĕmet* sign, that is, one 'on which she can rely.'[212] Their disparate views do not prevent insightful conclusions.

We can provisionally conclude that biblical conceptual parameters allow *ʾĕmet* to be predicated of material objects and abstract realities. It is debated whether this is a basic or marginal sense of the word, but either way it is among the senses in *ʾĕmet*'s purport. Predicating

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[210] Quell, 233.
[211] Piper, 713-4.
[212] Jepsen, 310.

ʾĕmet may mean that an object is genuinely itself (i.e. normatively as it ought or subjectively as one expects), that it is reliable (or with a more personal construal, it is faithful), or some conceptual combination thereof.

Unsurprisingly, ʾĕmet is also often applied to reports, statements, words etc., such as when the Queen of Sheba declares the report of Solomon's wisdom to be ʾĕmet (e.g. 1 Kgs 10.6). Two questions arise, which cognitive linguistics will help resolve. First, when ʾĕmet indicates thin truth, is it because the words correspond to reality or because they are reliable? These senses are conceptually distinct: Scott favours 'reliability' as the core sense while Silva favours 'whether statements accord with the facts and are therefore correct'; both allow for the other's sense to be present at least as an implication.[213] Jepsen shows how thin truth and reliability implicate each other, observing that 'words are dependable, and therefore trustworthy, if they recount a circumstance accurately, i.e., if they are true.'[214] We shall see that the mutual-implication of 'thin truth' and 'reliability' is why this study takes both senses to be present in ʾĕmet.

The second question emerges over passages such as Proverbs 14.25 and Jeremiah 42.5 which concern witnesses: Does the phrase 'witness of ʾĕmet' designate the (upright) speaker, their (truthful) speech, or (true) circumstances attested to as ʾĕmet? Wildberger laments 'one is frequently unable to decide with certainty whether [ʾĕmet] means "uprightness" in reference to the [subject] or "truth" in reference to the [object].'[215] He explains this uncertainty by noting 'the distinction between (subjective) uprightness and (objective) truth was not so apparent to the Hebrews as to us.'[216]

Cognitive linguistics illuminates these dilemmas (object or subject oriented ʾĕmet; and verbal correspondence or verbal reliability) with the concept of *sense facets*. When two possible senses of a word are conceptually distinct but frequently unified within the sentence's meaning, then they are called *facets*. Just as a physical book's pages and the story they tell are intellectually distinguishable but rarely so in experience, so too are the ʾĕmet of the witnesses and the ʾĕmet of their testimony. In this way, what is a great struggle for the biblical scholar or translator—translating an ambiguous foreign word where English does not allow ambiguity—is

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[213] Scott, 682; Silva, Ἀλήθεια', NIDNTTE, 227.
[214] Jepsen, 152.
[215] Wildberger, 152-3. e.g. Jer 42.5 favours the former while Isa 43.9, Prov 14.25 favour the latter.
[216] Wildberger, 153.

a great boon for the theologian. The irresolvable translation problem provides a conceptual parameter: there is no full sense-boundary between an individual's subjective uprightness and their speech's objective truth. The integrity of an individual and the truth of her/his words are not divisible. By the same token, neither is the thin truth of a statement and its reliability.

To conclude, in the OT concrete and abstract things as well as speech may bear *ʾĕmet*. Some see a sense of 'reliability' as well as 'being genuine' and 'enduring constancy' in the *ʾĕmet* of things. Two senses of *ʾĕmet* speech are reliability and thin truth. At times the text does not clearly distinguish between (a) the uprightness, honesty, or integrity of an individual, (b) the truthfulness/reliability of their testimony, and (c) the circumstances of which they speak. The cognitive linguistic category of sense facets illuminates how these three senses may be conceptually distinct and yet frequently invoked together in speech because they appear together in experience. Though in individual passages the *ʾĕmet* of things and that of speech may not always be identical, by considering the overarching purport they contribute to, we can see a sense of 'reliability' is shared. As a result, this means the Old Testament exhibits no absolute conceptual disjuncture between truth in words and truth in things or persons.

People and God: the ʾĕmet of Persons

When *ʾĕmet* is applied to humans, as we have just seen, it is often elided with their truthful speech. Again, there is often disagreement over whether 'truth', 'trustworthiness' or 'faithfulness' is the best translation. In Genesis 42.16 Joseph doubts his brothers, questioning whether they have *ʾĕmet*. Quell says, 'it is an open question whether we should translate: "Whether the truth is as you say," or: "Whether there is any truth in you," i.e. veracity.'[217] In other passages *ʾĕmet* is a persistent quality of character like honesty, as when in Exodus 18.21, Jethro advises Moses to appoint men of *ʾĕmet* as judges and Nehemiah 7.2 describes his brother Hananiah as *ʾĕmet*. Passages such as Proverbs 3.3 and Zechariah 8.16-17 make the normative demand that Israelites possess *ʾĕmet*. Nevertheless, the *ʾĕmet* of humans is frequently lacking. Hosea 4.1 declares God's judgment because the land's inhabitants have no *ʾĕmet*. People ought to be *ʾĕmet* and sometimes are, though rarely.

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[217] Quell, 234.

The variable translations for ʾĕmet regarding people continue for the divine realm. Unlike humans, God is constantly ʾĕmet. Indeed, Psalm 31.5 (31.6) names him ʾelʾĕmet: God of Truth. The Psalms frequently invoke divine ʾĕmet (37 times), as do Isaiah (12 times), Jeremiah and Proverbs (11 times each).[218] The cardinal Old Testament passage on God's truth is Exodus 34.5-7, where Yahweh (yhwh) declares himself "abounding in love [ḥesed] and faithfulness [ʾĕmet]" (34.6b). As the most extensive passage on God's name, and one spoken by Yahweh (yhwh) himself, Exodus 34.5-7 is 'the very heart of God's self-revelation within Israel.'[219] Once again, Wildberger finds that one cannot make a totalising statement as to whether divine ʾĕmet is '[subject]-oriented "dependability, uprightness, faithfulness,"' or '[object]'oriented "something dependable, truth."'[220] On the one hand, he finds Psalm 25.10 is best translated '"guide me according to your faithfulness"' demurring from those who translate 25.5 as "guide me according to your truth [ʾĕmet], teach me," because it requests instruction.[221] Although subject-oriented 'faithfulness' may seem more appropriate for a personal God, Quell points out 2 Samuel 7.28 appears to defines god using what I have termed a 'thin' sense of truth: 'Thou art the God, namely, thy words be true.'[222] Surmounting the subject-object ambiguity, Quell muses that ʾĕmet in religious language may not be a metaphorical application of its (in his view) essentially legal sense; it could stem from a fundamental experience of God, a 'religious perception.'[223] ʾĔmet then would serve 'rather to express the reality immediately accessible to religious feeling, something which all unsought impresses itself upon man, the attitude corresponding to it.'[224]

Where Wildberger distinguishes 'truth' from 'faithfulness' and Quell divides the subjective spiritual experience from the forensic process for establishing of facts, Spicq happily unites these senses. Viewing God's ʾĕmet and ʾĕmûnâ together, to him they suggest

consistency and solidity and therefore fidelity. Hence Yahweh is called "God of truth" on the basis of his unchangeableness, the solidity and stability of his works, the certain that his promises will be fulfilled: what he says comes to pass. His utterances and actual events coincide. God does not lie and never fails (Ps

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[218] Jepsen, 310.
[219] Moberly, 428.
[220] Wildberger, 155.
[221] Ibid., 155-6.
[222] Quell, 237.
[223] Ibid., 235.
[224] Ibid.

132.11); the principle of his speech is truth (Ps 119.160). All his gifts are characterized by stability, fixity, perseverance, continuity.[225]

Scott further distils this idea, to 'dependability: 'A "person of '[ʾĕmet]" is one whose actions can be trusted, and the "God of [ʾĕmet]" is the one on whom Israel can depend.'[226]

According to these biblical texts, ʾĕmet is always found with God and though ʾĕmet ought to be found with humans, it often is lacking. As for the purport of ʾĕmet, it has been variously interpreted as dependability, uprightness, faithfulness, thin truth, unchangeableness, solidity and stability in action, fulfiller of promises, truth-speaker, or the almost ineffable feeling of God's presence. Human ʾĕmet lacks the stability and sublimity, but when it is present also has connotations of truth/honesty, dependability, and faithfulness.

It is entirely possible that the sense relations among the English words used in translation could obscure the original sense relations as the texts were composed. Biblical scholarship is fractured over whether to unify or divide the various senses that ʾĕmet has applied to God in numerous utterances. Some possibilities, however, can be ruled out: between any sense of 'faithfulness' or 'truth' there cannot be a full sense boundary since even Wildberger's distinction between them (subject vs. object) holds they have 'dependability' in common. Additionally, one cannot unite divine ʾĕmet under a single sense 'dependability' because pericopes like Psalm 25.5 ('guide me into your truth, and teach me') retain a sense of thin truth even when the main sense is taken to be 'faithfulness.' Thus, we find that the God of ʾĕmet encompasses a broad purport, including dependability, 'thin' truth, honesty, faithfulness, and the sublimity and stability of divine presence, senses whose relations are neither completely division nor unification.

Speaking and Action: the ʾĕmet of Deeds

It has been shown that things, words, people and God may be ʾĕmet; this subsection considers ʾĕmet speech and action. Naturally, a person may 'speak ʾĕmet', as is readily apparent in Psalm 15.2 and Zechariah 8.16. Wildberger accurately notes such phrases refer to the 'pronouncement's dependability' more than the speaker's, but personal ʾĕmet is also in view, as

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[225] Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. James D. Ernest, 3 vols. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), i, 68.
[226] Scott, 682.

shown by the elision observed earlier between the *ʾĕmet* of the speaker and the *ʾĕmet* of what is spoken.[227] As with *ʾĕmet* of persons, *ʾĕmet* speech is uncommon but God's speech is always *ʾĕmet*. There is often a ring of surprise in biblical texts when utterances turn out to be true; e.g. Deuteronomy's demand that one determines whether accusations of apostasy or promiscuity are 'really true' presupposes a dubious stance towards testimony.[228] In contrast, God's speech is always *ʾĕmet*. See 2 Sam 7.28 where Yahweh words are 'true' (KJV and NRSV, Jepsen says 'reliable') and Psalm 119 which 'emphasizes the reliability of the divine word (119.43, 119.160), divine instruction (119.142), and divine commandments (119.151).'[229] The Old Testament exhibits scepticism towards *ʾĕmet* in human utterances and confidence in the constancy of *ʾĕmet* in God's speech, words, and commands.

In addition to being spoken, *ʾĕmet* can be done. Examples are so numerous that Scott suggests that *ʾĕmet* is 'primarily a characteristic of actions rather than words.'[230] Bethual does *ʾĕmet* when he grants his daughter to be Isaac's wife (Gen 24.49). Israelite spies enact *ʾĕmet* towards Rahab (Josh 2.14) and God enacts *ʾĕmet* towards his people (Mic 7.20). There are multiple patterns of actions for *ʾĕmet*. In Psalm 146.6 *ʾĕmet* is 'kept' while in Joshua 24.14 serving God with *ʾĕmet* is a pattern of action performed over time, and in Proverbs 29.14, legal judgments are rendered with *ʾĕmet*. Scott finds that *ʾĕmet* actions are usually 'helpful or beneficial' to others (e.g. Ezek 18.9) though not always—as when God does *ʾĕmet* by punishing Israel (e.g. Neh 9.33, cf. Exod 34.6-7). Often obligations are fulfilled (1 Sam 12.24), but again not necessarily, for in Genesis 32.10 'Jacob emphasizes that he is not deserving of God's merciful blessings, God's acts of [*ʾĕmet*].'[231] For this reason, Scott takes 'reliability' as *ʾĕmet*'s central sense when applied to actions (not helpfulness or obligation-fulfilling), stating that *ʾĕmet* properly 'characterises an act on which one can depend,' whether its the action of a trusty friend or a God who punishes the wicked and delivers the righteous, without obligation.[232]

Scott's proposal describes a single sense of *ʾĕmet* for non-verbal action, but Wildberger distinguishes two of *ʾĕmet*'s verbal applications. He separates out *shʾĕmet*—to exercise *ʾĕmet*—from *beʾĕmet,* an adverbial phrase. As for *beʾĕmet,* this phrase functions adverbially, translating

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[227] Wildberger, 152.
[228] Jepsen, 311.
[229] Ibid., 314.
[230] Scott, 682.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

as 'faithfully,' 'uprightly,' and 'with integrity,' such that 'it describes the dependability of the person's behavior (not the certainty of the state of affairs)'.[233] However, there are also instances where *beʾĕmet* has the sense of 'in truth, actual, really' (e.g. Judg 9.15).[234] To my eye, these senses are related; one who acts *beʾĕmet* not only acts faithfully but also actually, really performing the action. Turning to *shʾĕmet*, both God and humans may exercise *ʾĕmet* as seen in Nehemiah 9.33 and 2 Chronicles 31.20.[235] Enacting *ʾĕmet* is sometimes combined with *ḥesed* (steadfast love). Beyond the Psalter, this phrase (*shʾĕmet* and *ḥesed*) is characteristically applied to God's 'just guidance of people' (e.g. 2 Sam 2.6).[236] Here, both patterns of behaviour across years and an isolated task may enact *ʾĕmet* and *ḥesed* together. Notably, honesty is a necessary but not sufficient condition to do *shʾĕmet*. For instance, in Gen 24.49 Laban would have answered honestly—but without *ʾĕmet* and *ḥesed*—if he refused to give his daughter in marriage to be Abraham's kin. Likewise, one scholar observes that 'Calling on the Lord "in truth" (ps. 145.18) is not contrasted with hypocrisy, but rather … refers to a devotion in which the God of the covenant is worshipped—i.e., which is in accordance with what God has done for his people.'[237] Enacting *ʾĕmet* is more than mere honesty.

We may conclude the following when it comes to *ʾĕmet* and actions, which includes speaking words, non-verbal deeds, and patterns of behaviour. First, speaking *ʾĕmet* foremost indicates the *ʾĕmet* of one's speech, but has the *ʾĕmet* of the speaker in view as well. Second, God only speaks *ʾĕmet* but when humans speak *ʾĕmet* it comes as something of a surprise. Relatedly, God acts with *ʾĕmet* towards his people, who are expected to do so in return, though they often fall short. Third, one may do *ʾĕmet*, which often includes but does not entail connotations of being beneficial or fulfilling obligations—these actions are not always obviously positive, as when God acts with *ʾĕmet* by punishing Israel. Scott finds the reliability of *ʾĕmet* actions is consistent. Since one may refrain from doing *ʾĕmet* without being dishonest (as in the case of Laban), this would suggest that being reliably obstructive or recalcitrant would not be *ʾĕmet*. Wildberger maintains more senses, from 'in truth, actual, really' to 'faithfully, uprightly' or *ʾĕmet* as something which may itself be done. Finally, when it comes to acting with *ʾĕmet*, its meaning in context spans both action which is faithfully upright and action which is done 'in

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[233] Wildberger, 152.
[234] Ibid., 153.
[235] Ibid., 152.
[236] Ibid., 155.
[237] Piper, 714.

truth, actually, really'. From this we may conclude that within *ʾĕmet*'s purport there is a sense of reality or being (as truth) which is conjoined to that of moral uprightness, honesty, reliability, and faithfulness. Again, the precise nature of these sense relations are not clear, but we can rule out a hard full-sense boundary between the sense of an action's actuality and the sense of its faithfulness. Complete division between senses is not apparent, nor have we identified a single undeniably unifying theme.

Conclusion

From the Old Testament passages and the scholarly commentaries gathered here, we have inferred a number of things about *ʾĕmet*'s purport and possible sense relations, which were noted within each subsection. We will first summarise what we have found and then will constructively advance conceptual parameters drawn from these findings.

First, the regularity of *ʾĕmet*'s application to things, words, humans, God, speech and action indicates that these uses are not metaphorical applications; they are within the conventional use of the word. For concrete and abstract things, *ʾĕmet*'s purport includes: genuineness, reliability, and enduring constancy. For speech *ʾĕmet* may indicate thin truth, reliability, or both. The senses held in common between the *ʾĕmet* of things and of speech indicates that one need not posit a full division of sense. There also does not appear to be an absolute division between (a) the *ʾĕmet* of a witness, (b) the *ʾĕmet* of their testimony, and (c) the circumstances which are spoken of (an elision obscured by the tendency of English to require a choice between 'uprightness, honesty, or integrity', 'truthfulness/reliability', and 'actuality'). This may be a case of sense-facets, where in usage the senses are not distinguished, while upon reflection they refer to clearly distinguishable things, though (as is usually the case with sense-facets) they are rarely if ever found apart from each other.

As for the *ʾĕmet* of humans and God, there continues to be a debate over whether 'truth', 'trustworthiness,' or 'faithfulness' is the best translation, no doubt because honesty in speech, reliability in action, and devotion in character are conceptually related and usually encountered together. One division which is maintained throughout, however, is that the *ʾĕmet* of God is constant and that of humans is normative but uncommon. The senses which God's *ʾĕmet* is taken to convey is more diverse than for humans, encompassing a broad purport, including

dependability, 'thin' truth (usually associated with God's speech), honesty, faithfulness, and the sublimity and stability of divine presence. These senses can neither be completely divided (e.g. faithfulness vs. thin truth) nor completely unified (e.g. under 'dependability).

Finally, *ʾĕmet* may be considered an aspect of both action and speech. We found that the *ʾĕmet* of a speaker is in view when the *ʾĕmet* of speech is mentioned, and that there is a dichotomy between divine and human *ʾĕmet*, in that divine speech is perpetually *ʾĕmet* while human speech rarely is. As for doing *ʾĕmet*, God acts with *ʾĕmet* towards his people, who ought to respond in kind but often do not. Doing *ʾĕmet* is often beneficial, obligation-fulfilling, and verbally honest, but not universally so. The reliability of *ʾĕmet* action appears to include a sense of devotion and not simply honest consistency. Finally, actions done with *ʾĕmet* may be done 'faithfully,' 'uprightly,' and 'with integrity,' and sometimes it simply indicates that something was really (truly) done. Once again, the sense of *ʾĕmet* actions being really or truly done is conjoined with the sense of their being morally upright, honest, reliable, and faithful.

As for the development of conceptual parameters, it bears noting that the first biblical conceptual parameter (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin* has gained further support in this section. Many sense divisions in English which are independent to the point of mutual exclusion (one must pick between English options: truth, faithfulness, reliability etc.) appear not to be so in Hebrew usage of *ʾĕmet*. Truth is indivisibly thick and includes senses of uprightness, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, the sublimity and stability of divine presence, genuine, real, and actual (as well as 'thin truth', 'faithfulness', 'reliability', and firmness/solidity with enduring constancy).

Next, I develop the conceptual parameter (g) *that all existing things may be truth bearers*, i.e. the category of truth-bearers is all inclusive. Concrete and abstract objects, utterances, humans, God, and both verbal and non-verbal actions may each be said to be truth-bearers. No category of existence, however construed, appears to have been left out. Additionally, there does not appear to be a sharp conceptual division among creaturely truth bearers, as the truth of a person, their speech, and that which they speak of is may be treated, elided, as almost one and the same thing. This lack of complete division does not prevent different truth-bearers from bearing truth in subtly different manners, depending upon context.

While (g) is the main parameter developed in this section, note that (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* is also beginning to develop, now in an embryonic form. Of all that is called *ʾĕmet*, God alone is constantly *ʾĕmet* and Yahweh's superiority in this regard is especially clear in

comparison to humanity, which ought to be but falls short. Indeed, truth appears to be hard to find among created things, words, actions in general.

In this way, analysing what is referred to as ʾĕmet in the Old Testament has lead to the development of more detailed conceptual parameters.

III.4 Cognates of ʾĔmet

In III.2 we established that there is synchronic transparency between ʾĕmet and its cognates— i.e., the interpreted meaning of biblical utterances indicates perceived semantic commonalities among ʾĕmet and its cognates (ʾĕmûnâ, neʾĕmān, heʾĕmîn, and ʾāmēn, all coming from the root ʾmn) at the time of composition. This indicates that passages which contain ʾĕmet's cognates could be relevant to the biblical articulations about truth and God, since concepts extend beyond single words. For that reason, this section considers what biblical texts and biblical scholarship say regarding ʾĕmet's four cognates and its root. After examining ʾmn, ʾĕmûnâ, neʾĕmān, heʾĕmîn, and ʾāmēn, a new conceptual parameter will be developed: (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*.

The Root ʾmn

Even though three biblical scholars, Silva, Piper, and Jepsen, each characterise the root ʾmn with different words, they ultimately drive towards the same purport. Silva characterises ʾmn with the substantive attribute 'firm', elaborating 'that which is solid, firm, valid, durable,' and includes the relational 'notion of reliance.'[238] This relational sense is also noted by Piper, who roughly translates ʾmn as 'to sustain, to support.'[239] Jepsen's language combines the substantive sense ('firm') with the relational ('to sustain') by characterising ʾmn with words that have both interpersonal and ontological connotations: 'to be constant, permanent, faithful.'[240] ʾMn thus evokes a reliable sustaining constancy (or words to that effect), including the quality of firmness and its relation to others as sustaining/reliable. Considering the root's conceptual relation to 'truth', Jepsen hypothesises that ʾĕmet—in the sense of 'thin truth'—developed from the root

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[238] Silva, NIDNTTE, i, 225, 67.
[239] Piper, 713.
[240] Jepsen, 310.

ʾmn because 'truth is that which is constant and unchangeable.'[241] While some dispute Jepsen's speculation, this study can conclude that the transparency of ʾĕmet and its root ʾmn suggests that truth was conceptually related to a quality of existence (lasting, firm, constant) and a quality of relationship (reliable, sustaining, faithful). This provides the theologian with a root notion for truth.

Considering ʾĕmûnâ

ʾĔmûnâ and ʾĕmet are the two substantive nouns which derive from the root ʾmn. As with ʾĕmet, one can detect in ʾĕmûnâ the sense of 'firmness'—from its root ʾmn—informing its basic meaning.[242] ʾĔmûnâ usually characterises a person's 'conduct that grows out of reliability' or 'faithfulness.'[243] Moberly adds that it 'conveys the attractiveness of moral life … [and] "faithfulness" in the sense of integrity, trustworthiness, and dependability.'[244] As we saw in III.3, ʾĕmet and ʾĕmûnâ's purports 'overlap to a great extent.'[245] Indeed, this contributed to our conclusion on ʾĕmet's transparency in III.2.

If ʾĕmet and ʾĕmûnâ have purports with a great deal in common, then what is the nature of their distinction? Despite the similarities, ʾĕmet and ʾĕmûnâ cannot be fully synonymous because ʾĕmûnâ is never applied to speech or objects.[246] This leads Wildberger to criticise those who hold 'truth' to be ʾĕmûnâ's primary sense.[247] Jepsen, for one, argues that,

> [ʾĕmûnâ] is not so much an abstract quality, "reliability," but a way of acting which grows out of inner stability, "conscientiousness." Whereas [ʾĕmet] is always used in relationship to something (or someone) on which (or whom) one can rely, [ʾĕmûnâ] seems more to emphasize one's own inner attitude and the conduct it produces,' 'conscientiousness' being an apt translation.[248]

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[241] Ibid.
[242] Wildberger, 148.
[243] Jepsen, 323.
[244] Moberly, 430.
[245] Wildberger, 149.
[246] Jepsen, 317.
[247] Wildberger, 147.
[248] Jepsen, 317.

This emphasis on internal conscientiousness explains why *ʾĕmûnâ* is not used in reference to speech. As Jepsen explains, *ʾĕmûnâ* 'never refers to speech only, but to the conduct of the whole person, who, determined by [*ʾĕmet*], acts in [*ʾĕmûnâ*].'[249] Wildberger makes a similar point, noting that though *ʾĕmet* sometimes includes an element of assuredness or of reliability (cf. Prov 11.18), it still 'more than any other derivative of *ʾmn*, … has acquired the meaning "truth."'[250]

From the *ʾĕmet*—*ʾĕmûnâ* comparison, we can see that *ʾĕmûnâ* lacks the broad application to words, things, people, and action that *ʾĕmet* has, and instead specially describes a person's character and conduct as 'conscientious' and marked by integrity and trustworthiness. It emphasises the quality of character in itself rather than how it may be relied upon. 'Reliability' is a more central sense for *ʾĕmet*. It would appear that the relational element attributed to *ʾmn* is present in *ʾĕmet*'s sense of reliability (as assured presence), whereas *ʾĕmûnâ* more aptly indicates the personal ethical aspect of *ʾmn*'s steady firmness: fidelity, trustworthiness, honesty, faithfulness, and so forth. This distinction allows the theologian to posit that while *ʾĕmet* may be found in anything, it uniquely gives rise to the quality of *ʾĕmûnâ* in persons.

Considering neʾĕmān

Neʾĕmān is one of the two verbal forms derived from the root *ʾmn*, taking a passive verbal form of the simple aspect of the verb (Niph'al, the seventh Binyan, being the passive form of the Pa'al, the first Binyan, also called Qal). In Piper's opinion, *neʾĕmān* has the clearest semantic relation to the *ʾmn* root, because its purport includes the senses of 'firm, solid, reliable', 'faithful, tested', 'perceptible', 'true', and 'lasting.'[251] Wildberger agrees, saying that *neʾĕmān*, 'can unequivocally describe duration, permanence' (e.g. Isa 33.16) and 'in an ethico-religious perspective, the element of dependability and faithfulness' (e.g. Prov 25.13).[252] Silva's translation 'to be faithful, trustworthy' also highlights the personal element of *neʾĕmān*'s senses.[253] Jepsen observes that *neʾĕmān* is usually found in participial form and is predominantly applied to God and humanity, though occasionally also to things.[254] Thus, he translates it as

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[249] Ibid., 318.
[250] Wildberger, 151.
[251] Piper, 713.
[252] Wildberger, 138.
[253] Silva, NIDNTTE, i, 298.
[254] Jepsen, 294, 297.

'constant' as this English word 'can include both the permanency of things and the stability and reliability of persons.'[255]

In terms of *neʾĕmān*'s semantic relation to the cognates already considered, Moberly detects no shift in theological use from *ʾĕmet* and *ʾĕmûnâ* to *neʾĕmān*, except that as a verb it can also mean "established," "made firm."'[256] *Ĕmûnâ* draws out *neʾĕmān*'s sense of 'dependability, faithfulness' (e.g. 1 Sam 26.33), while *ʾĕmet* draws on the sense of 'permanence, security, duration' (e.g. Isa 16.5).[257] Thinking along similar lines, Piper stipulates that *ʾĕmet* 'designates a reality, which is firm and unchanging.'[258] *Neʾĕmān* is the cognate most closely resembling the senses of the root *ʾmn* in that it conveys that the subject is being that is firm, unchanging, and constant, and it corroborates the sense of *ʾĕmet* as firm unchanging reality. Its significance will be amplified by comparison with its fellow verb form *heʾĕmîn*.

Considering heʾĕmîn

Heʾĕmîn is the root *ʾmn* in the hiph'il verbal form (the third Binyan), conveying the causative aspect of the root, i.e. the subject causes something else to perform the verb (though the 'causative' aspect has almost entirely vanished from *heʾĕmîn*'s purport, as it has similarly with *hishmin*, 'to become fat'). [259] This verb has enjoyed much scholarly attention because of its place within the Hebrew semantic field for the senses 'believe, trust, have faith in.'[260] At its most basic, *heʾĕmîn* 'has the sense of putting confidence in something or someone, and is used of trusting God' as in Deuteronomy 1.32 which criticises Israel for not having done so towards God.[261]   Occasionally, the 'original concrete-physical meaning "to stand fast, hold still" ' is detectable (cf. Job 39.24), but it is overshadowed by the senses "to have trust, be dependable" (e.g. Ps 27.13).[262] Two prepositions, '*lĕ*' and '*bĕ*', are used to modulate the senses of *heʾĕmîn*. *Lĕ* conveys senses of 'to believe' and 'accept a report as true' (1 Kgs 10.7) while, to this recognition of the truth, *bĕ* indicates that the believer has also responded with trust or obedience (Job 39.11-

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[255] Ibid., 298.
[256] Moberly, 431.
[257] Wildberger, 148, 151.
[258] Piper, 713.
[259] Jepsen, 309.
[260] Though it is one of the less frequent lexemes in this semantic field, *bṭh* "to trust" being the most significant. Wilberger, 143.
[261] Silva, NIDNTTE, i, 225.
[262] Wildberger, 142.

12).[263]   This is, however, a tendency not a technical distinction, as some passages use both prepositions with *heʾĕmîn* without any apparent difference in sense (Ps 106.12, 24).[264]

The most striking aspect of *heʾĕmîn* is that it focuses on the 'subject of the act of trust' instead of 'the personal or impersonal object of trust,'[265] to the extent that the object of trust is sometimes omitted entirely from the sentence.[266] Thus, Jepsen paraphrases *heʾĕmîn* as "to gain stability, to rely on someone, to give credence to a message or to consider it to be true, to trust in someone," which he simplifies as "to become steadfast (stable)."[267]

We may conclude that the purport of *heʾĕmîn* retains the sense 'firmness' from the root, but this sense is not applied to the object which is considered true—rather it indicates the firmness of the subject who takes the object as true. As one scholar writes, 'to make a man true, [*heʾĕmîn*] means the same as to rely on him. It implies confidence in his having the will and power to maintain the claims of the covenant …. they *make* him 'true,' i.e., firm, sure, and strong"; "to consider a soul firm and thus to contribute to its firmness, that is to 'make true,' to believe in it."[268] In other words, if *heʾĕmîn* has a causative element, one could say it means (for instance) that Ashley takes Sam to be a true friend, but is really pointing out that by trusting Sam to be a true friend (provided Sam is), Ashley becomes true as well, at least in regards to Sam. Speaking imaginatively, it is as if there is a gathering firmness both in the one who trusts and in that which is trusted; analogously, a structure built on a firm foundation is itself steadied as a result. *ʾĔmet*, I would venture, has transferred from object doing *neʾĕmān* to subject enacting *heʾĕmîn* (though without becoming absent from the original). *Heʾĕmîn* particularly picks out the gathering firmness in the one who trusts. Interestingly, there is again a relational aspect to the *heʾĕmîn*, which is unlike that seen in the in *neʾĕmān*, in that an object is implied but is peripheral enough that it need not always be specified. *Neʾĕmān* speaks to the active constancy, being established and firm, while *heʾĕmîn* speaks to the burgeoning firmness that is enacted by the one who trusts that which is trustworthy. This dynamic will be developed into the idea that truth is transferable through relationships.

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263 Moberly, 431.
264 Moberly, 432.
265 Wildberger, 143.
266 Jepsen, 307.
267 Ibid., 308-9.
268 Ibid., 298.

Considering ʾāmēn

Finally, the last *ʾĕmet* cognate is *ʾāmēn*. It has the distinction of being the most widely known Hebrew word today, as the end to prayers in innumerable languages. Morphologically *ʾāmēn* is an adverb, but 'no certain conclusions can be drawn' from this regarding its meaning.[269] In the Old Testament it only occurs in liturgical, doxological, and theological contexts.[270] It also always appears as 'a word of response to what has been said by someone else.'[271] *ʾĀmēn* essentially means 'let it be so' or 'may it come true' and commits its speakers to avoid (Deut 27.14-26) or follow (Neh 5.13) 'a particular course of action.'[272] When a person declares *ʾāmēn*, s/he means both that something 'stands firm, is "true"' and also that it is 'obligatory for the speaker' because of its truth.[273] In a devotional context, with an *ʾāmēn* the speaker all at once 'affirms the wish that God may act, places himself under divine judgment, and joins in praise to God.'[274] For this reason, it is fair to say that *ʾāmēn* is thus 'self-involving religious language.'[275]

As a theologian drawing several themes, I would say *ʾāmēn*'s formalised affirmation of a declaration's truth is no disinterested observation; it involves oneself and makes one party to the matter at hand. The *ʾĕmet* of a speaker and his/her speech extends to those who declare '*ʾāmēn*' in response because the *ʾāmēn* declares one's recognition of *ʾĕmet* and one's intention of *ʾĕmûnâ* towards it. The social function of *ʾāmēn*, then, is to name one's own action of *heʾĕmîn* towards what was said. A similar English word-play is possible with the word 'determine.' When to *determine* a fact is also to *determine* oneself, to become *determined* in relation to it that the fact is so. *ʾāmēn* has this dual aspect of determining and self-determination.

Conclusion

It is widely agreed that the significance of a concept is not necessarily restricted to a single word. This section has examined *ʾĕmet*'s cognates because earlier it was shown there is semantic transparency between them (III.2). This indicated that passages which contain *ʾĕmet*'s

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[269] Jepsen, 320.
[270] Wildberger, 146; Moberly, 428.
[271] Moberly, 428.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Wildberger, 146.
[274] Jepsen, 322.
[275] Moberly, 428.

cognates could be relevant to the biblical articulations about truth and God. Taking the senses and sense relations attested to by biblical scholars, the theologian will now develop conceptual parameters based upon them.

To summarise, this section found: the root *ʾmn* has senses of a substantial quality (firmness, solidity, lasting, constant) and of relational quality (reliable, sustaining, faithful). Both of these qualities appear in the largely overlapping purports of *ʾĕmet* and *ʾĕmûnâ*, though the latter de-emphasises the relational quality. Their difference lies in that only *ʾĕmet* can convey a 'thin' sense of truth and be applied to speech on its own applies to language. *Ĕmûnâ*, on the other hand, specifically emphasises a personal and ethical sense of conscientiousness, honesty, in character and conduct of humans or God. The verbal form *neʾĕmān* conveys the constancy of persons (incl. God), and occasionally of non-personal things, and is the closest in its purport to the *ʾmn* root, with its senses of being 'established', 'made firm', and of 'permanence, security, duration.' *Heʾĕmîn*, the other verbal form, is used to describe a subject coming to the determination that a person, thing, message, or similar is established, firm, reliable, true, etc., and (most importantly) the subject becomes firm, sure, reliable, and true in his/commitment to the determination. Finally *ʾāmēn* is a formalised phrase for pronouncing that one has done this and the ongoing committed involvement it implies, especially in relation to God. This dynamic of sense relations between the *ʾmn* cognates provides material for conceptual parameter (i).

In my view, the sense relations found in the *ʾmn* word-family creates a rather elegant series of relationships, a gathering of firmness and reality on material, personal, and ethical levels. The *ʾmn* root evokes senses of firm solidity that is lasting, constant, and so is also reliable for continuing to be what it is. *Ĕmet* speaks to this quality in (as we have seen) material and abstract things, speech and testimony, humans and God, and even actions. *Ĕmûnâ* appears to be a related quality, but only found in the character and conduct of persons (human and divine), and so is more fit to be translated as 'faithful', because of the personal connotations, while *ʾĕmet* is more fit to be 'truth', even when applied to persons, because its purport includes senses applied to speech as well. With the verb *neʾĕmān*, we have a way of saying that something gains the qualities of firmness, reliability, whether in the very material sense of a stone pillar or the dependable faithfulness of a person. We could say, in English, that such a person is true. *Heʾĕmîn* is when a person takes something else to have these qualities of *ʾĕmet* or *ʾĕmûnâ*, for a something to be *neʾĕmān*, but it speaks most strongly to how, when one takes another thing to be firm, one

too gains firmness. To depend on the dependable makes one also reliable, but it also engenders the conscientious and faithful character of one who is ʾĕmûnâ. The word ʾāmēn serves a social function, as a declaration of one's intention to do so, in regard to specific pronouncements and persons.

Turning now to the task of conceptual parameters, it is first of all readily apparent that ʾĕmet not only has more senses than merely 'thin' truth, but also that its other senses are meaningfully connected to, rather than divided from, thin truth. This further reinforces (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin* (III.2). The main harvest of conceptual parameters, however, is developed from the lovely interweaving of cognates' senses; it is called (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*. By this I mean, first, that truth can refer to the substantial quality of something, that it is firm, enduring, constant and so forth. Second, truth's substantial quality which entails a relational aspect as well; one may rely, depend upon, trust, or treat as true that which as substantive truth. Third, the substantial quality of truth may be transferred from one thing to another when the relational quality of truth is acted upon. When this relational possibility is enacted one thing takes another thing as true (or as a truth), an act that may be characterised as an act of trust, belief, faith, reliance, or making true. It is self-involving, not a mere disinterested recognition of veracity, because one has not only determined the truth of a thing but also determined for oneself to be true to that truth—to live and act in accordance with its reality. This act transfers or extends the truth of that which is trusted to the one who trusts; this one too becomes firm, reliable, etc. This transferable aspect has a creative aspect to it as well. It involves creativity in that further trueness has been added to the world through the act of taking something as true, and maintaining it as so. It is like building a house on a rock, or the growth of crystals where molecules position themselves in line with and thereby extend the solid crystalline structure. In this way, thick truth is substantial, relational, and transferable.

III.5 ʾĔmet in Devotional, Legal, and Wisdom-Seeking Contexts

Introduction

The previous sections (III.2, III.3, and III.4) have focused on gathering material for conceptual parameters from sense relations detected surrounding ʾĕmet in Old Testament texts. This section and the following turn from sense relations to focus on textual meaning. Of course, sense relations and textual meanings mutually implicate each other (see I.5 and III.1), so this chapter complements the work of the previous. The interpretation of individual passages is guided by historical critical biblical scholarship. The organisation of which passages to attend to is influenced by cognitive linguistics, specifically, the cognitive linguistic distinction between a concept's profile and its domain (explained below). This section and the next identify and investigate multiple domains of thought and activity which contextualise the understanding of truth in the Old Testament. First, this section focuses on three *domains of action* in which ʾĕmet plays a notable role: namely, devotional contexts, legal contexts, and wisdom-seeking contexts. The following section, III.6, focuses on four *conceptual domains* that importantly inform understandings of truth in the Old Testament: words and things, Yahweh, the word of God, and wisdom. From these sections two conceptual parameters will be developed in great detail. First, parameter (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* will be developed considerably. Second, the final conceptual parameter of this study will be given form and articulation as (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth*. Once these are in hand, the thoroughly constructive work of Chapter IV will commence.

Before turning to study ʾĕmet's domains in earnest, the profile-domain distinction drawn by cognitive linguistics should be clarified. A concept's 'profile' is comparable to what most dictionary definitions list in their entries; its 'domain' is the 'knowledge or conceptual structure that is presupposed by the profiled concept.'[276] For instance, the profile of 'radius' is 'the distance from the centre to the circumference of a circle', and its domain is the concept of a circle. Without understanding the domain, one cannot understand the full significance of the profile. Sometimes, a word's different senses are analysable as the same profile being applied to difference bases. For instance, 'mouth' has the same profile of 'an opening' across the differing domains of 'bottle', 'face', 'cave,' and 'river'—a case which shows the necessity of clarifying domains to make sense of the profile.[277] Furthermore, conceptual domains often differ between cultures, explaining some issues that often arise in translations which are technically correct and

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[276] Croft, 14.
[277] Ibid., 19.

yet misleading. For instance, the English word 'lukewarm' and the Japanese 'nurui' have the same profile; they both indicate a liquid at room temperature. 'Nurui', however, is only used for liquids that should be hot, whereas 'lukewarm' could describe liquids meant to be hot or cold; their domains are different.[278] If someone took the statement 'The man from Alabama was disappointed that his sweet tea was lukewarm' and translated 'nurui' for 'lukewarm', it would mislead the Japanese reader into thinking that sweet tea in the American South is expected to be hot, when it is usually cold.

The distinction between a concept's profile and its domain reveals the deficiency of any attempt to explicate the understanding of truth in the Old Testament if one only offers English translations of ʾĕmet's senses. Over the course of III.2-4, a prodigious collection of individual senses has established in ʾĕmet's purport. But in order to ascertain a discourse's concept, one must cast one's net beyond key words and examine passages which lack the key word but are nonetheless relevant to understanding the concept's domain.

In my research, I have identified seven relevant domains for ʾĕmet and divided them into two categories designated 'scripts' and 'frames'. Scripts, a cognitive linguistic term, 'is often used for a frame/domain with a sequence of events', or when it is a 'dynamic concept extending through time.'[279] For instance the concept behind 'purified' involves a notional account of a purifying sequence of events. In that spirit, this study calls ʾĕmet's action-oriented domains the three 'scripts' of devotional, legal contexts, and wisdom-seeking contexts. These are 'scripts' of my own designation, meant to categorise the many observations in biblical scholarship regarding ʾĕmet and do not indicate either distinctions of genre or *sitz im leben*. Cognitive linguistics often uses 'frame' interchangeably with 'domain', but this study will use it to refer to conceptually-oriented domains. I have identified four frames, each of which is picked out by a key term: words and things (*dābār*), God (*yhwh*), the word of God (*dəbar yhwh*), and wisdom (*ḥokmâ*). This section examines the three scripts (action-oriented domains) and the following takes up the four frames (conceptually-oriented frames).

Devotional Contexts of ʾĕmet

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[278] Ibid., 20.
[279] Ibid., 17.

The script of 'devotional contexts' pertains to passages which treat ʾĕmet in relation to God or human devotion to God. One cardinal devotional encounter is between Moses and God in Exodus 33-4, in which God proclaims Godself to be Yahweh 'a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness [ḥesed and ʾĕmet]' (34.6) Here, Yahweh has chosen to renew the covenant with Israel despite their unfaithfulness in worshipping the golden calf.[280] In this narrative, God's faithfulness (ʾĕmet) endures regardless of the vicissitudes of his chosen people. Similarly, Nehemiah 9.33 'confesses of the past: "Thou hast been just in all that has come upon us, for thou hast dealt faithfully [ʾĕmet] and we have acted wickedly.'[281] Clearly, God has no obligation to be faithful, but nevertheless is, as is elsewhere widely attested (see Ps 86.15; cf., 2 Tim 2.13)). In these passages, God's ʾĕmet is characterised by an enduring commitment to Israel through all time (past, present, future) even in the face of Israel's apostasy and wickedness.

The phrase ḥesed and ʾĕmet—'steadfast love and faithfulness' or 'grace and truth' deserves greater attention because it appears dozens of times in the biblical text, making it a 'veritable refrain', especially in the Psalter (e.g. Ps 25.10).[282] Our attention will be rewarded with the knowledge of how ʾĕmet is intimately related to ḥesed, especially in devotional contexts where God's ʾĕmet is overwhelmingly understood in conjunction with God's steadfast love or grace.

A cottage industry of scholarship has emerged around ḥesed, because it is at the heart of Yahweh's character and action, and is often thought to be a uniquely 'covenantal' word, speaking to covenantal faithfulness. Put briefly, ḥesed is 'a theologically significant word that has a broad range of meaning ("kindness, favor, love, loyalty, grace"), though when applied to God it is often rendered with such combinations as "steadfast love" (NRSV) and "unfailing love" (NIV).'[283] When paired with ḥesed, ʾĕmet is often translated in the NRSV as 'faithfulness', with overtones of 'honesty', and 'integrity' (e.g. Gen 24.49), but it is acknowledged that 'thin truth' in the senses of 'veracity and integrity' is also sometimes present. For instance, Silva explains that in Ex 34.6

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[280] Moberly, 429.
[281] Jepsen, 314.
[282] Wildberger, 154.
[283] Silva, NIDNTTE, i, 226.

'since the next verse sets side by side the promise of mercy for thousands and the warning of punishment for the guilty,' God's veracity and integrity are included in *ʾĕmet.*[284]

Though some have argued that *ʾĕmet* is used to modify *ḥesed*—as if to say 'lasting mercy' rather than 'love and faithfulness/truth'—evidence of parallelism in adjoining half-verses and the use of plural verbs mitigates against reading *ʾĕmet* adjectivally. [285] This suggests that *ʾĕmet* and *ḥesed* were spoken of as 'separate attitudes of God, who manifests himself in active kindness and protective faithfulness respectively.'[286] Ps 85.11 is a strong example, in that *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet* are treated almost as independent hypostases or cosmic entities.[287] They are distinguishable but rarely separable.

*ʾĔmet'*s near constant association with *ḥesed* shows that God's *ʾĕmet* is not dispassionate objectivity, but overwhelmingly understood in conjunction with God's steadfast love, grace, etc. At times divine *ʾĕmet* and *ḥesed* are spoken of independently as that which supports God. *Ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet* may be found in humanity, but are preeminently in God; they may be done as well as possessed, and there is in God's *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet* the sense of 'truth' as well as the sense of 'faithfulness.'

As for what God's *ʾĕmet* means for God's people, it is more than an attitude of faithfulness. The devotional Psalms show it alters daily life, is meant for all people especially the oppressed, and is found in all God's works. First, that they request or praise God's *ʾĕmet* in the form of identifiable actions make this clear. In Psalm 69.14 the psalmist 'implores Yahweh specifically to grant an audience "in the faithfulness of your aid".'[288] The *ʾĕmet* of *yhwh* in Psalm 54.5 (54.7) includes protection from one's enemies and elsewhere leads the psalmist to compare divine *ʾĕmet* to a sword and buckler (Ps 91.4).[289] Yahweh's *ʾĕmet* can even be a source of guidance, leading one to where God resides (Ps 43.3, cf. 138.2). Thus, God's *ʾĕmet*, faithfulness despite infidelity, manifests in quotidian existence outside of liturgical contexts, as protection, aid, and guidance.

How far does God's *ʾĕmet* extend? On Wildberger's reading, Psalm 146 views God's *ʾĕmet* (146.6) as 'faithfulness eternally', praising Yahweh 'as the helper of all who are oppressed.

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[284] Ibid.
[285] Jepsen, 314.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Wildberger, 151.
[288] Wildberger, 154.
[289] Ibid.

Yahweh himself is, indeed, called the God of Jacob (v 5), but he is described as the creator God and the God of Zion (146.10), who will rule eternally.'[290] This brings God's *ʾĕmet* to all people, most especially those in need of divine *ʾĕmet*'s guidance and protection. Jepsen notes that Psalm 111.7 characterises all the words of *yhwh* as 'faithful [*ʾĕmet*] and just', and that it follows that God's precepts are "executed, faithful [*ʾĕmet*] and just' (111.8). These and similar passages support the parameter that all God's words and works are expression of his *ʾĕmet*. This is a third universalising of God's *ʾĕmet*; in addition to it being for all time, for all people, it finally applies to all of God's works, categorically not incidentally.

Some biblical scholars have considered the implications of divine *ʾĕmet* for God's nature. Spicq reasoned that God's reliability is related to God's constant nature, which is to say, God's truth and being are bound up together.[291] Jepsen likewise connects divine truth with divine being and reliability of presence: Jeremiah 10.10 holds the 'true' God is living and potent. As he puts it 'the God on whom one can rely and he alone is the true God' (e.g. Ps 54.5, Ps 57.4).[292] The Bible's concrete metaphors support this connection of God's truth with God's being, especially given *ʾĕmet*'s transparency to its root *ʾmn*, which has the sense 'firm;' 'Thus he can rightly be called a fortress, a refuge, or a rock, and his "truth" is the reason why people can trust him. In a universe which is constantly in flux and change (it "floats upon the waters"), he proves to be the only unchanging reality.'[293] These biblical scholars have connected God's truth with God's being through their attention to biblical passages, rather than philosophical categories. To be constant, reliable, present, engaged and so forth is simply how God exists; it is Yahweh's un-altering character as experienced and reflected upon in the Old Testament texts.

To know God's *ʾĕmet* towards humanity has the implication that one's conduct should also be *ʾĕmet*. Quell finds that Ezekiel 18.8, 19 (cf. Ps 15.2) holds that devotion to God leads one to execute true judgment among men, and Hosea 4.1 excoriates the reverse, that without knowledge of God, there is no *ʾĕmet* in the land, concluding that 'truthfulness grows from knowledge of God.'[294] Jepsen makes a similar point, noting that 'walking before God (1 Kgs 2.4), calling upon him (Ps 145.18) or swearing his name (Jer 4.2) must always be done with

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[290] Wildberger, 154.
[291] Spicq, 68.
[292] Jepsen, 315.
[293] Piper, 714.
[294] Quell, 235.

ʾĕmet, that is 'honestly, genuinely, reliably.'[295] Joshua 24.14 and 1 Sam 12.24 both contain the injunction "Fear the Lord and serve him [with ʾĕmet]." In these texts, the normative demand for humans to serve with ʾĕmet derives from God's abiding ʾĕmet which precedes it. Such human ʾĕmet includes both devotional practices towards God and displaying ʾĕmet to one's neighbour.

At times, the devotional script overlaps with judicial and wisdom-seeking scripts. The judicial coincides with the devotional where Yahweh's commandments are concerned, as they are the basis of law and are repeatedly called ʾĕmet. Wildberger maintains their ʾĕmet is not restricted to a 'thin' sense of truth, but also dependability and eternal quality (cf. Ps 19.10, 119.152).[296] This is yet another occasion where ʾĕmet contains both a sense of the thin truth alongside senses of constancy and dependability. The mutual involvement of godly devotion and wisdom-seeking appears in Psalm 51.6 (51.8), though the text is difficult to interpret. Textual uncertainties notwithstanding, it is apparent that ʾĕmet here clearly 'parallels [ḥokmâ] "wisdom," and like [ḥokmâ] it can be taught.'[297] God's desire for the psalmist to have inward ʾĕmet correlates to God instructing the psalmist in wisdom.

To conclude, this subsection's findings on ʾĕmet in a devotional context serve to develop conceptual parameter (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth.* In this study's view, God's Truth consists of constant devotion despite apostasy and wickedness, throughout time, manifesting in concrete aid, protection and guidance, meant for all those in need, and that categorically all God's words and works are true in this sense. Likewise, all of God's self and character is ʾĕmet, creating a coincidence between God's truth and God's being as experienced by Israel as God's constancy and abiding presence. Additionally, this divine form of truth is marked by its conjunction with steadfast love (ḥesed). The appropriate human response is to act truly (with ʾĕmet), importantly towards others as well as God. The thin sense of divine truth is apparent in that God's commandments are ʾĕmet (being true and valid/dependable) and that cultivating human truth involves instruction in wisdom.

Judicial Contexts of ʾĕmet

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[295] Jepsen, 315.
[296] Wildberger, 156.
[297] Wildberger, 156.

ʾĔmet's judicial contexts include courts of law, political systems, and paths of righteousness. The first of these, legal or forensic contexts, is believed by some scholars to be where the term ʾĕmet first developed to indicated that 'truth' as has been determined by a legal proceeding or cause (e.g. Deut 13.14 (13.15) and Zechariah 8.16).[298] In such cases, ʾĕmet designates 'truth' which is 'the actual fact over against mere contentions, particularly in a trial' and an ʾĕmet judgment is one which is based upon established facts and cannot be disputed.'[299] In these situations, ʾĕmet is defined by a certain *procedure* or 'script'. The ʾĕmet of witnesses, testimony, and judgments are crucial elements of the legal process. In Isaiah 43.9 witnesses preface their testimony with 'this is the truth (ʾĕmet).' Recall from III.3 that one may parse 'ʾĕmet witness' either as 'a witness on whose testimony one can depend' or 'one who "speaks truth"'. This highlights the indivisibility of a witness' ʾĕmet and the ʾĕmet of their testimony. The one who passes judgment also has a duty to judge with ʾĕmet, (e.g. Ezek 18.8f.).[300] Clearly, there is a concern in the biblical text that in order for ʾĕmet to result from the 'script' of a legal process, there must be ʾĕmet in the actors and their actions as it proceeds.

This judicial script is intimately related to the political. Old Testament kings sit in judgment, so it is unsurprising that the ʾĕmet is also demanded of royal rulers. The throne of a king who judges the poor with ʾĕmet lasts forever (Prov 29.14). ʾĔmet and ḥesed preserve the king (Prov 20.28) and, in Psalm 89.14 (89.15), ʾĕmet and justice preserve God's throne. From these passages we can see that the impartial judgment of judges and kings is highly valued, considered normative, and a source of prosperity for those reigning and those ruled. The king, however, is not the apex; God is the ultimate judge and whose judgments are always ʾĕmet (Isa 42.3; Ps 96.13).[301]

Furthermore, the laws and decrees established by God and (secondarily) monarchs ought to be ʾĕmet. The law was instituted by God in the first place and Yahweh's Torah and commandments are celebrated for being ʾĕmet (Ps 111.17, throughout Ps 119). Moberly and Scott both hold that the psalmist means both that the commandments are true not false and that they are trustworthy reliable guidance for living one's life.[302]

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[298] Quell, 233.
[299] Piper, 715.
[300] Jepsen, 312.
[301] Spicq, 68.
[302] Moberly, 428; Scott 682-3.

This guiding quality connects the truth of God's law with the recurrent phrase 'walking in truth' and its variations (e.g. Ps 86.11). Scott says God's ʾĕmet is a 'reliable path in which to walk, a lifestyle that mimics God's own reliability.'[303] Similarly, Quell considers 'walking in thy truth' as reducible in meaning to 'solid rules of life which are called truth and which are the theme of divine instruction.'[304] It is readily apparent that this walking in truth coincides with the way of the righteous.

Piper speculates that God's commands have '"truth" in them because they are an expression of God's 'true' will, and he continues, 'such usage implies that the OT standard of justice is not found in an abstract sociological or ethical principle but in God's way of dealing with this world.'[305] I would say, God's ḥesed and ʾĕmet towards Israel teaches God's people the nature of law and justice, with political implications that the king who rules must show ʾĕmet to the 'true' commands as do all subjects of the kingdom. 'Thus,' Piper concludes, 'while "truth" implies veracity, truthfulness, it is not confined to it, but rather designates the whole field of religious and moral life, as it agrees with God's will.'[306]

From this analysis of ʾĕmet in judicial contexts, I now venture to begin developing our final conceptual parameter: (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth*, focusing on law at this point. Thick truth (including thin truth, honesty, trustworthiness, reliability etc.) is normative in judicial and political systems for their proper functioning. God is the apex of these human institutions, as the ultimate law-giver and judge and it is implied that the divine commandments and Torah are ʾĕmet both because they correspond with God's will—being perhaps united with or derived from the divine ʾĕmet—and because they are dependable guides to a good godly life. Thus, justice, piety, and moral patterns of life are derived from God's very character as ḥesed and ʾĕmet, and Israel's experience of God's abiding active presence as such. To follow in God's way is to walk in the way of truth, which certainly includes truthfulness but encompasses more broadly all moral and pious ways of life.

Wisdom-Seeking Contexts of ʾĕmet

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[303] Scott, 682-3.
[304] Quell, 236.
[305] Piper, 714.
[306] Ibid.

ʾĔmet is frequently mentioned in relation to wisdom the search for which is a dominant theme in Proverbs and other biblical wisdom literature. The pursuit of wisdom (*ḥokmâ*), in which ʾĕmet is involved, is a dynamic process and hence a script. Most obviously, the ethical demand of ʾĕmet is made clear. Proverbs exhorts its reader to acquire truth (23.23), that ʾĕmet is a source of atonement (16.6), and that ʾĕmet should be bound around one's neck (3.3). Lady Wisdom only speaks ʾĕmet (8.7) and the sage explains he teaches ʾĕmet (22.21).

ʾĔmet has a programmatic role too, in that it is strongly associated with *fear of the Lord*, which is a primary step to seeking wisdom. For instance, Nehemiah 7.2 immediately follows an accolade for Hanani's ʾĕmet by adding that 'he feared God.' Likewise, when the covenant is renewed at Shechem, Joshua delivers the injunction to fear *yhwh* and directly adds 'serve him in sincerity and faithfulness [ʾĕmet]' (Josh 24.14).[307] The textual difficulties with Psalm 51.6 (51.8) do not obscure that ʾĕmet clearly stands in parallel to wisdom here, such that truth in a person comes from God's instruction of wisdom. Fear of the Lord and personal ʾĕmet go hand in hand.

If ʾĕmet is essential to wisdom, how does it assist the pursuit of wisdom? Divine truth, it would seem offers illumination and faithful guidance. Jepsen draws together that ʾĕmet appears to be an illumination and guide (Ps 43.3), presumably of God's paths, which are all ʾĕmet and *ḥesed* (25.10); likewise, Abraham's servant thanks God for leading him on the ʾĕmet path (Gen 24.27, 48).[308] As we saw in the judicial context, walking in truth appears coincident with the path of faithfulness, for which God faithfully illuminates and offers guidance. Wildberger importantly points out that one must not divide interpersonal ethical considerations from those of piety here: 'the response to God's faithfulness can only be faithfulness toward one's fellow human beings.'[309] ʾĔmet behaviour 'toward God is demanded of Israel, not primarily in the sense of "faithfulness" … but "uprightly, genuinely, honestly".'[310] While these senses of faithfulness and kindness certainly predominate here, Silva points out that a thin sense of truth as related to 'reality' is also at play, saying Ps 43.3 'is not a prayer for God to remain faithful, but a request to be able to see things for what they really are in the face of the enticing words of "deceitful"

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[307] Moberly, 429.
[308] Jepsen, 315.
[309] Wildberger, 155.
[310] Ibid.

people (v. 1).'[311] Thick truth is very much in evidence, and it plays a crucial role in guiding one towards wisdom.

From this examination of *ʾĕmet* in relation to seeking wisdom, conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth* will be further developed, this time focusing on wisdom. Fear of the Lord, appropriately enacted, is congruent with serving Yahweh with thick truth; God's instruction in wisdom is both the consequence of fearing the Lord and what brings a person into truth. Similarly, the righteous path is the way taken by those who walk in truth and God's truth illuminates and guides people along this path. In this pursuit, individual piety and inter-personal ethical action are conjoined, such that one is not present without the other. Likewise, the thin element of truth continues to weave through truth's senses of faithfulness and devotion: one is exhorted to honesty and truth in speech. Additionally, walking in the way of truth explicitly enables recognition of the world as it truly is; the world is made plain in the light of the Lord.

This concludes this study's examination of action-oriented domains of *ʾĕmet* in the Old Testament, leaving the conceptually-oriented domains to be taken up in the next section.

III.6 Conceptual Frames of *ʾĔmet*

The previous section developed conceptual parameters from an examination of *ʾĕmet*'s role in viewing them as scripts of action which form a domain to *ʾĕmet*'s senses (profiles) (see III.5). This section considers conceptual domains, or 'frames', which I judge to be relevant to properly explicating the understandings of truth that appear in the Old Testament. These four conceptual domains salient to for this study of *ʾĕmet* are: words and things (*dābār*), God (named *yhwh*), the word of God (*dəbar yhwh*), and wisdom (*ḥokmâ*),

The Words and Things of dābār

One domain of *ʾĕmet* is speech. By far the most prominent Hebrew lexeme translated as 'word' is *dābār*.[312] Once its use in the Old Testament is examined, this study will find that words

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[311] Silva, NIDNTTE, i, 227.
[312] Paul N. Anderson, 'Word, The,' in NIDB, v, 893-94.

and the things they speak of are elided together. The result is that the underlying image of the relationship between the thin truth of language and reality is less like a relationship of matching correspondence but rather, more like a filling in or making-solid. This is a useful insight for conceptual parameters.

Dābār, like *ʾĕmet*, appears to have two categorically different senses when translated into English. On one hand, there is a cluster of translations related to speech, including 'word', 'dispute,' 'lyrics,' 'whisper,' etc..[313] On the other hand, *dābār* is often translated as 'thing' or 'matter' (e.g. Prov 11.13), an indefinite 'something' (e.g. Amos 3.7), or even an event (e.g. Gen 22.1, 20 'some time later' literally after these events).[314] This second usage of *dābār* as 'thing' is 'widespread, ancient, and unusually variable in the OT' and it usually involves an 'intellectual' element in that 'one is occupied with something intellectually.'[315] Again, as with *ʾĕmet*'s senses of thin truth and faithfulness, there are passages where it is uncertain whether *dābār* is better translated as 'thing' or 'word' (e.g. Exod 35.1 "these are the things the LORD has commanded;" cf. Eccl 12.13).[316] That the preferred sense is at times indeterminable means there is no antagonistic mutual exclusion between these two senses. This indicates that 'word' and 'thing' are not two entirely distinct senses for *dābār* (recalling our principles of full sense boundaries from cognitive linguistics).

How can words and the matter they touch upon be elided together? Schmidt proposes an insightful solution. Old Testament texts frequently describe *dābār* as an object completed by something beyond the utterance itself. Schmidt explains: 'The word that announces the future is connected with the expectation that it will be fulfilled. This idea of the fulfillment or realization of the word is expressed by the greatest variety of verbs. In this sense, [*dābār*] appears both as object (a) and also as subject (b) of these verbs.'[317] Instances include 'to fulfil a word' (e.g. 1 Kngs 1.14) 'to fully execute' (e.g. Num 22.20) or to 'confirm' a word (e.g. Deut 9.5). In these cases, *dābār* is an object completed by something beyond the utterance itself. Similarly, the 'word' and the matter it speaks of go undistinguished, being 'regarded as a unity,' as a unified subject: e.g. when *dābār* 'comes true' (e.g. Deut 18.22) 'comes to pass' (e.g. Isa 55.11), is

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[313] Frank Ritchel Ames, 'דבר,' in NIDOTTE, i, 913.
[314] Schmidt, W. H., and H. Lutzman. 'דָּבַר Dābar; דָּבָר Dābhār,' TDOT, iii, 105-6.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ames, 913.
[317] Schmidt, 115.

completed/accomplished (e.g. Ezra 1.1), or happens (e.g. Num 11.23).[318] From all these passages, we may conclude that the Old Testament texts exhibit a strong conceptual proclivity to seeing speech as incomplete when what they assert is not yet the case and empty when what they speak of is not the case. When what is said is also the case (real/reality) the result is that the word and the matter spoken of are regarded as a unified phenomenon: they are true. Schmidt observes that frequently 'the fulfilment of the word is regarded as a decisive and sufficient criterion of truth,' (e.g. Jer 28.8f.).[319] It is then intelligible that in addition to speaking, hearing, trusting, or scorning a particular *dābār*, one may 'do' *dābār*—in the sense of fulfilling or executing the word.[320] This is simply an extension of the elision between word and thing (including actions).[321]

If a fulfilled, accomplished, or executed *dābār* is *ʾĕmet*, then Procksh is right to observe that 'there should be a relation of truth between word and thing, and a relation of fidelity between the one who speaks and the one who hears. Hence the word belongs to the moral sphere.'[322] Just as Yahweh's words are *ʾĕmet*, so should human ones be. Moreover, one speaks *ʾāmēn* to the words one believes; the *ʾāmēn* is a self-involving commitment to sustain the spoken word, to make it true by bringing it to pass (e.g. by upholding the commandments of God).

At this point, it is useful to think of the pioneering work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By,*[323] They persuasively argued that metaphors underlie many of the notions that structure daily life, for instance, that time is money or that argument is war.[324] If we consider the 'thin truth' sense of *ʾĕmet* against the conceptual frame of words and things as elided by *dābār*, then it appears the thin truth sense of *ʾĕmet* does not have an underlying image of *corresponding* so much as *fulfilling*. The underlying metaphorical image of correspondence-truth is of matching, like a mirror, but the dynamic among *dābār*'s senses indicates that the underlying metaphor of truth is of filling in or making solid. Furthermore, the image of correspondence implies that speech and its matter are similar but independent of each other, whereas if a word can be fulfilled or completed, then speech and its matter are mutually involved and effected. Future-oriented speech may be lacking and uncertain until fulfilled, and words that speak truly to the present or past are already reliable, they are full, solid, accomplished, *ʾĕmet*.

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[318] Ibid., 115-6.
[319] Ibid., 116.
[320] Ibid., 107.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Procksh, O., 'C. The Word of God in the Old Testament,' TDNT, iv, 93.
[323] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we Live by* (Chicago: UCP, 1980).
[324] Lakoff, 7-8, 4.

Given Hebrew's word-thing elision, it is perhaps not surprising that proper names are strongly connected with the person or thing they name. In Old Testament narratives when characters have names that speak meaningfully to who they are (e.g., Gen 27.36, 1 Sam 25.25), the name is no mere label or arbitrary designation; it conveys the object's 'existence, identity, and character' or even 'nature.'[325] Though a name may not reveal everything about a person, it will provide characteristic insight.[326] With the name's grasp on the named-one's very self, there arises an association of power with the name, such as the power 'to summon him to his/her aid' (cf. Gen 32.24-30 (32.25-31), Adam attaining or enacting dominion over the animals by knowing and naming them (Gen 2.20), or the power of knowing the name/answer of Samson's riddle (Judg 14.17-20).[327]

To conclude, *dābār*'s purport includes both what is said and the matter spoken of, such that there is no full sense division between these senses. When this is taken as a conceptual frame in which to understand *ʾĕmet*'s sense of thin truth, the nature of truth is re-characterised. Rather than self-sufficient speech corresponding (or not) to the referenced realities, *dābār* is empty and unfulfilled until it is accomplished, fulfilled, made *ʾĕmet* by that of which it speaks. This suggests a fundamental metaphor of filling, solidifying, or completing for speech, rather than corresponding, matching, or mirroring. In the case of names, because they pick out an important quality of the one whom they name, there are both non-arbitrary and give the speaker some power regarding what they named and thereby know.

From this, conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth* draws material regarding 'word'. Speech is treated neither as arbitrary set of labels nor independent verbal entities that may or may not correspond to reality. Meaningful utterances are only true when they are completed and fulfilled by the reality they speak to. False speech is empty, and some speech which has not yet 'come to pass' is not empty though also not yet entirely true. Names appear to have these qualities as well, in that knowing a true name gives one some power or grasp over the one who is named. Finally, there are strong normative connotations and moral freight to the state of one's words, for they ought to be true.

The God called 'yhwh'

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[325] C. L. Seow, 'God, Names Of,' NIDB, ii, 588.
[326] Ibid., 605.
[327] Henry O. Thompson, Henry O., 'YAHWEH,' ABD, vi, 1012.

Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament is *el ʾĕmet*, the God of Truth, and so an obvious domain to attend to, a task which will cover the significance of God's name and creedal statements in the Old Testament.

The Tetragrammaton, *yhwh*, is not merely the personal proper noun for Israel's God, it is also 'by far the most common designation for God in the OT', used 6,282 times.[328] Though its use declined in the post-exilic period, this is due to its eternal significance: *yhwh* was considered too holy to utter[329], being replaced with the words for 'Lord,' 'God,[330]' or simply 'the Name.'[331] Since an ancient Near Eastern name frequently indicates the nature, essence, or key traits of its reference, we ask what significance '*yhwh*' had. The vast majority of scholars agree that it in some way plays on the Hebrew verb *hyh* for 'to be or become,'[332] but etymologising beyond that is contentious territory and, as James Barr and cognitive linguistics make clear, etymology is extraneous to semantic considerations unless proven otherwise. Fortunately, in Exodus 3, when Yahweh reveals his name to Moses, there appears to be a sort of 'folk' etymology, a story of the name's origin in the narrative.[333] Regardless of its linguistic accuracy, a folk etymology's textual presence proves its semantic relevance for the authors.

In Ex 3.14 God declares to Moses I AM WHO I AM, which could also be translated severally: "I will be what (who) I will be"; "I will cause to be what I will cause to be"; or "I will be who I am/I am who I will be."[334] In all cases, the Hebrew phrase 'consists of the repeated form of the verb to be (*hyh*, earlier form *hwy*) in the first person singular plus the relative particle.[335] At this juncture, Moses is concerned about facing Pharaoh on the Hebrews' behalf. Yahweh replies that he will be with Moses, that he has heard the misery of his people, then provides his name as a cryptic being-statement, which he then truncates into 'I AM' has sent you, then as *yhwh*, the one who was present to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and whose title will last forever. The narrative next indicates how Yahweh's presence will deliver his people from bondage in Egypt. Clearly, the whole passage is geared towards God's lasting, reliable,

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[328] Seow, 590.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Thompson, 1011.
[331] Seow, 590.
[332] D. N. Freedman, and M. P. O'Conner, 'יהוה YHWH,' TDOT, v, 513.
[333] Seow, 590.
[334] Terrence Fretheim, 'Yahweh,' NIDOTTE, iv, 1296.
[335] Fretheim, 'Yahweh,' 1295.

efficacious presence: I will be with you. As it is said, 'The force of the name is not simply that God is or is present, but that God will be faithfully God for them in the history that is to follow (see Ex 3.16-17).'[336] The same verbal form in 3.12, 4.12, 15 (cf. 6.7, 29.45) supports this. God is not to be capricious or arbitrary, but to live up to his name.[337]

If we have seen that the purport of *ʾĕmet* includes lasting reliable firmness, a presence which can be depended upon, and that names are expected to articulate something essential, then all the language about *yhwh* as *ʾĕmet* perfectly accords with the word play in Exodus 3.13-15. This elides God's Truth with God's Being. As Noth rightly points out, this is not an allegedly 'Greek' idea of pure 'being', pure 'existing' but rather an 'active being' who appears and acts in history.[338] Childs agrees on this point: 'The major witness of Ex. 3 lies in the revelation by God of himself to Moses as that divine reality who had already made himself known in the past to the Fathers and who promised to execute his redemptive will toward Israel in the future.'[339] He warns against straying too far in emphasis either on ontology or on history, noting that 1) God's being and activity are not divided, 2) that 'the concept of history can be just as much a theological trap as ontology if it is divorced from the divine reality which appeared in its fullness in the incarnated Lord, who is both 'first and last', and 3) that this revelation is not mere information giving but should 'evoke a response of obedience within God's plan.'[340] This recalls how 'ʾāmēn' simultaneously recognises truth and declares one's allegiance to it.

Thus far, we may conclude, *yhwh* is the personal name for God but it was not an arbitrary set of syllables which merely designate the divine. The folk etymology of Exodus 3 shows that the name's perceived relation to verbs of being and creation was taken to bear on the name's meaning and thus on the nature of God. The narrative context involves God declaring God's efficacious presence to Moses and the ancestors, further informing '*yhwh*''s significance with the personal experience of God in history. The much debated I AM THAT I AM phrase is an almost philosophical statement or *koan* about the being thus encountered. God is a lasting stable existence, who has reliability in presence (being) and creativity in giving life (also being) to others (in a form *yhwh* determines—*I will make what I make*). Language referring to God is semantically related to the divine reality in itself, and as such is to be revered and respected. The

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[336] Ibid., 1296.
[337] Seow, 607.
[338] Noth, Martin, *Exodus: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: SCM, 1962), 45.
[339] Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary*, (London: SCM, 1974), 87.
[340] Ibid., 88.

precise significance of *yhwh* and God's answer in Exodus 3.13-15 is uncertain in details, but we have found broad agreement is on these overall aspects.

The abiding presence of *yhwh* in Ex 3.14 illuminates the narrative's later declaration that God is full of *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet* in Exodus 34.6. Exodus 34.6-7 is one of a few creed-like statements in the Old Testament ('others e.g. Deut 26.5-9; Josh 24.2-13; Neh 9.6-31').[341] Fretheim points out that other divine speeches in Exodus (3.7-10; 34.6-7, cf. 2.23-25) are also 'sharply oriented towards images of grace, love, and mercy', and these recurrences add to their creedal tone.[342] Childs adds that the OT's widespread repetition of the '*ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet*' phrase from Exodus 34.6 indicates its centrality.[343] Indeed verses 6-7 have been central to Jewish liturgy, possibly since the Second Temple period, classically being divided into 13 characteristics of God.[344]

Because God's speech comes on the heel of the golden-calf apostasy, Childs tells us 'The faith which Israel learned to prize was not a proud tradition that once in the past God had singled out a people, but rather that God had continued to sustain his original purpose with a sinful nation both in mercy and judgment.'[345] The passage emphasises God's constancy even in the face of Israel's infidelity, a clarification on *yhwh*'s abiding active presence as conveyed in Exodus 3. A recent Jewish commentary parses it similarly: translating it 'kindness and faithfulness' and teaching that

> Each of the components has a wide range of meaning. [*Ḥesed*] involves acts of beneficence, mutuality, and often also obligations that flow from a legal relationship. … [*ʾĔmet*], usually translated "truth," encompasses reliability, durability, and faithfulness. The combination of terms expresses God's absolute and eternal dependability in dispensing His benefactions.[346]

It is as if the nature and significance of *yhwh*'s presence that Ex 3 has established is then parsed in Ex 34, to explain what God's abiding lasting reliable presence is in truth.

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[341] Fretheim, 'Yahweh,' 1299.
[342] Terrence E. Fretheim, *Exodus,* (Louiseville: John Knox Press, 1991) 16-7.
[343] Childs, 612.
[344] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok, eds., (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 216.
[345] Childs, 612.
[346] Nahum, 215.

The final element of Yahweh's nature that cannot go unmentioned is established in what becomes the Shema Yisrael prayer of Deuteronomy 6.4: 'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.' *Yhwh* (translated 'the LORD') is not as a diverse conglomerate but a unified being, a coherent consistent whole, one to be held above all other would-be gods that offer themselves for human devotion.

From this subsection's analysis of the God Yahweh (*yhwh*) who is *ʾelʾĕmet* (God of Truth), further content can be drawn for conceptual parameter (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth*, pertaining to God's abiding being, love and truth. By reading Exodus 34 in light of Exodus 3, the fundamental connection becomes clear between God's lasting presence actively engaged with Israel and God's character as *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet*. God's presence is that which IS, both eternal through all time and space as well as actively engaged in history. Furthermore, divine presence is to be *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet*, and from the Shema we know that these are in some sense unified in God's person. Yahweh's character and mode of dealing with God's people (which is itself unified,) does not alter, even when they do. He is compassionate towards Israel yet unbending from justice, and actively engaged even as Yahweh himself is reliably constant and unaltered.

Word of God: *dəbar yhwh*

The third conceptual frame of *ʾĕmet* combines the first two; the word of God. The truth of God's word is seen to signify more than divine honesty or thin truth's accuracy, once the significance of the phrase is fully unpacked. The most common phrase for the word of God is *dəbar yhwh* and it always takes a definite article in the prophetic books; prophets receive *the* (not *a*) word of God.[347] Besides prophetic words, *dābār* is also used for divine commandments and God's creative word.[348] In addition to being described as being *ṭôb* (good, full of promise, comforting) and *yāšār* (upright,) the *dəbar* of God is *ʾĕmet* (e.g. 2 Sam 7.28) and *neʾĕmān* (e.g. 1 Chr 17.23).[349] The profile of truth acquires particular significance when framed by the divine word that encompasses commandments, teaching, and prophetic pronouncements, with its own creative and salvific power.

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[347] Schmidt, 111.
[348] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 135.
[349] Schmidt, 115.

The most well-known use of *dābār* in one form or another as God's law and commandments is the Decalogue—ten words—of Exodus 34.28 and Deuteronomy 4.13, 10.4. Though *dābār* does not become a technical term for apodeictic (clearly established) commandments,[350] a commandment may be referred to as a singular *dābār* (e.g. Deut 15.15) and the (non-decalogue) commandments often with the plural (e.g. Deut 1.1).[351] Over the course of Deuteronomy, these 'words of the Torah' come to be written of as 'the single uniform revelation of the will of Yahweh to Israel' upon which Israel is totally dependent and by which they will live long and prosper (e.g. Deut 17.19, Deut 32.47).[352] Unity is a prominent theological theme of Deuteronomy, as it focuses on 'the one God (6.4), the one sanctuary (12), and the one "word" (4.2).'[353] As a result, the *dābār* in the singular sometimes designates the entire 'divine will for justice imparted to Israel in the covenant' (e.g. 30.14).[354]

Similarly, the unified word of God appears in Psalm 119. Here, *dābār* is normally singular and is freely identified with the Torah, whose teachings encompass the covenant's promises and the prophets' demands. One scholar notes at length,

> The Word stands in heaven (v. 89). Its sum is truth (v. 160). It is a light on the path (v. 105). It has the content of life, for according to its measure God quickens the righteous (v. 25, 107, 154) and gives him understanding (v. 169). It has within it power, for the poet trusts in it (v. 42) and hopes in it (v. 74, 81, 114, 147; cf. Ps 130.5). It demands obedience and observance (v. 57, 101). It thus has moral significance for man. It is both promise and hope, demand and power. As one may say that both the motivation and the rest of faith and of the moral life are to be found in the [Torah], so one may find these in the Word because it contains God's revelation. Since its quintessence is truth, one can rely on God's Word absolutely.[355]

The importance of *dəbar yhwh* as *ʾĕmet* is brought to the fore here.

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[350] Ibid., 117-8.
[351] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 152.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid., 153.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Procksch, 100.

The singularity of the divine word may inform the prophets' view of their commission, in that the word of God they receive is a *reassertion* of God's word in the law, i.e. they are 'validating the authority of the covenant commandments against judicial malpractice and law-breaking in Israel.'[356] For instance, Amos 2.4-8 condemns oppressing the poor as a violation of the covenant order; Jeremiah 7.9 condemns a 'decalogue-like array of transgressions'; and Ezekiel 22.2 warns that violating the covenant endangers the people.[357] In this way, prophets do not speak a new word from God but speak God's single word to their own time and place. We could say that the prophetic words are a working out of God's *ʾĕmet* and *ḥesed* according to God's promises, and so are too the *dəbar yhwh*.

Nor is the word of God always verbal; sometimes it appears in a sign or vision instead of speech and has non-verbal features.[358] For instance, prophets frequently refer to the divine word with an 'event-word formula', such as 'and the word of the Lord came to . . .' as if the word is something that happens and becomes effective, i.e., as if 'the word of God became active reality.'[359] This divine prophetic word has dynamism, as if it is an 'urgently pressing force.'[360] Thus, the prophet has encountered something in history, not simply observed a generalised word-presence in the world.[361] *Dəbar yhwh* has what Procksh calls 'a dynamic creative and destructive element'—its great blessings being apparent in Isaiah 9:7-8, the combination of blessing and rebuke in Isaiah 2.3-4, and the downfall that comes to those who scorn it (28.13); he concludes that 'Revelation is a blessing whose absence is felt as a judgment, for they will thirst for the Word of Yahweh and they will not find it. The Word of Yahweh is the vital force whose withdrawal means that grace ceases.'[362] The *power* of the word of God is clearly evident in Old Testament utterances.

Beyond the law and the prophets, the Deuteronomistic history relates to God's word as well because this history traces the fulfilment of the word. Recall *dābār*'s elision of speech and the matter it speaks of, and that true speech is fulfilled by the reality it speaks of. History fulfils God's word, describing the 'fulfillment of the covenant commandment proclaimed by Moses with its possibilities of blessing and curse', and prophets continually demand the people return to

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[356] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 152.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Procksh, 94.
[359] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 139.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Procksh, 96-7.

fulfilling the divine word, conveying its combined summons, promise, and judgment.[363] The sense of the word of God as a 'historical force' develops further in Deutero-Isaiah, but it never goes so far as to confuse the divine word with history itself; instead, the divine word brings to pass its own fulfilment on earth. Procksch explains:

> Nature passes away, but the Word of Yahweh lasts forever [cf. Is 40.8] … The *dəbar yhwh* is presented as absolute by nature in the well-known comparison with rain and snow in Is 55.10f. As rain and snow cannot be unfruitful but soak into the earth and cause seeds to sprout, so the Word of Yahweh cannot return to heaven without accomplishing its mission . . . The Word is seen to be a heavenly force which creatively accomplishes its work on earth.[364]

This calls to my mind Psalm 85.8-13 (85:9-14), where the psalmist promises to heed Yahweh's word, with full expectation that truth will spring from the earth.

This specifically *creative power* of God's word in the natural world, as well as the law and the prophets, should not be overlooked. Though the phrase *dəbar yhwh* is absent from Genesis 1, God clearly creates though speech, setting the God of Israel apart from other ancient Near Eastern creation myths which rely on violence (e.g. Marduk vs. Tiamut).[365] God's word-driven creativity appears in other early biblical texts as well, such as the prophets (e.g. Ezra 37.4, Isa 40.26), and the Psalms (e.g. 147.15-18).[366] Furthermore, the wisdom literature touches upon God's creative word, this time associating it 'ontologically' with wisdom in Proverbs 8.22-31 (a theme developed further in *Sirach* and *Wisdom of Solomon*).[367]

Israel's elision of God's creative words with the word of salvation and the word of law distinguishes it from other instances of powerfully creative divine words elsewhere in the ancient Near East.[368] Psalm 33 praises God's word as the force of creation and source of salvation, and Psalm 147 links the divine word with natural forces and divine commandments (147.4-5, 15). Anderson puts it nicely, emphasising truth's central role:

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[363] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 154.
[364] Procksh, 98.
[365] Anderson, 898.
[366] Procksh, 99-100.
[367] Anderson, 895.
[368] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 154-5.

The source of cosmic (and political) order is thus neither violence nor force, but truth, conveyed by a feeble word. God's same word orders lives of humanity in the Decalogue and the Torah, and confronting kings and the powerful, authentic representatives speak God's word with prophetic clarity and penetrating relevance.[369]

Silva agrees and stresses that the creative word of God is also the covenant's word of law and its salvific promises; this unification is unique, characterising 'the specifically Israelite understanding of the true word of God.'[370] Looking beyond Psalm 119—where this coincidence of creative word, law, and salvation's promise is obvious— Schmidt sees the broad activity of the God's word in evidence throughout the Psalter: it effects the life of individuals and nations, the course of nature and the content of commandments, and brings life and healing.[371] The word of God is one.

By examining the word of God, *dəbar yhwh*, the significance of God's truth becomes more apparent. Specifically, the significance of God's truth for creation and humanity has come into focus, and from these insights conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth* received further development. Most importantly, the word of God is true, i.e., it is good, upright, thinly true, and reliable in its accuracy to reality and as a guide for a good life. Divine commandments and the pronouncements of the prophets are unified expressions of God's word, not many and various individual words received as if by dictation. The word may appear as harsh judgment, but more characteristically it heals, guides, and restores. The prophetic excoriations are a unified part of this process rather than divine fickleness. Indeed, one of the divine word's characteristics is consistency. In this way, the word has power and efficacy among the creatures of the world, which is most pronounced in God's creation and sustaining of the cosmos through the divine word. Ultimately, the word of God has creative, salvific, and normative qualities for personal conduct and courts of law.

Wisdom (ḥokmâ)

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[369] Anderson, 898.
[370] Silva, NIDNTTE, iii, 155.
[371] Schmidt, 118.

In earlier sections of this chapter, we have seen Old Testament texts that closely associate ʾĕmet, God's creative Word, and the Torah with wisdom. This indicates that the biblical approach to wisdom is an important conceptual domain or frame for this study. The central Hebrew term for wisdom or being wise is ḥokmâ, which Dell defines as 'having the ability to make the right use of knowledge, being learned, discreet, skillful, perceptive, and judging rightly.'[372] Far from a secular concept, the term is closely connected to God and it has the remarkable quality of appearing as a personified female figure, Lady Wisdom, 'who mediates among human beings, the wider world, and the divine real.'[373] In this section we will consider the diversity of human wisdom, how to attain it, its relation to God, and finally the figure of personified Wisdom.

Old Testament ḥokmâ encompasses what in English is divided among knowledge, learning, and skill. Fohrer documents ten English subdivisions of Hebrew wisdom: skill and ability, cleverness, slyness and cunning, practical wisdom, magic and manticism, cultural wisdom, rules and behaviour, ethical conduct, piety, academic wisdom, and eschatological blessing and apocalyptic endowment.[374] Although biblical texts are by no means above criticising another society's wisdom there is an explicit acknowledgment that Israel is not alone in its pursuit of wisdom (e.g. Jer 50.35, Isa 47.10) nor above adopting wisdom others have codified (Prov 22.17-23.11 strikingly resembles *Wisdom of Amenemope*).[375] Perhaps more significantly, wisdom is accessible to all, and is noted in men, women, children, slaves, and foreigners.[376]

Biblical scholars have attempted to unite the disparate content of wisdom under a single characterisation, but the Old Testament does not offer theoretical formulation for the nature of wisdom. Instead, it repeatedly essentialises the *pursuit* of wisdom: 'the fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom' (e.g. Prov 9.10). This is Hebrew wisdom's distinguishing trait; it begins with knowledge and fear of God. Rather than being stark terror, fear of Yahweh is a commitment to heed God above all.[377] Murphy puts it nicely: 'To know God, in the Wisdom Literature, is to

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[372] Katharine J. Dell, 'Wisdom in the OT,' in NIDB, v, 869.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Georg Fohrer, 'σοφια: B. The Old Testament,' TDNT, vii, 476-489.
[375] Silva, NIDNTTE, iv, 333.
[376] Carole, R. Fontaine, 'Sophia,' in NIDB, v, 356.
[377] Silva, NIDNTTE, iv, 332.

be in, and to do, the truth. This is as much a faith experience as any of the cultic acts in the Jerusalem temple.'[378]

Until the recent decades, biblical scholarship neglected wisdom literature because its lack of explicit reference to the Pentateuch's salvation history made it appear extraneous to the main religious purport of the Old Testament.[379] It appeared too philosophical to not be secular, but appearances can be deceiving and its innately religious orientation has come to be recognised, as has that the secular/religious distinction is ill-suited for biblical texts.[380] As we have seen, fear and knowledge of Yahweh is wisdom's driving impulse, and wisdom gained from human experience and the natural world is an intimate possession, aspect, or companion of God. Furthermore, the Psalms integrate wisdom with Yahweh, salvation history, and the law. 'Many psalms are concerned with personal piety, and these embody a certain type or aspect of such piety, but they also state or imply an association between wisdom and the Jewish law, such as we suspected might underpin Proverbs 1-9.' [381] For instance, Psalm 93.1-5 moves from creation to the temple and Psalm 96 combines thanksgiving for salvation to celebration of creation.[382] Likewise, Psalms 1 and 119 link personal piety and law, distinguishing the pious adherent to the Torah from the wicked one who disregards it, a distinction matching that between the wise and wicked in Proverbs.[383]

Dell helpfully illustrates the process of gaining wisdom as a triangular structure. On one corner is humanity, on another nature: 'the world to which the wisdom writers look is the natural one; proverbs often draws comparisons between unlike phenomena: one human, one nonhuman.'[384] Humanity and nature form the base and God is the peak, as the 'creator of the world, of humans, animals, plants, the elements, and of the order that holds the fabric of life together … God is the head of the social order for human beings, the king being God's representative on earth.' [385] Murphy says Israel experienced no disjuncture between knowledge

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[378] Roland E. Murphy, 'Wisdom in the OT,' in ABD, vi, 925.
[379] Ibid., 922.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 89.
[382] Murphy, 924.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Dell, NIDB, v, 874.
[385] Ibid.

and faith for God was experienced in the world.[386] Thus Wisdom is a divine gift informed by experience (Isa 28.23-29).[387]

Now we come to consider God's relationship to wisdom, as it is portrayed in the Old Testament (overlooking the deutero-canonical books). As implied by God gifting wisdom to certain people, wisdom is treated as God's possession (e.g. 2 Sam 14.20), and as such it is beyond human skill (Jer 10.7) and greater than any human understanding (e.g. Prov 21.30).[388] The Wisdom of God has generative and ethical connotations as well. References occur to God's technical and artistic mastery in creating (e.g. Is 40.13 f.) and sustaining creation (e.g. Job 37.16).[389] As for moral conduct, Fohrer tells us that God's ḥokmâ is also God's manner of action, of establishing justice, on which is founded human ethical codes (e.g., Ezra 7.25).[390] God is said to attain and create wisdom, not merely possess it. Job 28 lengthily portrays how no-one can find wisdom; neither humans nor even death, the sea, or the deep know where to find it/her (28.14, 22). Only God finds the way of wisdom among the heavens, and the chapter ends by declaring that humanity only finds wisdom through God. Opinions differ as to whether wisdom is pre-existent to God's discovery or God knows where wisdom is found because God established the word with wisdom.

This distinct hypostatisation of an appealing elusive wisdom becomes an explicit personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9. Within Dell's triangle of humanity, nature, and divinity, she notes this additional figure who takes 'a mediating role, imparting wisdom to human beings, acting for the divine, primeval yet herself created … a gift from God to the whole creation, attainable to all who seek to follow its ways.'[391] In Proverbs 1-9 wisdom is undeniably personified and female: she calls out in the market place (1.20), prepares and invites people to a banquet (9.1, 4), she offers love (8.17) is to be embraced (4.8) and spoken to like a sister or close friend (7.4). Proverbs 8.3-36 explicitly describes her role in relation to God, repeatedly emphasising her existence before any other created thing and that she is at God's side.

There is dissension over how to make theological sense of personified wisdom. At times the pursuit of wisdom is described through the image of a relationship with Lady Wisdom. She is

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[386] Murphy, 925.
[387] Fohrer, 493.
[388] Ibid., 493.
[389] Ibid., 489.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Dell, NIDB, v, 874.

personified, feminine, and speaks in a manner with has more in common with God's speech than that of sages and wisdom teachers. Murphy explains that to some scholars 'she seems to be something of God, born of God, in God. Usually she is said to be a divine attribute, a personification of the wisdom with which God created the world,' while other scholars disagree, taking the view that 'wisdom [is] an attribute of the world' made by God and as the mysterious world order she 'beckons to human beings.' [392] For his part, Murphy sees wisdom as coinciding with Yahweh: 'Is Wisdom not the Lord, who turns toward creatures and summons them through creation, through the wisdom experience?'[393] These various interpretative options have been debated since ancient times, so reaching a consensus is unlikely. Lady Wisdom has been interpreted variously as a hypostasis, a primordial creation, co-eternal with God, or an aspect/trait of God, but in any case Lady Wisdom is a guiding central figure to the pious quest for wisdom and how to live in its way—not unlike the guidance given by God's word.

In conclusion, these findings regarding the approach to wisdom in biblical texts now informed the last conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth*. the pursuit of wisdom is fundamentally devotional: fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and all wisdom is a gift from God. This premise is held, without any sense of contradiction, with the views that growth in wisdom is supported by experience, the natural world, and tradition, and can occur in other nations than those devoted to Yahweh, though with mixed results. Virtually all realms of knowledge, skill, craft, and cleverness are encompassed by wisdom, and it is something available to men, women, children, regardless of social standing or national origin. Adherence to the Torah, moral action, and honesty are aspects of wisdom as will, and wisdom is the path of the created world as set by God, for God created through wisdom. Like the word of God, wisdom is instrumental in the creation and sustaining of the cosmos as well as in guiding humanity to live godly lives.

This concludes this study's analysis of conceptually-oriented domains of *ʾĕmet* in the Old Testament.

III.7 Conclusion

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[392] Murphy, 927.
[393] Ibid.

The preceding chapter has made two significant contributions to this study. First, it has explicated and demonstrated the application of its novel theological methodology through its productive approach to the Bible, successfully engaging with biblical studies and cognitive linguistics while also producing conceptual parameters for use in constructive theology. Second, it has done original work to explicate the understanding of truth and divinity in the Old Testament, yielding five conceptual parameters which are of value to theological approaches to truth.

The first subsection (III.1) built on the methodological section in Chapter I (I.5), setting out the plan to investigate both textual meaning and sense relations in the Old Testament that relate to truth and divinity. It justified the decision to consult historical criticism for the interpretation of biblical passages and to restrict its inquiry to the Protestant canon, naming this a 'historical canonical' approach. The benefit of engaging with cognitive linguistics was also made apparent. Finally, the effect of aiming to be *congruent* with the biblical text rather than merely *informed* by it was clarified.

The following five sections of analysis were developed into five conceptual parameters. The following section (III.2) had immediate occasion to make rigorous use of cognitive linguistic categories, and its examination of the senses of ʾĕmet, the Hebrew word usually translated 'truth', was developed into this study's first biblical conceptual parameter: (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin.* Section III.3 attended to the many entities that are called true (ʾĕmet) in the Old Testament, drawing from this (g) *that all existing things may be truth bearers*, including God, humans, speech, things, and actions. Additionally, it added further support for (f) *thick truth* and some initial material for (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth.* The word family associated with ʾĕmet was the topic of section III.4, which yielded a rich dynamic of sense relations, one from which this theologian theorised (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*— meaning that truth can be a quality of substance and/or of relationships, and that the substantive truth of one thing can become transferred to or shared by another through a true relationship. After three sections investigating sense relations, the final two turned to textual meaning, looking to flesh out the Bible's domains of practice and thought that contextualised the many biblical senses of ʾĕmet. III.5 looked to scripts, or action oriented domains, in which ʾĕmet figured prominently, focusing on devotional contexts, legal contexts, and wisdom-seeking contexts. III.6 turned to conceptual domains or frames, focusing on words and things (encompassed by dābār),

Yahweh, the word of God, and wisdom. These two sections yielded detailed material for both (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* and (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth.* These importantly included the theological positions that: first, God's presence is that which IS, both eternal through all time and space as well as actively engaged in history, a presence marked by steadfast love and faithful truth, such that he is compassionate towards Israel yet unbending from justice, and actively engaged even as Yahweh himself is reliably constant and unaltered; and second, that the word and wisdom of Yahweh are both a powerful active force which creates the cosmos, maintains its existence, are found in the Torah and commandments—both are true in the sense of thin truth and in that they are reliable for pursuit of a good and godly life.

Chapter IV: A Constructive Theology of Truth

Chapters II and III yielded ten conceptual parameters concerning the nature of God and truth. This chapter aims to form them into a constructive theology of truth. To that end, it considers how conceptual parameters are turned into a constructive theology and provides a brief overview of the parameters developed in Chapters II and III. The remainder of Chapter IV then presents this study's constructive theology of truth, synthesising and augmenting the parameters into an alethiology that addresses truth in general, God as Truth, and truth in creation. Its implications for epistemology, relevance to theological discourse, and relation to the philosophical and theological accounts of truth in Chapter I will be noted as well.

IV.1 Theological Construction and Parameter Review

From Conceptual Parameters to Constructive Theology

This study has articulated ten conceptual parameters regarding truth and divinity. The constructive theological task is to develop this list of independent ideas into a coherent theological alethiology. The process of turning independently articulated conceptual parameters into a coherent theological proposal is a creative process that will vary depending on the topic at hand. Instead of prescribing a regimented process, this method allows the approach to vary as needed as long as the chosen process is transparent and accountable to the reader. The theologian may construct as s/he wishes, as long as it is transparent (i) when a conceptual parameter is being implemented, (ii) how conceptual parameters are being related to or synthesised with each other, and (iii) when a material is being added by the constructive theology. This transparency and accountability enables the comprehension, evaluation, critique, and implementation of this study's findings for other projects.

One goal of this conceptual parameter method is to clearly display the influence of ancient Christian sources on the conceptual parameters while also indicating that the resulting theological account is not identical with its sources. This Chapter IV synthesises multiple ancient positions, uniting them in a manner that is both new and congruent with traditional Christian thought and practice. This theology is intelligibly ancient and new. The methodology likewise

makes clear in what sense the proposed theology of truth is biblical, Christian, and Augustinian. This study does not claim to present the 'biblical' view of truth as if it were what the historical persons who wrote the canonical texts had in mind at the time. It is 'biblical' in the sense of being *congruent* with defensible interpretations of the Bible. Furthermore, the theology of truth is 'Christian,' but not because it is the view held by all or most Christians. Rather, it is essentially Christian because it is congruent with the Nicene Creed and the biblical text. Finally, it is Augustinian by virtue of being *informed* by three of his texts, without precisely reiterating his own position.[394]

The Ten Conceptual Parameters

The conceptual parameters developed from the Bible and Augustine's selected writings are summarised below. They are *lettered instead of numbered* to reinforce that their order does *not* indicate priority among them. Their order of development and presentation was chosen for clarity with the reader in mind.

The following five Augustinian conceptual parameters have been developed:

(a) *understanding God as truth* names God as Truth itself, unbounded by time and space, superior to all creation, who is apprehensible through the constant truths of mathematics and the wise principles for a good life. Though this God yet remains mysteriously beyond comprehension, he is personally relatable in prayer and devotion by the names Truth, Love, and Eternal (a position we might call an apophatic realist position).

(b) *the human apprehension of divine truth* reiterates the incomprehensible nature of God as truth, noting that it nonetheless may be apprehended, learned, discovered, abided in, held in faith, and brought into understanding. Divine truth is not subjected to the human mind, for it is unaltered by human apprehension which is always limited, fallible, diverse, and variable. It is the condition of possibility for human understanding, already present to the mind and closer than one is to oneself.

(c) *the human pursuit of truth* is never finished—though a decisive threshold is crossed when one accepts the divine Truth as one's God with all one's heart, soul, and mind (this being

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[394] Being *informed* is a lesser hurdle than being *congruent*, in that one may be *informed* by some elements of Augustine's writings and yet not be *congruent* with his entire body of thought.

the same God who is incarnate in Christ). The constancy and reliability of divine Truth affords the seeker peace, security, and freedom (especially from sin), affecting the entire human person (intellect, emotions, bodily life), who is entirely engaged in the pursuit. Additionally, creation aids the search for divine truth, as it always refers one to its maker.

(d) *the Trinitarian God as truth* took on three principles of Trinitarian language: that it always falls short of God; that all names attributing a divine trait treat God's entire substance indivisibly; and that only relational names (excluded from the previous principle) are not necessarily convertible with each other. Furthermore, 'Truth' is a substantive divine name which is convertible with Love, Goodness, Being and all other substantive divine names.

(e) *the relationship between human wisdom and knowledge* holds that knowledge is an awareness of temporal and bodily things (i.e. creaturely things and the cosmos) whereas wisdom is an awareness of eternal things (i.e. divine things, God). Humans cannot advance in either wisdom or knowledge without the other, and when the pursuits of wisdom and knowledge are properly integrated, wisdom holds primacy.

The following five biblical conceptual parameters have been developed from the Old Testament:

(f) *that truth is thick rather than thin* states that truth encompasses many senses alongside the 'thin' truth of speech agreeing with reality. These include: faithfulness, truthfulness, honesty, integrity, reliability, firmness/solidity, enduring constancy, being genuine real and actual, and the sublimity and stability of divine presence.

(g) *all existing things may be truth-bearers* means that no category of existence is excluded from being able to bear truth, including concrete and abstract objects, utterances, humans, God, and both verbal and non-verbal actions. This parameter allows that different things may bear truth in different manners, but also notes that attributions of truth frequently blur boundaries, such as when it groups together the truth of a witness, their testimony, and the event testified to.

(h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* holds that Yahweh's truth is normative, constant, and united with God's active presence, steadfast love, and faithfulness. God's Truth consists of constant devotion despite apostasy and wickedness, throughout time, manifesting in concrete aid, protection and guidance, meant for all those in need, and that all God's words and works are categorically true in this sense. God's truth and God's being—experienced by Israel as God's

constancy and abiding presence—is that which IS, both eternal through all time and space as well as actively engaged in history. Additionally, divine truth always coincides with divine steadfast love. The thin sense of divine truth is apparent in that God's commandments are thinly true and valid/dependable for a living a good life, often cultivated by instruction in wisdom. The appropriate human response is to act truly towards God and other humans. The human failing to fulfil this norm is always apparent in comparison to God's faithful truth.

(i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable* indicates that truth can be a quality of substance (e.g. firm, enduring, constant; also reliable, dependable), and quality of relationships (e.g. when one element relates to another element as true, through reliance, trust, belief etc.), and that, through a true relationship, the substantive truth of one thing can become transferred to or shared by another. This transference is a form of creative making, in that truth is brought to be where it was not, as when building a firm foundation.

(j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth* covers more ground than any other conceptual parameter, articulating how divine truth cannot be understood apart from divine law, word, and wisdom. In this biblical view, the underlying metaphor for speech is that speech that is true is *being filled* or *solidified* by the reality it speaks of: true speech has been fulfilled, false speech is empty, and some speech has not yet come to pass. God's word effectively and powerfully creates its own truth, enacting what it expresses, for instance, in the creation of the world. God's word is also singular, such that divine commandments and prophetic pronouncements are diverse expressions of the same divine word. While retaining its constancy, God's word can variously heal, guide, restore, and harshly judge. Divine commandments and Torah are true in that they derive from God's very character (steadfast love and faithful truth) *and* as they are dependable guides to a good godly life. Ultimately, the word of God has creative, salvific, and normative qualities for personal conduct and courts of law. Finally, to walk in the way of truth is to live by God's word. This is closely related to the pursuit of wisdom, itself a fundamentally devotional pursuit, one which brings a person into the true path. It begins with fear of Yahweh, who is the giver of all wisdom, as it is found through experience, tradition, and the natural world. Virtually all realms of knowledge, skill, craft, and cleverness are encompassed by wisdom, and it is something available to men, women, and children, regardless of social standing or national origin. Wisdom illuminates the righteous path, which is marked by honesty, piety, and ethical treatment of others. Like God's word, divine wisdom powerfully creates and

maintains the cosmos, is found in the Torah and commandments, and is reliable for pursuing a good life.

These ten conceptual parameters should act as guardrails in this study's effort to create a Christian theology of truth. Here they will be synthesised and augmented for just that purpose. Following the relational order explained in I.1—in which alethiology lies implicit within all epistemology—this section begins its theology of truth with alethiology, considering truth in general. It then elaborates by addressing God as Truth and truth in creation. Finally, it relates the alethiology's impact upon the search for knowledge, i.e., epistemology. Throughout, provisional indications will be made as to the relation of this study's proposal to other accounts of truth and to promising avenues for further development.

IV.2 Alethiology: What is Truth?

Choosing Thick Truth

In John 18.38 Pilate asked Jesus: What is truth? The answer looked him in the eye. In the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ, God made human, is truth. This declaration makes little sense, however, if one thinks of truth only in its 'thin' sense—the notion that truth is a thought, sentence, or similar which agrees with an aspect of reality. Truth, in this sense, is only a property of propositions, sentences, thoughts, ideas, or the like, not of persons. The implication of exclusively 'thin' truth is that the cosmos is divisible into two categories, wherein mental or linguistic entities (whether thoughts, propositions etc.) are fundamentally distinguished from the rest of reality (in which all material being is included);[395] only members of the thought-like contingent can be true or false and are so in virtue of their relationship to the latter.

This study's alethiology begins with conceptual parameter (f) *that truth is thick rather than thin*. Further, it holds a more expansive view: any existing thing, action, or relationship may be true—an insight taken from biblical conceptual parameter (g) *that all existing things may be truth bearers.* This includes human persons, e.g. Jesus. Importantly, this understanding of truth refuses any binary division between mind and body or between language and reality. Something may be true in itself or in relationship to something else, and actions and relationships may 'true'

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[395] A division reminiscent of Descartes' mind-body dualism.

themselves. This dissolves 'thin' truth's absolute distinction between intellect and thing and the emphasis on their relationship. Classic truth-bearers in analytic thought (propositions, sentences, beliefs, etc.) are merely one truth-bearer among all the rest of the created world/existence. The word-to-world relationship is simply another sort of world-to-world relationship.

Considering all existence to be potential truth-bearers may exceed the intuitive notion of 'thin truth', but it does not contradict English usage, which applies 'truth' and 'true' to persons, objects, and actions. In common speech, a 'true' individual is loyal or faithful, ('true friend', 'truehearted') or, archaically, honest ('all good men and true'). 'True' can indicate something is real or actual ('her true intentions') or that something is genuine, rightly/strictly so called ('true craftsmanship', 'true love', 'true north'). An object can even be true to another, as in the phrases 'true to form' and 'true to life' ('the film was true to the book'). The verb 'to true' is still used in architecture and engineering, for when a beam is brought into alignment, making it reliable for construction. When something 'comes true' it becomes a reality, as when dreams or wishes 'come true.' Thus, while 'thin truth' is a common intuitive sense of truth in English, the word's purport is by no means restricted to it. In this way, conceptual parameter (g) gives this alethiology an advantage over exclusively 'thin' truth by accounting for common usage of 'true' in English.

This thick conceptualisation of truth includes the senses of 'thin' truth, but also faithfulness, reliability, honesty, and being genuine or actual—senses evident in the common English phrases above. Truth is indivisibly thick and includes senses of uprightness, honesty, integrity and truthfulness; the sublimity and stability of divine presence; the genuine, real and actual; and of course, 'thin truth', 'faithfulness', 'reliability', and firmness/solidity. Though it takes many English words to express the full range of truth's significance, this thick account of truth is not alien to the English language.

How are all these senses are united in this alethiology's concept of 'thick' truth? The cognitive linguistic concept of micro-senses is instructive here. It describes the phenomenon of a single word appearing to have separate senses on different occasions but upon reflection, the word has a single conceptual core.[396] To illustrate, the word 'card' has different micro-senses in the following sentences: 'this deck is missing a card', 'a card from Jo arrived in the post', and 'I'll pay by card'. Most of the time 'card' is used in obviously specific ways, such as (post)card,

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[396] Croft, 126-8.

(business)card, (credit)card, and (birthday/greeting)card. The word 'card' defaults to the specificity of a micro-sense. These are not, however, full sense divisions, for the specific senses can be included within a single concept: 'a piece of thick, stiff paper or thin plastic.' The word 'card', however, is so rarely used this way in speech that an additional phrase must indicate it is meant in a general sense, e.g. 'any kind of card will do.' A word with micro-senses at first appears to have many fully autonomous senses, but upon reflection they are all unifiable. In this way, the many senses included within thick truth (for which English uses different words but Hebrew does not), can be united under a single concept conveyed by the term 'truth.'

There are multiple ways one might begin to articulate the unifying definition of truth, a task that has preoccupied analytic philosophy for over a century, often coining a summarising slogan for major truth-theories. For this study's alethiology, if one wanted a slogan, one could say that 'truth is what is real.' This would directly pick out the senses of genuineness, actuality, firmness/solidity, and the sublime stability of the divine presence. By extension, this could be seen to entail what is reliable, dependable, and has integrity. It is more of a stretch for 'thin' truth which emphasises a relational quality, but one can see that thin truth is nevertheless directly related to what is 'real,' and that the falsehood of empty words have less purchase with reality than they pretend.

This slogan falls short, however, because the quest for a definition of truth which encompasses its fullness and does it justice will never succeed. There is no single comprehensive definition which can unite these many senses of truth because the one instance where they are all truly united and fully displayed is in God, and God is beyond comprehension. This was learned from Augustinian conceptual parameter (b) *the human apprehension of divine truth*, which describes God, who is Truth, as being impossible for human beings to understand fully or exhaustively.[397]

The resulting inability to satisfactorily define 'truth' (which has also plagued analytic philosophy) is not a flaw in this proposal; it is a feature. One should expect *all* definitions of truth to fall short, to be incomplete when truth is grounded in incomprehensible God. In this way, this alethiology explains the irresolvable state of analytic truth debates. It also holds that while all analytic truth theories are mistaken insofar as they purport to exhaustively define truth, they

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[397] Exodus 33-34 may be read to a similar effect. Moses is not permitted to see God face to face because it would be too much for his mortal frame to sustain. He is told, nonetheless, that Yahweh is the one who abounds in steadfast love and faithful truth.

each do have genuine (though limited) insight into the nature of truth. For instance, this theology of truth endorses the medieval formulation that truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus* —an intuition that lies at the heart of correspondence theories—as accurate as far as it goes but incomplete in itself. Unlike many who adopt this Latin phrase, this alethiology insists that it does not exhaustively define all that truth is.

Though incomprehensible, Divine Truth itself is still apprehensible (again, drawing on conceptual parameter (b)), preserving the pursuit of truth from futility. One *can* gain greater understanding of truth in time, though not completely comprehend it. Further, Augustinian conceptual parameter (c) *the human pursuit of truth is never finished* teaches that this pursuit is worthwhile on both an intellectual and personal basis.

This theological alethiology has the potential to harmonise the insights of each analytic truth-theory, showing that it is their claims to exclusivity and exhaustive definition of truth which renders them mutually exclusive, and that if they were seen as limited incomplete apprehensions of the incomprehensible nature of truth this modification would enable them to be complementary formulations. Recall, additionally, that the postliberal theologians surveyed in I.3 wished to maintain a conviction in truth's reality while also refusing to define it too clearly; this study's alethiology could furnish a more robust defence of that position. Fleshing out these comparisons is one potential avenue for subsequent development of this alethiology

The Fullness of God as Truth

The Hebrew experience of God as recorded in the Old Testament is foundational for understanding God as truth, indeed, as Truth itself.[398] Biblical conceptual parameter (h) *understanding Yahweh as truth* dovetails nicely with Augustinian conceptual parameters (a) *understanding God as truth* and (d) *the Trinitarian God as truth* because each of their distinctive accounts of the divine as truth is conceptually compatible when each is taken to refer to the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ.

For a Christian alethiology, the understanding of God as truth begins with the experience of Yahweh in the Old Testament, among the Israelites. God's truth and God's being—as

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[398] In Exodus 3 God self-identifies to Moses as Yahweh and promises to set his people free. After saving them from bondage and witnessing their first wayward idolatry, God again reveals Godself to Moses on Mt. Sinai: Yahweh, the one who IS, abounding in steadfast love and faithful truth (34.6).

experienced by Israel is Yahweh's constancy and abiding presence—is that which IS, both eternal through all time and space as well as actively engaged in history. Likewise, Augustine names God as Truth itself, unbounded by time and space, superior to all creation, but expands this application to encompass the Trinity.

This is not an Aristotelian eternal divinity who simply lasts forever, unchanging and inactive within time and space. Instead, the character of God is both constancy and activity, maintaining devotion to Israel despite apostasy and wickedness, providing aid, protection, and guidance to those in need, sometimes being moved to rebuke. An aspect of God's truth is not to overlook wickedness, but to ensure justice. Fundamentally, the eternal character of God is steadfast love and faithful truth, as Israel knew throughout its history and Augustine declared in prayer to the God who is Eternal, Love, and Truth. In this way, God's truth is God's very self and eternal being. God's constancy of character does not waver, forever acting with faithful truth and steadfast love. God's word and works are categorically true in this sense, the character of their action.

Bringing to bear biblical conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth,* recall that the divine word is singular, interpreted and re-articulated in many and various ways into commandments and by prophets. It also creates the cosmos and sustains the universe, maintaining the natural world. I find this understanding of God's word combines well with Augustine's identification of the eternal truth of mathematics as indicative of God's existence and truth (parameter (a)). The laws of physics, chemistry, and mathematics are eternal truths that generate, sustain, and maintain the universe. The thin sense of divine truth comes to the fore when considering these natural laws. Furthermore, to live according to God's word means to be guided into the wisdom of a good and holy life—wisdom being the second sort of eternal truth, after that of number, which leads Augustine to see God as truth. More will be said on this topic when we consider the human apprehension of truth and epistemology, but for the moment the Augustinian parameter (a) which holds that the truth of God is mathematical as well as wise can be seen to dovetail with the biblical parameters (h) and (j) that articulate God's truth as intimately bound to God's word which sustains the cosmos. The appropriate human response is to live in truth towards God and one's fellow humans, but the insufficiency of the human response only serves to highlight God's constancy despite human failings.

Now, God as truth is clearly experienced personally and intellectually; the truth of God is found and named for what it is in the first instance through the history of Israel and their relationship with Yahweh. It is also encountered—though not always recognised for what it is—in the eternal truths of mathematics and hard sciences that uncover the underpinnings of the created cosmos, and in the principles societies uncover for living a good life. These apprehensions of facets, features, and events of divine truth, however, never amount to comprehension of God who is Truth itself. God always remains mysteriously beyond complete comprehension, whether it is Moses' unfulfilled wish to see Yahweh face to face, or the continually elusive *theory of everything* sought by physicists.

The Trinitarian God is Truth as well. Taking up conceptual parameter (d) *the Trinitarian God as Truth*, this alethiology is congruent with the Nicene Creed using an Augustinian approach to divine names. Because God is one,[399] all names that attribute a divine trait are substantive attributions. God not only is true; God is Truth. Each of the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are themselves Truth just as each is God. This accords with the New Testament, which calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth, and in which Jesus says he is the Truth. God's Truth is convertible with all other substantive names of God, such that God's Truth is identical with God's Being, Love, and Goodness, to mention a few divine name. The convertibility of the divine names Being, Love, and Truth harmonises well with the constant conjunction of Yahweh's steadfast love and faithful truth in the Old Testament.

This study goes further than the Augustinian parameter (d), however, in that it holds truth to be a relational name of God as well as a substantive name.[400] Relational names include relations to creation (e.g. Creator, Redeemer) as well as relations within the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are relational names). In keeping with biblical conceptual parameter (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*, Truth can also be a relational name for the relations between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each one is always true to the others, being in complete accord.

This alethiology has implications for Christian theology, drawing on the account of speech in conceptual parameter (j) illuminates both the significance of Jesus being God's word and one sense in which the humanity of Christ is the Truth. A word in the general sense of

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[399] Cf. the Shema of Deuteronomy 6.4.

[400] Augustine provided the distinction between substantive and relational names, and in *Trinity* he does not designate 'Truth' to be a relational divine name.

speech is said to be true when it is fulfilled, when the reality it speaks of has come to pass, making it metaphorically solid and dependable. At this point, the truth of the speech, the speaker, and the spoken-of reality are tied together—truth is transferable and shared among them. God's singular word expresses God's character as eternal constancy, steadfast love, and faithful truth. Included in this is a promise of redemption, of grace for those who have gone astray. *Charis* and *alētheia* 'grace and truth' in John 1 is a direct allusion to *ḥesed* and *ʾĕmet* of *yhwh* in Ex 34. When God's word is made flesh in the incarnation, God's word is fulfilled in that the reality it promises comes to pass and is complete (through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection). Christ's humanity fulfils the divine word, eliding their truth together. Furthermore, the life of Jesus is perfectly emblematic of the one who follows in the way of truth, the way of the righteous, as described in the wisdom literature and the psalms. The hypostatic union metaphysically describes the union of a human being living truly to God's word, a reality only truly accomplished in Christ. More will be said about Jesus as the 'way' and the 'life' when we come to the human pursuit of truth.

Of course, this is in no way fully explicates what it means to call God 'Truth,' and much more could be said about Yahweh, the Trinitarian godhead and each of the Trinitarian persons in this regard without even beginning to plumb the depths. Having said this much, however, should convey that the divine name Truth has rich theological significance beyond what a consideration of attributes would suggest. The implications go further as we turn to truth in creation, given an understanding of God as truth.

Truth in Creation

Everything that is not God is God's creation. Taking *creatio ex nihilo* as a given, we now revisit biblical conceptual parameter (g) *all existing things may be truth-bearers* to begin the extension of this alethiology to creation. This central parameter means that inanimate and abstract objects, human beings, thoughts and propositions, verbal and non-verbal actions, and relationships between these existing things are all possible truth-bearers. Compared to the eternal God, these creations exist in a limited way as bodily temporal entities within time and space (which are also creations). Divine Truth is eternal, it fully encompasses all the 'thick' senses of truth, and is indivisible from God's steadfast love. There is truth in creation, but unlike God's

Truth, it is limited by time and space, as are all of God's creatures. The only truly universal truth is the divine Truth who is God, true in all times and place, in regard to all things. All other truths, the creaturely ones, are limited, true only for a certain time, or certain places, or in regard to certain things.

While all created things may be truth bearers, different truth-bearers may bear truth differently. The variety among creaturely manifestations of truth is similar to how beauty and goodness will manifest differently in one situation or another, or how a mathematical formula will have different outcomes when its variables are given different values. The truth of a person includes the sense of honesty as a result of the person's volition, but a while one may speak of 'a true honest word', the sense of honesty which true speech has does not result from the speech's volition, for it has none. In God alone do all the senses of truth become fully manifest. These differences in how truth is borne, however, are not disjunctures that isolate different instances of truth from each other, as if being distinguishable made them separate. On the contrary, the transferable nature of truth gifts it with a web-like quality, joining together disparate portions of creation. For instance, the truth of a witness, of their testimony, and of the event testified to are indivisible despite there being three distinguishable truth-bearers. Hence, the attribution of truth often combines together the truth of ontologically distinct entities as a possessing a single truth together.

To explain this dynamic joining quality of truth, it is instructive to turn to biblical parameter (i) *that truth may be substantial, relational, and transferable*. 'Truth' can indicate the firm, enduring, constant, reliable, and dependable quality of one of God's creations. 'Truth' can also describe a quality of relationship when one entity is oriented to rely or depend upon the truth of another entity. This reliance may involve trust and belief or it may be an unthinking reliance. At this point, truth then becomes transferred or shared, from the relied upon entity to the one which then relies. This transference is a form of creative making, in that truth is brought to be where it was not, as when building a firm foundation.

Hence, a core image for this constructive theology is that truth is like a gathering firmness, dynamically building. This image differs markedly from both the concealing/un-concealing dynamic Heidegger explores and the receptive self-surrender to truth that Balthasar portrays. I would also suggest that this dynamic is the opposite of what Nietzsche describes as

the pursuit of truth (an unrelenting hunt to uncover and demolish falsehood). Fleshing out these comparisons is one potential avenue for subsequent development of this alethiology.

Truth that is substantial, relational, and transferable has a creative quality, as suggested by the image of a gathering firmness. To elaborate, this alethiology details the role of God's Truth in creation by appealing to conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth*. This study then adds the constructive move of stating that God's law, word, divine wisdom, and the truth of number are one and the same (see (a) *understanding God as truth,* which holds that the truth of God is mathematical as well as being wisdom), and furthermore, that they are properly thought of as God's Truth. When God created all that is not God, the cosmos was and remains completely dependent upon God for its continuing existence, and that includes a dependence upon God's Truth—the word, wisdom, law, number that are everywhere apparent.[401] God's truth (word/law/wisdom) effectively and powerfully creates more truth, enacting what it expresses in the creation of the world, while remaining beyond full comprehension. Even the divine Truth of number which governs the most basic matter of the universe is not fully articulable.[402]

Understanding this Alethiology of creation can be useful when considering other theological issues. For example, God's Truth (word/law/wisdom) is singular, such that divine commandments and prophetic pronouncements are diverse expressions of the same divine word. But one may wonder how God's Truth as Law and Wisdom relates to the many disparate instances of divine law or wisdom found in the Pentateuch or Wisdom literature (not to mention the laws of physics, mathematics, and so forth). How is it that they are so often spoken of as one and the same? Here, cognitive linguistics' category of 'sense facets' is illuminating. A word has 'sense facets' when particular senses of a word are, upon reflection, ontologically distinct as different kinds or categories that cannot be unified, and yet are often invoked together in what functions as a unified sense. For instance, the word 'book' can have the sense of a physical tome, and also the sense of a story that is written in multiple physical tomes. An immaterial story and material tome are clearly utterly different categories of existence, and yet, 'book' is frequently used to mean both simultaneously without confusion. This is because the two senses (book as

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[401] Even God's truth of number which governs the basic matter of the universe is not fully articulable. There are irrational numbers which cannot be expression in fractions or decimal points. It is not that there is complete *order* per se.

[402] E.g., irrational numbers such as pi and the square root of two cannot be expressed in fractions or decimal points. The governing power of God's Truth includes infinite and chaotic aspects of creation.

tome and book as story) coincide in reality to such a great extent. Similarly, God's 'law' and 'wisdom' is often used with two ontologically distinct senses at the same time. God's truth which is eternal and single, and the many human articulations of God's truth, which are various, limited, and even occasionally incompatible (e.g. Newtonian physics and sub-atomic physics are both true but incompatible). This again reiterates the limited nature of created truth compared to divine Truth. However, because all human articulations of truth are dependent upon the Truth of God in order to be true themselves, the two ontologically distinct forms of truth are at times spoken of as one and the same.

One benefit of this insight is that it credibly prevents the Bible from becoming the bearer of Christian truth which must be defended, in a fundamentalist manner, as absolutely and completely true. Only God is absolute Truth; the Bible is not. Likewise, the word of God is Truth, but the word of God is not the text of the Bible. The text of the Bible is a human articulation of its experience of and relationship with God who is Truth and God's Word who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. The Bible is true in a limited creaturely way. In this account, the Bible remains a true guide to the true God, to the pursuit of wisdom, and to a godly, righteous, and truly happy life. This is not achieved by following its laws to the letter or believing every chapter and verse with complete fidelity. The life of truth does not consist in devotion to the words of the book. It is, rather, the devotion to the God that is everlasting steadfast love and faithful truth, who is revealed in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

This concludes this study's alethiology, but as was noted in Chapter 1 (I.1), alethiology always lies implicit in epistemology. Because of their intimate relation, the next subsection outlines a constructive theological epistemology that emerges out of the alethiology presented thus far.

Epistemology

Instead of beginning with a definition of knowledge, the epistemology developed from this study's theology of truth begins with God. It should now be a familiar idea from Augustinian conceptual parameter (b) *the human apprehension of divine truth* that the incomprehensible God is Truth, who is never subjected to the human mind (being always superior and impervious) and yet may be apprehended or understood in part while remaining beyond comprehension.

Furthermore, as we have seen, divine truth is the condition of possibility of human knowledge because it is the source of all being for the knowing creature.

Conceptual parameter (b) further specifies that human apprehension of divine truth is limited, fallible, diverse, and variable. 'Limited' refers to the limit of apprehension that falls short of comprehension. 'Fallible' means that sometimes humans misunderstand divine truth even as they are directly reckoning with it, as when a person miscalculates their arithmetic. To say that humans' limited apprehensions of divine truth are diverse indicates that they will differ from each other even when no mistakes have been made. This diversity can at times appear as contradiction, as in Augustine's example, where what is a just law in one society might be an unjust law to those who live under different societal or materials conditions. Finally, apprehension of divine truth is 'variable', which means that it can increase and decrease overtime. It is possible for one's errors to be corrected and for one's understanding to be expanded.

The absolute distinction between God and God's creation has already been noted: that God is eternal, unbounded by time and space, while all of creation is limited, being temporal and/or bodily. Building on this distinction (and drawing from Augustinian conceptual parameter (e) *the relationship between human wisdom and knowledge*), knowledge is an awareness of temporal and bodily things (i.e. creaturely things and the cosmos) whereas wisdom is an awareness of eternal things (i.e. God). This Augustinian parameter accords nicely with biblical parameter (j), *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth,* which found that wisdom begins with fear of Yahweh, who is the giver of all wisdom, as it is found through experience, tradition, and the natural world. Knowledge is the rational apprehension of what is bodily and temporal (creation), and wisdom is the rational awareness of what is eternal (God).

Knowledge requires wisdom because wisdom's awareness of eternal truth is necessary for making judgements regarding the created world. Conversely, wisdom requires knowledge because humans cannot conceive of that which is uncreated apart from creaturely terms. There can be no knowledge without at least implicit wisdom. One cannot judge a quantity without a sense of unchanging number and measure. One cannot judge the truth of statements without having a sense of what it would mean for something to be true or false, that is, an apprehension of 'truth' itself. One cannot make moral judgments without an awareness that there is 'goodness' in some sense. On the other hand, God is never encountered by creatures apart for their own

creatureliness, and that of the world they inhabit. This is to say, God is never apprehended in isolation from creaturely things. This account of an awareness (even unnamed) of God in all human knowledge has the potential to make the centrality of religious experience and the concept of *sensus divinitatus* proposed by some reformed epistemologists more recognisable to those who have not had a visceral spiritual experience of God's presence. Once again, the connections between this theology of truth and other approaches is a promising avenue of further investigation.

In this view, knowledge and wisdom are neither separate nor independent of each other, for in the human mind, knowledge is impossible without some measure of wisdom, and wisdom is impossible without some substance of knowledge. Of the two, wisdom must always hold primacy of place, or else no knowledge will be found. This is apparent in that wisdom ultimately concerns God who is Truth. Unless truth is one's ultimate goal, genuine knowledge will never be found. In this way, even scholarly pursuits which are not explicitly devotional must be at least implicitly aligned with fear of Yahweh, in that to devote oneself to Truth is in essence to devote oneself to God (even if this devotion is based on an incomplete and partial understanding of God and truth).

This approach works well with conceptual parameter (j) where virtually all realms of knowledge, skill, craft, and cleverness are encompassed by wisdom, and it is something available to men, women, children, regardless of social standing or national origin. Even people who have not accepted Yahweh or Jesus Christ as their God can pursue divine wisdom (though, admittedly, at a disadvantage without the insight into the character of truth that is inherently bound up with God's everlasting being and steadfast love, as most clearly revealed in God's incarnate life, death, and resurrection). The refusal to specify the appropriate method for pursuing truth beyond devotion to God has some resonance with Gadamer's position that no single method can encapsulate or codify the process of finding meaning. This is another comparison waiting to be fleshed out.

In this Christian epistemology, more can be said about the role of devotion in the human pursuit of truth, wisdom, and knowledge, drawing on Augustinian parameter (c) *the human pursuit of truth.* Since one never fully comprehends God, the pursuit of truth never ends but at best continues indefinitely in an asymptotic fashion, drawing closer but never reaching complete understanding. Nevertheless, the accumulation of wisdom and knowledge is not a simple gradual

aggregate. There are threshold points in the process, the most important of which is when one accepts the divine Truth as one's God with all one's heart, soul, and mind (this being the same God who is incarnate in Christ). At that point, the constancy and reliability of divine Truth affords the seeker peace, security, and freedom (especially from sin). Even when one knows very little, this creates a qualitative difference in one's search for truth compared to even those who possess vast bodies of knowledge but are still putting other priorities ahead of the divine Truth (who is the everlasting constant God, who named godself Yahweh and is made manifest in Jesus Christ). Just as the fullness of divine truth affects every aspect of a person's life, the entire human person become engaged in the pursuit of truth, mind, body, etc. The truth is not only what some call facts, but also the wisdom of living a good life, principles articulated at times as divine law or commandments which can rebuke, heal, guide, and restore one to fulness of life. See biblical conceptual parameter (j) *the relation of divine law, word, and wisdom to truth*. Love is an integral part of the epistemic pursuit, for one must love truth to seek it. To walk in the way of truth, pursuing truth, is to seek and love God, a fundamentally devotional pursuit. Wisdom illuminates the righteous path, which is marked by honesty, piety, and ethical treatment of others.

One final word needs to be said about the nature of falsehood, because the position of this theology of truth regarding falsehood is a genuinely constructive move. Falsehood is not to be confused with the limited nature of creaturely truths, just as creaturely finitude in itself is not sinful. All creaturely truths are limited even when they are entirely true. For instance, it is true that two parallel lines will never meet, but only in Euclidian geometry (imagine railroad tracks). In spherical geometry, they do (imagine the lines of longitude that are parallel at the equator but meet at the poles). This does not render them false but only true in limited circumstances. Likewise, the truth of a person, even a completely morally upright one, is limited because mortal flesh will eventually fail and die. Falsehood, however, is not limitation in this sense.

This alethiology also contends that falsehood is not equal and opposite to truth. This involves rejecting the common view that falsehood and truth are bivalent (opposite, equal, and mutually exclusive). Instead (and this is a genuinely constructive move), falsehood is a privation of truth. This is analogous to Augustine's depiction of evil as a privation of the good. There is always some degree of truth to a falsehood, and this is part of what makes it deceiving. False statements are ones that purport to be true but which are not reliable, accurate, and so forth. A falsehood which one has discovered is false and has been labeled as 'false' is, in this account, a

redeemed falsehood. The redeemed falsehood functions as a 'It is not the case that . . .' statement. The falsehood becomes reliable once again once it is recognised as a falsehood (otherwise one could not build logical deductions from it). A false friend, false gold, and so forth purport to be something other than what they are. The falsehood is redeemed what it is recognised as what it is (fool's gold or a traitor). Another way to think of the privation of falsehood is to consider that nothing can be false unless there is a presumption of truth, whereas truth requires no such presumption of falsehood.

This constructive theology of truth could be worked out in greater detail and precision and there are questions about it which remain to be answered. Nonetheless, it is complete enough as it stands to present an intelligible account of truth founded upon approaching God as truth itself, one which is Christian, drawing on the Bible and Augustine of Hippo.

IV.3 Conclusion

This study has engaged with a live contemporary question that draws attention in philosophical and theological spheres: what is the nature of truth? In reply, a theology of truth has been offered, one that is both a novel addition to current debates and is deeply indebted to seminal strains of thought in the Christian tradition.

This study's first significant contribution is its new methodological approach to constructive theology, which characteristically develops conceptual parameters from source material that are then employed in constructive theology. This beneficially distinguishes the goals and claims of constructive theology from those of historical theology.

A second significant contribution is that this methodology provides theologians with a tool to engage productively with biblical scholarship, in a manner that respects the integrity of those disciplines, and has demonstrated its worth by making extensive use of the Bible for constructive theology. Further, it has been shown that this methodology capably engages with other disciplines too, such as cognitive linguistics, such that constructive theology is not limited to drawing on disciplines that it has traditionally made use of. The particular insight of cognitive linguistics for theology concerned with language has been notably apparent.

In addition to the constructive methodology itself and its use of biblical studies for theological work, a third contribution resulted from its specific application to Augustinian texts and the Old Testament: a fresh harvest of previously underappreciated insights into the understanding of truth and divinity in these texts. It was seen that naming God 'Truth' is a central topic in *Free Will, Confessions*, and *Trinity*, with robust metaphysical and prayerful content. Likewise, the Old Testament exhibited a rich and complex approach to truth, in relation to both God and creation. The work done here, while not presented as historical theology or biblical studies, indicates that greater attention to these two areas by historical theology and biblical studies respectively would be rewarded with fresh insight into their respective views on divinity and truth.

This thesis, as constructive theology, developed ten conceptual parameters from Augustine and the Bible and reconfigured them into a constructive Christian theology of truth. This is its ultimate contribution, in that it has responded to a pressing philosophical and theological concern—truth—by producing a new alethiology that is demonstrably biblical, Augustinian, and Christian, simultaneously both rooted in the ancient Christian tradition and relevant to contemporary debate on the important topics of truth, divinity, and Christian truth claims.

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List of Abbreviations

ABD

Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

IDB

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, eds. George Arthur Buttrick et al., 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).

Confessions

The Confessions by Augustine of Hippo, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. David Vincent Meconi (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1997).

Free Will

'On the Free Choice of the Will' in *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings* by Augustine of Hippo, ed. and trans. Peter King (Cambridge: CUP 2010), 3-126.

NIDB

New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, eds. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld et al., 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006-2009).

NIDNTTE

New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, rev. ed., Moisés Silva, 5 vols. (2nd edn., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

NIDOTTE

New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 5 vols. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996).

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