

## The Distinction between Love for God and Love for Neighbour in St. Augustine

This journey into Augustine's mind on how love for neighbour and love for God are related to each other opens with the question of the distinction he makes between them. On what basis does he distinguish between "the greatest and the first commandment" and "the second which is equal to it in value" (cf. Matt. 22. 37-40; par. Mk. 12. 29-31)<sup>1</sup>?

<sup>1</sup>) The fact that Mark and Matthew speak of a "first" and a "second" commandment does not imply that the former is more important than the latter in the Synoptics. See the study of Victor Paul FURNISH, *The Love Commandment in the New Testament*, SCM, London, 1973.

*On Mark* (p. 27): "The two commandments together are set over against all other requirements of the law: 'There is no other commandment greater than these' (vs. 31b). The 'second' commandment is not 'of second importance'. It is, simply, the second of two mentioned as together comprising the 'chief' commandment about which the scribe had initially inquired". Furnish continues with a quotation from Ceslaus SPICQ, *Agape in the New Testament* (English translation: Sister Marie Aquinas McNAMARA & Sister Mary Honoria RICHTER), St. Louis and London, 1963-1966, Vol. I, p. 64: "The union of the singular 'no other commandment' and the plural 'than these' maintains the distinction between the two precepts, but puts both of them into a special category".

*On Matthew* (p. 31): "Perhaps most significant is the apparent concern in Matthew's version to emphasize the relatedness of the two commands to love God and the neighbour (vs. 38-39a). To love God is underscored as the 'great and first commandment', but then the 'second' is said to be 'like' it, which quite apparently means equal to it in importance. Moreover, in summary the Matthean version links the two commandments together as those upon which 'all the law and the prophets depend' (vs. 40)". The explanation of ὅμοια as 'equal in importance to' is supported by K. BERGER, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu. Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament. Teil I: Markus und Parallelen* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 40), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972, p. 207: "Es ist zu beachten, dass in vers 39 das Gebot der Nächstenliebe ausdrücklich als ὅμοια bezeichnet wird: Gottes- und Nächstenliebe sind zugunsten der Nächstenliebe als gleichwertige oder gleich grosse Gebote bezeichnet".

Finally, in *Luke* (p. 35) there is "no request concerning the 'chief' or 'great' commandment (as in Mark and Matthew respectively). Instead, his (i.e. the lawyer's) question is: 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' (RSV)". Here Jesus allows the questioner himself to state the commandment. Most significant about this formulation is "the closeness with which the two commandments of Deut. 6.5 (i.e. love for God) and Lev. 19. 18 (i.e. love for neighbour) have been identified. Not only is any enumeration of them as 'first' and 'second' entirely lacking; just one occurrence of the verb 'you shall love' governs the two commands, which are joined by the simple conjunction 'and'. In this way the two commands really do become just one, and there is no need for the sort of explicit indication of their equality to be found in Matthew's 'A second is like this' (22. 39)" (p. 37). Jesus tells the lawyer: "Do this (i.e. what the commandment requires) and you will live" (vs. 28b).

Is the former more important for him than the latter? Is he inclined to give more weight to the former such that love for neighbour is to its disadvantage subordinated to love for God? Or, can love for God be separated from love for neighbour in such a way as to be able to stand alone, independently of it? Are we faced with two essentially distinct loves, each with its own field of activity and mode of operation, bordering on each other but not intrinsically related? In order to discover the beginnings of an answer to such questions — and perhaps also to sharpen the questions themselves — the first step in this investigation will be to survey those texts in which Augustine explicitly presents love for God and love for neighbour as in some way or other distinctly different. It is well to be aware, however, that in many of these very same texts there are also indications of a kind of unity. But, because the initial task is primarily to lay bare the foundations for speaking of love for God and love for neighbour as distinct precepts and distinct acts, it would be confusing and premature to emphasise unity greatly yet. The distinction will be examined chronologically throughout the various periods of Augustine's development.

## I. THE EARLY YEARS: 386-395

### A. *Introduction to the distinction*

In *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, dating from 388, Augustine permits us an insight into the complexity of the problem of the relation between the two loves for him at that time. The two loves are certainly distinct, but Augustine is uncertain how to draw the lines of relation between them:

But I do not know whether these two loves (for God and for the neighbour) rise up together to fullness and perfection, or whether, while love for God (*Dei amor*) begins first, love for neighbour is first to be accomplished. For perhaps divine love (*divina charitas*) draws us more quickly to itself at the outset, but we accomplish smaller things more easily. However that may be, the main point to be held to is this, that no one should think that while he despises his neighbour he will come to beatitude and to the God whom he

Then, in answer to the lawyer's self-justifying question, "who is my neighbour?" (vs. 29), he recounts the parable of the Good Samaritan which closes with the exhortation: "Go and *do as he did*" (vs. 37b). When Augustine quotes the double commandment, it is in the vast majority of cases the Matthean version to which he refers.

loves... On this topic — which is one, I think, of great difficulty — we will try to say a few words in the context of the work we have undertaken, placing all our hope in Him from whom alone we receive these gifts<sup>2</sup>).

This text reveals a man attempting to express himself tentatively on a matter of some obscurity<sup>3</sup>). One should not take the cautions, exploratory language — «*sed nescio quomodo*», «*fortasse*», «*quoquo modo autem res se habet*», «*de qua re, quantum arbitror, difficillima, tentabimus dicere*» — and the hope for God's help as mere dressing for an essentially dogmatic statement of how things stand in this regard. The text, therefore, cannot be taken as stating a firm and unbending position, except on that point Augustine himself stresses before all else: if the neighbour is shunned, there can be no expectation of happiness and of coming to the God one loves. This is an assertion of principle; the rest is exploratory speculation about the way the principle works. It will suffice for the present to comment briefly on these provisional remarks of Augustine insofar as they disclose a criterion by which he is able to distinguish one love from the other.

Firstly, therefore, the move from «*Dei amor*» in the first sentence of the text quoted above to «*divina charitas*» in the second sentence should be noted. We translated the former as “love for God” (not “the love of God” i.e. “God's love”), since this is the only feasible rendering in view of what precedes our text. But, in the sentence which follows, the divine love («*divina charitas*») which draws us to itself is somewhat more ambiguous. Is Augustine referring to a taste or desire for love for God, the *Summum Bonum*, which first stirs love of any kind, including love of neighbour, to life, or does he mean that God takes the initiative in loving us thereby attracting us, at least in the beginning, to love Him more readily than others? From the context it is not possible to make out

<sup>2</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 51 (ML 32, 1332): “*Sed nescio quomodo aut pariter ista in plenitudinem perfectionemque consurgunt, aut inchoatur prius Dei amor, et prius perficitur proximi. Ad incipiendum enim citius nos fortasse in se divina charitas rapit, sed facilius minora perficimus. Quoquo modo autem res se habet, illud maxime tenendum est, ne se quisquam credat, contempto proximo ad beatitudinem et ad Deum quem diligit esse venturum ... De qua re, quantum arbitror, difficillima, tentabimus dicere pro suscepto opere pauca quaedam, spem totam constituentes in eo cuius solius ista dona sunt*”.

<sup>3</sup>) Dietrich BONHOEFFER, at the close of a letter to Eberhard Bethge on the theme of our earthly love and the love for God, expresses himself in a somewhat similar vein: “*Ich weiss nicht, ob ich es jetzt richtig gesagt habe, man sagt so etwas selten ...*”. See *Widerstand und Ergebung*, Munich and Hamburg, 1967, p. 142-143.

clearly which, if either, of these senses is intended. Perhaps both are, for they are not incompatible. The point of interest, however, has been to note a likely shift in this text from "love for God" to "the love of God", "God's love"; we leave the question as to whether this has been a real shift in abeyance with the hope of clarification in Augustine's later writings. It will already be perfectly clear that to distinguish our love for God from our love for the neighbour is quite a different matter to distinguishing God's love for us from our love for neighbour.

A second comment to be made on this text concerns the position given to love of neighbour. It is reckoned among the smaller things, the «*minora*», which we perform more easily. It may not be far-fetched to understand this in terms of what is said to the good and faithful servant in the parable of the talents: "you have shown you can be faithful in small things («*pauca*»; «*ὀλίγα*»), I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness" (Matt. 25. 23). This scriptural text, however, is not cited; and it is highly probable that philosophical considerations also play an important role. The neighbour occupies a place in an ordered hierarchy; it is naturally a "lesser" place than that occupied by God.

Therefore the soul should worship only God who alone is its creator. As for man, whoever he may be, however wise and perfect, or rather as for the rational and blessed soul, it is only to be loved and imitated, and respect is to be shown it in accordance with its merit and rank (*ordine*). For "you will adore the Lord, your God, and serve Him alone" (Deut. 6. 13; Matt. 4. 10).

To those souls related to our own who are in error and in trouble we know that we ought to bring help, insofar as it is permissible and laid down. We should do this in such a way as to understand that in every good action God is acting through us<sup>4</sup>).

God then is to be adored, others related to ourselves who err («*errantibus cognatis animis*») are to be helped, "insofar as it is permissible and laid down", and in this the order of reality will be respected.

<sup>4</sup>) *De Quantitate Animae* 34, 78 (ML 32, 1078): "Deus igitur solus ei colendus est, qui solus eius est auctor. Homo autem quilibet alius, quanquam sapientissimus et perfectissimus vel prorsus quaelibet anima rationis compos atque beatissima, amanda tantummodo et imitanda est, eique, pro merito atque ordine, quod ei congruit deferendum. Nam, *Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies* (Deut. 6. 13). Errantibus vero cognatis animis et laborantibus, quantum licet atque praeceptum est, opem ferendam esse sciamus, ita ut hoc ipsum cum bene agitur, Deum per nos agere intelligamus". This text dates from about the same time as *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*.

"The soul keeps order in loving with its whole self what is above itself, that is God, and in loving its companion souls (*socias animas*) as itself. Indeed, by the strength of this love the soul gives order to lower things, and is not sullied by them"<sup>5</sup>). In this text from *De Musica* (387 A.D.) Augustine means by "lower things" those below man in the hierarchy of being i.e. his lower soul, his body, all the creation not possessed of «ratio». Order reigns in these regions when, in accordance with the commandment, other human beings, related to man as companion souls, are loved 'as himself', and God alone is worshipped in an attitude of loving abandon of the whole self. For *De Vera Religione* (390 A.D.), the freedom and perfect goodness («*perfecta iustitia*») of human beings consists in loving God more than oneself in subjection to him. In this sense we love the better more and the lesser less: «...*qua potius potiora et minus minora diligimus*»<sup>6</sup>). We prefer to cling to God and to have him reign in our lives than to remain attached to ourselves and to be lords over our own lives. The «*minora*» here are explicitly ourselves, not the neighbour. But, as will become clear, this kind of love for self is not without its influence on love for neighbour, which is to be 'as oneself'.

That there should be two commandments, one of love to God and one of love to neighbour, is evident from at least two points of view. Firstly, God is God and man is man. Between them is all the distance between the creator and a being created in the likeness of the creator. To be sure, just as there is a likeness between the creature and the creator, so the other («*alterum*»), the second commandment of love to neighbour, is said to be "like" the first. In fact, Matthew says it is ὁμοία, that is, equal in importance to the first. Nonetheless, for Augustine, because of the superiority of the divine nature to the human nature, two differentiated precepts are called for<sup>7</sup>). Secondly, only God is the Supreme Good («*Summum Bonum*»), and, therefore, nothing is to be loved more than

<sup>5</sup>) *De Musica* 6, 14, 46 (ML 32, 1187): "Tenet ordinem, seipsa tota diligens quod supra se est, id est Deum, socias autem animas tamquam seipsam. Hoc quippe dilectionis virtute inferiora ordinat, nec ab inferioribus sordidatur".

<sup>6</sup>) *De Vera Religione* 262 (CSEL 77, 67) = 48, 93 (CC 32, 248. ML 34, 163-164): "Quem delectat ergo libertas, ab amore mutabilium rerum liber esse appetat; et quem regnare delectat, uni omnium regnatori deo subditus haereat, plus eum diligendo quam se ipsum. Et haec est perfecta iustitia, qua potius potiora et minus minora diligimus".

<sup>7</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 49 (ML 32, 1331): "Promat nobis ergo alterum praeceptum ipse Dominus, de vitae praeceptis interrogatus: non enim contentus fuit uno, qui sciret aliud Deum esse, aliud hominem; atque interesse tantum, quantum inter eum qui creavit et id quod ad Creatoris similitudinem creatum est. Dicit ergo secundum praeceptum esse: *Diliges proximum tuum tamquam teipsum* (Matt. 22. 39)".

He; He alone is to be loved with the whole self, "with all the soul, and heart, and mind"; to love any being less good and less trustworthy unreservedly would be disastrous and idolatrous. "These things having been established and most firmly believed, who will doubt, I ask, that there is no more excellent good, to which we must hasten to arrive before all the rest, than God?"<sup>8</sup>). In the quest for eternal life, unrestricted love for God appears at some moments to be all-important for Augustine. As John puts it: "This is eternal life, to know you, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn. 17. 3). "What therefore", Augustine asks, "do we have to do but first to love with full love Him whom we wish to know?"<sup>9</sup>) Love to God, the fulfilment of "the greatest and the first commandment", at least seems to be granted a position of privilege here. As we have seen though, our author is fully conscious that 'while a person despises his neighbour he will (not) come to beatitude and to the God he loves'<sup>10</sup>). Love for the neighbour is indispensable if the right order of reality is to be regarded and maintained, and if the exploration into the fulness of love for God, eternal life, is not to prove abortive.

In certain other texts from Augustine's early period (pre-395), the types of distinction between the two loves dealt with above are given further nuances. Two of them will, for the present, just be mentioned and the third dealt with in more detail. In the same *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, love for neighbour is conceived in terms of Rom. 13. 10

<sup>8</sup>) *Ibid.*, 1, 11, 18 (ML 32, 1319): «Si igitur diligentibus Deum omnia procedunt in bonum, et summum bonum quod etiam optimum dicitur, non modo diligendum esse nemo ambigit, sed ita diligendum ut nihil amplius diligere debeamus, idque significatur et exprimitur quod dictum est: *Ex tota anima, ex toto corde, et ex tota mente*: quis quaeso dubitaverit, his omnibus constitutis, et firmissime creditis nihil nobis aliud esse optimum, ad quod adipiscendum postpositis ceteris festinare oporteat, quam Deum?"

<sup>9</sup>) *Ibid.*, 1, 25, 47 (ML 32, 1331): «Diligamus igitur Deum ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente, quicumque ad vitam aeternam pervenire proposuimus ... *Haec est, inquit, vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te verum Deum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum* (Jn. 17. 3). Aeterna igitur vita est ipsa cognitio veritatis ... Quid ergo agendum est, quid quaeso, nisi ut eum ipsum quem cognoscere volumus, prius plena charitate diligamus?» In *Retractationes* 1, 6, 4 (CSEL 36, 31) = 1, 7, 4 (ML 32, 593) Augustine proposes «sincera» as more appropriate than «plena», since love will only reach its fullness when God is seen face to face.

Jn. 17. 3 and the commandment to love God alone are again found together in a «beata vita» context in *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 83 q. 35, 2 (CC 44A, 52-53. ML 40, 24-25). One is recommended to consider with all one's power of thought «saluberrimum illud praeceptum».

<sup>10</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 51 (ML 32, 1332): «... illud maxime tenendum est, ne se quisquam credat, contempto proximo ad beatitudinem et ad Deum quem diligit esse venturum».

("Love of neighbour does not do evil") and love for God in terms of Rom. 8. 28 ("We know that for those who love God all things issue in good"):

And if we cannot attain to good things without first ceasing to do evil, acts of love for neighbour are a sort of cradle for love to God, such that since "love of neighbour does not do evil" (Rom. 13. 10), we may rise from this to what has been said: "We know that for those who love God all things issue in good" (Rom. 8. 28)<sup>11</sup>).

Love for neighbour is thus presented as a necessary condition of love for God, evil must be rejected if good is to grow; love for neighbour is, as it were, love for God in its infancy. In his commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount (393-394 A.D.) Augustine finds that the Golden Rule (Matt. 7. 12) is said to be "the law and the prophets". But "all that you wish people to do for you, do it also for them" can be translated as "love your neighbour as yourself". This leaves room for the commandment of love for God to take its proper place along with that of love for neighbour. In these *two* commandments are "the *whole* law and prophets" (Matt. 22. 40)<sup>12</sup>). Finally, in his commentary on the letter to the Galatians written in 395, Augustine puts the matter as follows:

Every sacrament, when it is understood, is related either to contemplation of the truth or to good action by which one's beliefs are practised. Contemplation of the truth is founded on love for God alone; good action by which one practises one's beliefs is founded on love for God and for the neighbour. On these two precepts the whole law and prophets depend<sup>13</sup>).

<sup>11</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 50 (ML 32, 1332): «Et si ad bona pervenire non possumus, nisi mala operari destiterimus, ista sunt quasi cunabula charitatis Dei, quibus diligamus proximum; ut quoniam *dilectio proximi malum non operatur* (Rom. 13. 10), hinc ad illud ascendamus quod dictum est, *Scimus quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia procedunt in bonum* (Rom. 8. 28)».

<sup>12</sup>) *De Sermonibus Domini in Monte* 2, 22, 75 (ML 34, 1303-1304): «Cum vero expressius de hominibus dictum est, *Omnia ergo quaecumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, ita et vos facite illis* (Matt. 7. 12); nihil aliud dictum videtur quam *Diliges proximum tuum tamquam teipsum*. Sed non est negligenter attendendum quod hic subiecit, *Haec est enim Lex et Prophetiae*. In his autem duobus praeceptis, non tantum ait, *Lex pendet et Prophetiae*, sed etiam addidit, *tota Lex et Prophetiae* (Matt. 22. 40); pro eo quod est *tota prophetia* quod cum hic non addidit, servavit locum alteri praecepto, quod ad dilectionem Dei pertinet ...».

But, just over a decade later, Augustine was of the mind that one precept alone could stand for both. The Golden Rule (Matt. 7. 12) could "non immerito" represent both commandments in which are "the *whole* law and the prophets". Cf. *De Trinitate* 8, 7, 10 (CC 50, 284-285. ML 42, 956-957).

<sup>13</sup>) *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas* 19 (CSEL 84, 77. ML 35, 2117): «... omne autem

The question of the relation between love for God and love for neighbour then is also that of the relation between contemplation of the truth and good action by which one's beliefs are put into practice. It is important for the understanding of this text to place it in a wider context.

B. *The view of Ragnar Holte on love for God «ex toto»*

Ragnar Holte has ably examined this question in his work, *Béatitude et Sagesse*<sup>14</sup>). In order to define the contours of the distinction between love for God and love for neighbour more precisely it will be useful here to note some of his findings. This limited survey of Holte's work on this point will at the same time provide a bridge to the following period of Augustine's development for which, at least so far as systematic theoretical discussions of the issue are concerned, *De Doctrina Christiana* forms one of the more important sources.

Holte pays special attention to the fact that "the greatest and the

sacramentum cum intellegitur, aut ad contemplationem veritatis refertur, aut ad bonos mores. Contemplatio veritatis in solius Dei dilectione fundata est: boni mores in dilectione Dei et proximi, in quibus duobus praeceptis tota Lex pendet et Prophetiae ...».

We have rendered "boni mores" as "good action by which one's beliefs are practised". In this way we hope to have done justice to the possible two-fold nature of this expression. On the one hand, it is quite clear from the same paragraph 19 of *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas* (CSEL 84, 76. ML 35, 2117) that "ad mores autem (pertinent): *Non occides, non moechaberis, non falsum testimonium dices* et cetera talia. (Cf. Ex. 20. 13-16)". The terrain of "mores", therefore, is that of the latter seven precepts of the Decalogue. In the text we have quoted, "boni mores" is coupled with "contemplation of the truth", and it is this combination that evokes the idea of good action accomplishing the commandments contained on the second tablet of the Decalogue. See *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 22, 27 & 28 (CSEL 25/1, 621-622. ML 42, 418-419). On the other hand, "mores" also forms part of the formula "fides et mores". Although this formula as such is not present in *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas* 19, a distinction is made at the very beginning between the grace of faith and the works of the law, and the latter are further sub-divided into "sacramenta" and "mores". Therefore, the resonance of "mores" as related to "fides" has to be taken into account. According to J.K. COYLE, *Augustine's «De moribus ecclesiae catholicae»* (Paradosis, 25), Fribourg, 1978, p. 91, the best translation for it is not "ethics", "customs" or "morals", but "beliefs in practice". Cf. P. FRANSEN, "A Short History of the Meaning of the Formula 'Fides et Mores'", in *Louvain Studies* vii/4 (1979) 270-301; on Augustine, p. 271-277. However, it is clearly not the case of "boni mores" in our text that, as Fransen, p. 276, alleges of the "mores" of Augustine's "fides et mores" in *Epistolae* 54, 1-2 (CSEL 34, 159-160. ML 33, 200) and 55, 18, 34 (CSEL 34, 208. ML 33, 220-221) to Iuanuarii, "it has nothing to do with the so-called 'morals'". In translating «boni mores» as «good action by which one practises one's beliefs», we have attempted to include both the major dimensions of the expression which are alluded to in our text.

<sup>14</sup>) Ragnar HOLTE, *Béatitude et Sagesse. Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne*, Paris-Worcester, 1962, especially p. 251-281.

first commandment" is indeed a trinity of love: "with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind". This threefold love corresponds for Augustine to the doctrine of the three parts of the soul i.e. the dynamic tendency (*appetitus*) of the soul working at different levels and traversing the whole of human existence. The *appetitus* (*tendere esse*) of the whole person expresses itself in different ways in the different parts of the soul; this is not dissimilar to the Stoic doctrine of the fundamental instincts of human nature. In the contemplative life (*mens*) the *appetitus* appears as a natural desire or quest for the divine, for beatitude and wisdom; in the active life (*cor*) it is the effort to preserve and develop the rational self (self-love), and also a tendency to be involved in society and in community (love of neighbour); in the life of the senses (*anima*: the lower soul), finally, it shows itself as care for one's own body (the instinct of self-preservation) and the instinctive tendency to be united with other bodies (sexual instinct)<sup>15</sup>. Now all of these levels are covered by the commandment to love God; thus, Christian love for God is presented by Augustine as the gift of human life in its totality.

For this is the rule of love that has been established by God: "You will love your neighbour as yourself", but "God you will love with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind". Therefore, you are to devote all your thoughts, your whole life and your whole intelligence to Him from whom you have all these goods you bestow. For with the words, "with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind", He means to allow no part of our life to remain empty or to make room, as it were, for the wish to enjoy something other than Himself. Rather He demands that whatever else suggests to our minds that it might be loved should be drawn to the same goal towards which the whole élan of our love is running<sup>16</sup>.

The trinity contained in the commandment to love God might be schematised on the basis of this text as follows:<sup>17</sup>)

<sup>15</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 256. Cf. p. 260, where the God-given dynamisms or tendencies of the soul are described simply as «un instinct naturel dirigé vers le divin, un instinct naturel dirigé vers la vie d'opération active et un instinct naturel qui a pour objet le soin du corps».

<sup>16</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* I, 42-43 (CSEL 80, 19) = I, 22, 21 (CC 32, 17-18. ML 34, 27): «Haec enim regula dilectionis divinitus constituta est: *Diliges*, inquit, *proximum tuum sicut teipsum*; *Deum vero ex toto corde, et ex tota anima et ex tota mente* (Lev. 19. 18. Deut. 6. 5. Matt. 22. 37 and 39); *ut omnes cogitationes tuas et omnem vitam et omnem intellectum in illum conferas, a quo habes ea ipsa quae confers. Cum autem ait, toto corde, tota anima, tota mente, nullam vitae nostrae partem relinquit, quae vacare debeat et quasi locum dare ut alia re velit frui; sed quidquid aliud diligendum venerit in animum, illuc rapiatur, quo totus dilectionis impetus currit*».

<sup>17</sup>) Cf. R. HOLTE, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

- a. *ex toto corde — omnes cogitationes* — the life of productive, creative thought i.e. the active life;
- b. *ex tota anima — omnem vitam* — all non-rational life in human beings;
- c. *ex tota mente — omnem intellectum* — intellectual comprehension or vision i.e. the contemplative life.

No element of human existence is omitted in the requirements of the commandment; all we have received from God, on each and every level of our life, from our desire for Him to our sexual instinct, is to be devoted to Him, bestowed upon Him.

Such all-inclusive love for God, proposed as “the greatest” commandment and as the *telos* of human life, would have been profoundly shocking to ancient thought. For Plotinus only the highest level of man (*mens*) was related to human *telos*. The rest has ultimately to be shed. Platonic philosophical *eros* is by nature purely contemplative; it aims for the union of the intellectual soul with the Ideas, leaving behind the active life, where self-love and love for neighbour have their places, and the life of the senses. It will be clear that only the first of the three categories of love for God mentioned above corresponds to philosophical *eros*. And this raised a difficulty for Augustine whose Platonic background was not negligible. On the one hand, he wanted to submit himself without reserve to the demand of the precept which requires a love for God engaging all parts of the soul; while, on the other hand, he could not ignore the Platonic conception of the contemplative life (i.e. *mens*, only one part of the soul) as the proper place for the realisation of the communion of man with God. According to Holte, “all Augustine’s speculation on love can be ultimately considered as a hand to hand struggle with this intellectual task: to clarify the relation between these two aspects and to harmonise them in a coherent system”<sup>18</sup>).

How then did Augustine go about this task? On the doctrine of the different parts of the soul he had been able to ground psychologically the possibility of loving God *ex toto*, in all dimensions of human life. Only man’s highest function, the rational intellect (*ratio*), however, has God as its *direct* object; to it alone is it granted to know, to see and to enjoy God, the Eternal. But there are also other objects that can be loved; to

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255: «Toute la spéculation augustinienne sur l’amour peut être au fond considérée comme un corps-à-corps avec cette tâche intellectuelle: mettre au clair la relation entre ces deux aspects et les harmoniser en un système cohérent».

these the functions of the parts of the soul other than the highest (i.e. *cor* and *anima*) correspond. In view of this differentiation in the scale of values of the various categories of lovable objects and the parallel differentiation of the psychic functions, it would be "a fundamental mistake to understand *appetitus* as a simple, undifferentiated desire capable of being directed towards objects of all categories"<sup>19</sup>). To understand correctly the meaning of Augustine's "ordered love" (*dilectio ordinata*) it is imperative to take into account this structural correspondence which, for him, prevails between the different levels of objects and the different functions of the soul<sup>20</sup>). At the highest level the object of love is God in whose regard the related God-given, human

<sup>19</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 256. Further on Holte returns to this point, p. 259: «Augustin ne mentionne pas ici expressément une chose qui pour lui va de soi: l'existence d'une correspondance directe entre l'échelle des valeurs des diverses catégories des *res* et celle des fonctions psychiques, et partant les auteurs ont eu champ libre pour introduire dans l'interprétation de cette phrase (i.e. *dilectio ordinata*) une bonne dose de psychologie moderne simplifiée: ils y ont vu une théorie selon laquelle l'homme orienterait son 'désir' univoque, indifférencié, vers une série d'objets et leur attribuerait une valeur relative à leur capacité de satisfaire le désir — ou bien au contraire une théorie où le désir entrerait en conflit avec un ordre moral qui doit le régler». As a proponent of the former interpretation Holte has Anders Nygren in mind, and of the second Hannah Arendt. Regarding the former theory, see further, p. 261: «... (*dilectio ordinata*) ne peut apparaître comme un frein à la spontanéité de l'amour, mais bien comme sa libération. Il n'est nullement question ici d'un désir indifférencié, auquel on imposerait un moule étranger, mais ce sont les dynamismes divers innés qui, chacun dans leur domaine, apportent leur contributions créatrices sans être gênés par les obstacles des passions».

Commenting on *En. in ps.* 31, *sermo* 2, 5 (CC 38, 228. ML 36, 260) (392 A.D.) i.e. «Purga ergo amorem tuum; aquam fluentem in cloacam, converte ad hortum; quales impetus habebat ad mundum, tales habeat ad artificem mundi», Anders NYGREN states in *Agape and Eros* (English translation: Philip S. WATSON), 1st revised edition, New York and Evanston, 1953, p. 494-495: «Caritas-love, which is the same as the good will, is distinguished from Cupiditas-love, which is the root of all evil, not absolutely and qualitatively, but merely in virtue of its object. In both cases it is a question of acquisitive love. 'Love, but see to it *what* you love. Love to God and love to neighbour is called Caritas; love of the world and love of temporal things is called Cupiditas'. (*En. in ps.* 31, *sermo* 2,5). We must be converted from false Cupiditas love, but the conversion (*conversio*) consists simply in turning love's desire from a lower to a higher object, in conducting the water from the sewer to the garden (*converte ad hortum!*)».

Apropos of this view, Ragnar HOLTE remarks, *Béatitude et Sagesse*, p. 269: «Anders Nygren a cru de bonne méthode de citer cette expression (i.e. *En. in ps.* 31, *sermo* 2,5) comme argument principal d'une interprétation théologique du sens de la conversion chrétienne d'après Augustin. Il va de soi que le raisonnement compliqué qui sous-tend cette formule ne peut être réduit à la thèse nygrénienne qui ne connaît qu'un 'désir' simple, indifférencié, lequel se tourne vers un objet nouveau. L'idée d'un désir humain de base, primitivement sensuel, qui par sublimation puisse être dirigé vers les valeurs spirituelles, appartient à la psychologie moderne de vulgarisation; elle est étrangère à Augustin».

<sup>20</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 259.

function (or instinct or dynamism) is the contemplative reason (*mens* — *ratio*).

For the most excellent of all things is that which is eternal; therefore, we cannot enjoy (*habere*) it except by means of that in which we surpass other creatures, namely intelligence. Now whatever is enjoyed by the intellect is enjoyed through being known; and no good is perfectly known if it is not perfectly loved. Just as the intellect alone has not the power of knowing, nor is it alone in being able to love. For love is a kind of tendency (*appetitus*); and we see that this tendency is present also in the other parts of the soul. If this latter tendency is in harmony with the intellect (*mens*) and with reason (*ratio*), it will be possible for a person in this peace and tranquillity to contemplate with the intellect that which is eternal. It is therefore also with its other parts that the soul ought to love the great good which it is to know with the intellect<sup>21</sup>).

All the other human functions, therefore, are to be subordinated to the contemplative reason, the lower are to be brought into conformity with the higher. The tendencies of the other parts of the soul may also be described as love for God, but only insofar as they do not disturb contemplative activity but submit themselves to it in peace and harmony. Indeed, when the tendencies of the other parts of the soul are in agreement with contemplative reason, then we may say that a certain form of love for God is already present there. Love for God in its total gift of self embraces and gives order to the dynamisms of intellect, heart and lower soul<sup>22</sup>); and the two latter are so integral to its harmonious movement that they cannot be left out of consideration when love for God is spoken of. It is love for God in this full sense, as comprising the dynamisms of *cor* and *anima* as well as that of *mens*, that is to be

<sup>21</sup>) *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 83 q. 35, 2 (CC 44A, 52. ML 40, 24): «Omnium enim rerum praestantissimum est quod aeternum est: et propterea id habere non possimus, nisi ea re qua praestantiores sumus, id est mente. Quidquid autem mente habetur, noscendo habetur; nullumque bonum perfecte noscitur, quod non perfecte amatur. Neque ut sola mens potest cognoscere, ita et amare sola potest. Namque amor appetitus quidam est: et videmus etiam caeteris animi partibus inesse appetitum, qui si menti rationique consentiat, in tali pace et tranquillitate vacabit mente contemplari quod aeternum est. Ergo etiam caeteris suis partibus amare animus debet hoc tam magnum quod mente cognoscendum est».

<sup>22</sup>) HOLTE, *op. cit.*, p. 259-260: «... l'interprétation de la *quaestio* 35, qui voit une forme d'amour de Dieu dans l'*appetitus* des 'autres parties de l'âme', lorsqu'il se trouve en accord avec l'activité contemplative de la raison. L'amour ordonné est identique à l'abandon à Dieu de la vie humaine dans sa totalité sous la triple forme d'un amour de Dieu qui rassemble les dynamismes de l'esprit, du cœur et de l'âme inférieure».

associated with eternal life and «*beata vita*»<sup>23</sup>). If *cor* and *anima* are not acting at their own levels in openness and obedience to *mens*, then *mens* is emasculated. "No one should think that while he despises his neighbour he will come to beatitude and to the God whom he loves".

The order that is said to reign in the "peace and tranquillity" of contemplation is not static and dead. It is rather the harmonious natural relation between the dynamisms. Not only has God placed different instincts or tendencies at different levels of human being, but He has also given the soul the instinct to subordinate the other two categories of tendencies to its desire for God<sup>24</sup>). The soul therefore has an instinct for the harmony of the order created by God. To respect this order is to respect the law of the nature with which God has endowed human beings, along with its created hierarchy of tendencies. In such a structure, action (i.e. self-love and love for neighbour) is required to be subject to contemplation (i.e. the love that has God as its direct and proper object); only when this is so will action be liberated from the annihilating force of the passions and be able to operate constructively within its own sphere<sup>25</sup>). For this reason, "good action by which one practises one's beliefs is founded on love for God and love for neighbour"<sup>26</sup>), the former being understood as incomplete without the latter (since contemplation requires the cooperation of action, and because love for God is also to be «*ex toto corde*»), and the latter powerless to work for good in its own domain unless it surrenders to the former (since otherwise the soul's instinct for harmony is betrayed and chaos keeps the instincts of heart and lower soul captive and in disarray).

To complete this short summary of Holte's work on the nature of the early (i.e. pre-400) Augustinian distinction between love for neighbour and love for God it will be appropriate to quote at some length what is a key text in his treatment. It is to be found in *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, and will be the subject of our attention again, especially in Chapter Three which deals with the *uti/frui* distinction as it occurs in relation to our theme.

<sup>23</sup>) The two texts referred to above in connection with Jn. 17. 3 are to be understood as speaking of love for God in this full sense. See *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 25, 47 (ML 32, 1331) and *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 83, q. 35, 2 (CC 44A, 52-53. ML 40, 24-25).

<sup>24</sup>) HOLTE, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>26</sup>) *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas* 19 (CSEL 84, 77. ML 35, 2117): «Contemplatio veritatis in solius Dei dilectione fundata est; boni mores in dilectione Dei et proximi...».

Sin, then, is any transgression of the eternal law in deed, or word, or desire. And the eternal law is the divine reason or will of God, which requires the preservation of the natural order, and forbids the breach of it. But what is this natural order in man? Man, we know, consists of soul and body; but so does a beast. But, it is plain that in the natural order the soul is superior to the body. Moreover, in the soul of man there is reason, which is not in a beast. Therefore, as the soul is superior to the body, so in the soul itself reason is superior by the law of nature to the other parts which are found also in beasts; and in reason itself, which is partly contemplation and partly action, contemplation is unquestionably the superior part. For in it is the image of God by which we are renewed through faith to vision. Rational action ought therefore to be subject to rational contemplation, which is to be exercised in faith while we are absent from the Lord, as it will be hereafter by vision, when we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Then in a spiritual body we shall by His grace be made equal to angels...

A man, therefore, who acts in obedience to the faith which obeys God, restrains all mortal affections, and keeps them within the natural limit, giving precedence to what is better over what is inferior according to an ordered love<sup>27</sup>).

Thus, just as to fail to love God, to disobey Him, is to disrupt the natural created order of values, so to love God, to obey Him, is to respect the order He has established in creation and in man himself<sup>28</sup>). Augustinian love for neighbour, it needs to be insisted, takes its place in this order of love not on the level of the "mortal affections" that are to be restrained, but rather on that of rational action liberated by the rational

<sup>27</sup>) *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 22, 27 & 28 (CSEL 25/1, 621-622. ML 42, 418-419): «Ergo peccatum est factum vel dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem. Lex vero aeterna est ratio divina vel voluntas dei ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans. Quisnam igitur sit in homine naturalis ordo, quaerendum est. Constat enim homo ex anima et corpore, sed hoc et pecus. Nulli autem dubium est animam corpori naturali ordine praeponendam. Verum animae hominis inest ratio, quae pecori non inest. Proinde sicut anima corpori, ita ipsius animae ratio ceteris eius partibus, quas habent et bestiae, naturae lege praeponitur: inque ipsa ratione, quae partim contemplativa est, partim activa, procul dubio contemplatio praecellit. In hac enim et imago dei est, qua per fidem ad speciem reformamur. Actio itaque rationalis contemplationi rationali debet oboedire sive per fidem operanti, sicuti est, quamdiu peregrinamur a domino, sive per speciem, quod erit, cum similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum, sicuti est, effecti etiam in spiritali corpore ex gratia eius aequales angelis eius. Quapropter hominis actio serviens fidei servienti deo refrenat omnes mortales delectiones et eas coercescit ad naturalem modum meliora inferioribus ordinata dilectione praeponens». English translation in large measure owing to that of R. STOTHERT in Philip SCHAFF (editor), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Grand Rapids, 1887 (reprint, Ann Arbor, 1967), Vol. IV, p. 283.

<sup>28</sup>) HOLTE, *op. cit.*, p. 257-258.

contemplation of God, which in this time of pilgrimage is only possible in faith, that is to say, on the level of rational action exercised in obedience to Him.

## II. THE FIRST EPISCOPAL YEARS: 396-410

Having been introduced by Holte to some of the nuances of Augustine's distinction between love for God and love for neighbour in his early period, we proceed with the presentation of the nature of this distinction in the subsequent phases of the bishop of Hippo's work.

### A. Two principal means of distinction

During the period 396-410 Augustine used two principal means of distinguishing between the two loves and their precepts: on the one hand, God is to be loved «*propter seipsum*» and the neighbour «*propter Deum*»; on the other hand, God is to be loved as God and the neighbour as oneself.

#### 1. *Propter seipsum* — *propter Deum*

*De Doctrina Christiana* has already been referred to in connection with Holte's exposition of the intricacies of Augustine's psychology of love: we are to devote all our thoughts, our whole life and our whole intelligence to God<sup>29</sup>). Consequently, God is not to be loved to any purpose or for any end other than himself. For "every man, insofar as he is a man, should be loved for the sake of God, but God is to be loved for his own sake"<sup>30</sup>). When, in the life of action, the neighbour is properly loved "for the sake of God", God himself is loved «*ex toto corde*». This form of the distinction is put slightly differently further on in the same work: "...we are to realise that the fullness and end of the law and of all the sacred Scriptures is love for one being who is to be enjoyed and for another being who is capable of sharing in that enjoyment with us..."<sup>31</sup>).

<sup>29</sup>) See *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 42 (CSEL 80, 19) = 1, 22, 21 (CC 32, 17. ML 34, 27): «... ut omnes cogitationes tuas et omnem vitam et omnem intellectum in illum conferas, a quo habes ea ipsa quae confers».

<sup>30</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 59 (CSEL 80, 23) = 1, 27, 28 (CC 32, 22. ML 34, 29): «... omnis homo in quantum homo est, diligendus est propter Deum, Deus vero propter seipsum».

<sup>31</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 84 (CSEL 80, 30) = 1, 35, 39 (CC 32, 29. ML 34, 34): «... ut intellegatur Legis et omnium divinarum Scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio (Rom. 13. 10. I Tim. 1. 5) rei qua fruendum est, et rei quae nobiscum ea re frui protest ...».

Now, to enjoy (*frui*) a being is exactly what is meant by loving that being 'for its own sake'; it is appropriate that God alone should be the object of *frui*. Other human beings, companion souls endowed with active and *contemplative* reason, are to be loved as creatures who, like ourselves, are capable of the fruition of God. As a further illustration of this form of the distinction, it will also be useful to mention a text from a sermon to which no date can be assigned with certainty. Here we find that God is to be loved for his own sake and that we are to love one another in him and for his sake; when we love a friend God is to be loved in him.

Let us love, let us love gratuitously; for we love God to whom nothing better is to be found. Let us love him for his own sake, and one another in him, but for his sake. For true love of a friend loves God in the friend, either because he is there or so that he might be there. This is true love; if we love one another for the sake of anything else, we hate rather than love<sup>32</sup>).

## 2. God *tamquam Deum* — the neighbour *tamquam te*

Already in *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* we met the distinction between the two precepts on the basis of the superiority of God's nature to man's<sup>33</sup>). Not surprisingly, this argument for a double commandment appears again in *De Doctrina Christiana*: "the precept by which we are to love God is distinct from love of neighbour because the divine essence is superior to and above our nature"<sup>34</sup>). Consequently, in a small book on catechetics, Augustine, speaking of gratuitous love for God, instructs: "But He is to be loved not as something visible to the eyes, rather as wisdom is loved, and truth and holiness and justice and charity, and others of their kind; and these, not as they are found in human beings, but as they are at the very source of imperishable and unchangeable

<sup>32</sup>) *Sermo* 336, 2 (ML 38, 1472): «Amemus, gratis amemus: Deum enim amamus, quo nihil melius invenimus. Ipsum amemus propter ipsum, et nos in ipso, tamen propter ipsum. Ille enim veraciter amat amicum, qui Deum amat in amico, aut quia est in illo, aut ut sit in illo. Haec est vera dilectio: propter aliud si nos diligimus, odimus potius quam diligimus».

<sup>33</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 49 (ML 32, 1331): «... aliud Deum esse, aliud hominem; atque interesse tantum, quantum inter eum qui creavit et id quod ad Creatoris similitudinem creatum est. Dicit ergo secundum praeceptum esse: *Diliges proximum tuum tamquam teipsum*».

<sup>34</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 72 (CSEL 80, 26) = 1, 30, 33 (CC 32, 25. ML 34, 31-32): «Sed quoniam excellentior ac supra nostram naturam est divina substantia, praeceptum quo diligamus Deum a proximi dilectione distinctum est».

wisdom"<sup>35</sup>). The presence of such qualities in human beings invites others to admiration and imitation; quality itself in its origin, God, who is wisdom, is to be adored. Only "in this God must all our hope be placed. For He by whom we are justified is quite distinct from those with whom we are justified"<sup>36</sup>). The argument from the excellence of God's being is understood to be valid not just ontologically but also soteriologically. Salvation comes from God; human beings are not saviours but the saved.

At times it can seem that the neighbour comes out a poor loser in the face of God's greatness. Preaching at Bulla Regia in the last years of the fourth century, Augustine recites the litany of God's praises: his greatness, his beauty, his power, through which all creation has life, form and force. Therefore, he continues:

Whatever we love on earth is nothing in comparison to God. It is not sufficient to say that what we love is nothing; for we ourselves too are nothing. The lover ought to consider himself as worthless in comparison to the being he is to love. This is that love which is commanded "with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind"<sup>37</sup>).

But, if lovers themselves are to be worthless nothings, it is not likely to benefit the beloved neighbour greatly to be loved 'as themselves'. Augustine's idea, however, is that the lover acquires a true sense of his own worth only in giving himself over whole-heartedly to God. Set over against God his life and love are without value. But, when he is loving God fully, he genuinely loves himself, and he is empowered to love others 'as himself' truly and beneficially<sup>38</sup>). Augustine raises a further problem with respect to this question in a sermon dating from the first decade of the fifth century:

<sup>35</sup>) *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 27, 55 (CC 46, 177-178. ML 40, 347-348): «Sed amandus est, non sicut aliquid quod videtur oculis, sed sicut amatur sapientia, et veritas, et sanctitas, et iustitia, et caritas, et si quid aliud tale dicitur; non quemadmodum sunt ista in hominibus, sed quemadmodum sunt in ipso fonte incorruptibilis et incommutabilis sapientiae».

<sup>36</sup>) *Ibid.*, (CC 46, 178. ML 40, 348): «... in quo Deo spes omnis ponenda est. In homine non est ponenda, qualiscumque ille fuerit. Aliud est enim ille a quo iustificamur, aliud illi cum quibus iustificamur».

<sup>37</sup>) *Sermo Denis* 17, 6 (MA I, 86-87): «Quicquid ergo amamus in terra, in comparatione dei nihil est. Parum est, nihil est quod amamus; et nos ipsi nihil sumus. Ipse amator, in comparatione rei quae amanda est, vilesce sibi debet. Ipsa est illa caritas quae iubetur ex toto corde, ex tota anima, et ex tota mente».

<sup>38</sup>) *Ibid.*

Love itself is two-fold: for God and for the neighbour. To what extent are we to love God? With our all. What is the meaning of that? For it is surely not with our ear or nose or hand or foot. What then is there in us that can love fully? With all the heart, all the soul, and all the mind: with all that lives in you you shall love the source of life. If therefore I have to love God with all that lives in me, what have I left over to me with which to love the neighbour? Regarding love of neighbour the precept you were given states not that he is to be loved with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, but "as yourself". God you are to love with all that is in you, because he is better than you; the neighbour as yourself, because he is just what you are<sup>39</sup>).

Does loving God with all that lives in me exclude the neighbour entirely from my love? If all that I am is devoted completely to God, with which aspect of my life am I to turn my attention in love to the neighbour? The answer is to be sought in the same direction as that to the previous difficulty. It is not as if God and the neighbour were in competition for our affections. Rather, Augustine is anxious to show that the only right and fruitful love of self is that which is fully intent on God. "Therefore a rule has been set up to guide you in your love of self: love the one better (by nature) than yourself, and you have loved yourself... and bring the person you love as yourself where you have brought yourself (i.e. to God)"<sup>40</sup>). God, my better by nature, is to be loved *ex toto*; when this is so, my self-esteem is healthy, and the

<sup>39</sup>) *Sermo Wilmart* 2, 3 (MA I, 676): «Sed ipsa caritas gemina est: in deum et in proximum. In deum, quantum? Ex toto. Quo toto? Non enim aure, et naso, et manu, et pede. Unde diligere potest ex toto? *Ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente*: ex toto, quod in te vivit, diliges fontem vitae. Si ergo ex toto quod in me vivit diligere debeo deum, quid mihi relinquam unde diligam proximum? De proximo enim diligendo cum tibi praecipetur, non tibi dictum est, Ex toto corde, et ex tota anima, et ex tota mente; sed *tamquam teipsum*. Deum ex toto te, quia ille est melior te; proximum tamquam te, quia hoc est quod tu».

The question posed here regarding the wherewithal to love the neighbour in the face of God's total demand on human love arises in a later text in relation to self-love. See *Sermo* 34, 7 (CC 41, 426-427. ML 38, 212): «... pretium caritatis, tu ... Quid enim times dare te, ne consumas te? Imo si te non dederis, perdis te ... Vide enim, si aliquid voluit dimittere in te, unde amas vel te, qui tibi dicit: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota mente tua*. Quid remanet de corde tuo, unde diligas te ipsum? quid de anima tua? quid de mente tua? *Ex toto*, inquit. Totum exigit de te, qui fecit te».

<sup>40</sup>) *Sermo Wilmart* 2, 4 (MA I, 676-677): «... dicendo tibi ut diligas deum tuum ex tota te, ibi tibi data est regula quemadmodum diligas te ... Ergo constituta est tibi regula, quemadmodum te diligas: dilige meliorem te, et dilexisti te ... Quem diligis ergo tamquam teipsum, duc quo duxisti teipsum».

neighbour can be reassured that in loving him as myself I am bringing him to God, not to worthlessness and nothingness.

A text from *De Disciplina Christiana*, commenting on Matt. 22. 37-40, probes another dimension of the distinction by paying attention to the fact that God has no equal, and that therefore we cannot speak of loving Him 'as someone else'; but the neighbour does have an equal, that is, ourselves, and therefore we can speak of loving him 'as ourselves'.

See what is learnt in the school: to love God and to love your neighbour, God as God and your neighbour as yourself. For you do not find anyone who is equal to God, and therefore no one can say to you: love God as you love so-and-so. But, concerning the neighbour, a rule has been fashioned for you, since you yourself have been created equal to your neighbour<sup>41</sup>).

It merits mentioning that Augustine here makes the neighbour the centre of the comparison by stating that we are created equal to the neighbour, not that he is created equal to us; that we are what he is, not that he is what we are.

#### B. Other explanations of the distinction

##### 1. Three commandments of the Decalogue refer to love for God, seven to love for neighbour

A common procedure of Augustine is to reduce the ten commandments carved on two tablets of stone to the double precept of love for God and for the neighbour, three commandments referring to the former and seven to the latter. On this double commandment the whole law and the prophets depend. Instances of this feature (including those falling outside the period being examined i.e. 396-410) will be gathered and reported on here. The point is well made in a sermon that cannot be dated. Having quoted the double commandment of Matt. 22. 37-40, Augustine comments:

...indeed the Decalogue pertains to the two precepts, that is, of love for God and for the neighbour. Three strings belong to the first precept because God is Trinity. While to the other precept, that is, love for the neighbour, there are seven strings: how one should live

<sup>41</sup>) *De Disciplina Christiana* 3, 3 (CC 46, 209-210. ML 40, 670): «Ecce quod discitur in domo disciplinae: Diligere deum, diligere proximum; deum tamquam deum, proximum tamquam te. Non enim invenis parem deo, ut possit tibi dici: Dilige deum sicut diligis illum. De proximo inventa est tibi regula, quia inventus es proximo tuo par tu ipse».

with other human beings... For two tablets of the Law were given... The three commandments on one tablet pertain to God, the seven on the other pertain to the neighbour... Let us join these seven to those three pertaining to love for God, if we wish to sing a new song on the ten-stringed lute (cf. Ps. 91. 4)<sup>42</sup>).

Three commandments therefore govern our relations with the Triune God, the other seven our life with our fellow men and women. If the full rich harmony of life is to sound through, the latter are to play their part in conjunction with the former<sup>43</sup>). The actual specification of the two precepts is further advanced in *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (398-399 A.D.) which sees the tune of the ten-stringed lute (cf. Ps. 91. 4) as prefiguring the new song of the double commandment. Augustine is speaking to those whose hearts Christ possesses: "In the first precept is the chastity of your nuptials, in the second the unity of your members; with the one you embrace the Godhead, with the other you assemble a

<sup>42</sup>) *Sermo* 9, 7 (CC 41, 120-122. ML 36, 80-81): «... ad duo itaque praecepta, id est, ad dilectionem Dei et proximi pertinet decalogus. Ad primum praeceptum tres chordae pertinent, quia Deus est Trinitas. Ad alterum vero praeceptum, id est, ad dilectionem proximi, septem chordae: quomodo vivatur inter homines ... Nam ideo duo tabulae Legis datae sunt ... Tria (praecepta) in una tabula ad Deum pertinentia, septem in altera tabula ad proximum ... Haec (septem) jungamus illis tribus ad dilectionem Dei pertinentibus, si in psalterio decem chordarum volumus cantare canticum novum (cf. Ps. 91. 4)».

This procedure is repeated in the following texts:

*Epistola* 55, 11, 20 (CSEL 34/2, 190. ML 33, 213); *En. 2 in ps. 32, sermo* 1, 6 (CC 38, 251-252. ML 36, 281) where love for neighbour is conceived in terms of the Golden Rule (cf. Matt. 7. 12): «ne facias alii quod pati non vis»; *Sermo* 33, 2 (CC 41, 413-414. ML 38, 202-203) which again speaks of singing a new song on the ten-stringed lute; *Sermo Wilmart* 2, 3 (MA I, 675-676); *Sermo* 250, 3 (ML 38, 1166) where «unitas, veritas, quies» are said to belong to love for God; *Sermo Frangipane* 1, 18 (MA I, 187); *Sermo* 249, 3 (ML 38, 1162); *Sermo* 278, 6 (ML 38, 1271) where the double commandment is proposed as an antidote to the two genera of sins.

<sup>43</sup>) It is striking that the musical image employed in this sermon as well as in other texts of this kind occurs again in certain reflections of BONHOEFFER on the relation between love for neighbour and love for God. In the letter to Eberhard Bethge mentioned above, he writes: «What I mean is that God wants us to love him eternally with our whole hearts — not in such a way as to injure or weaken our earthly love, but to provide a kind of *cantus firmus* to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint ... Where the *cantus firmus* is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limits ... I wanted to tell you to have a good, clear *cantus firmus*; that is the only way to a full and perfect sound, when the counterpoint has a firm support and can't come adrift or get out of tune, while remaining a distinct whole in its own right. Only a polyphony of this kind can give life a wholeness and at the same time assure us that nothing calamitous can happen as long as the *cantus firmus* is kept going ...». *Letters and Papers from Prison* (English translation: Reginald FULLER et alii), London, 1971, p. 303.

community”<sup>44</sup>). It is worth noting that the emphasis in these texts has shifted from the subordination of one precept to the other because God is greater than man, to the idea that the one precept is complementary to the other. On these two together depend the whole law and the prophets. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that the members whose unity is held to be founded on love for the neighbour are conceived precisely as members of the Body of Christ. In this case Augustine will not be able to retain for long a notion of the Godhead as pertaining exclusively to “the greatest and the first commandment”. The chapter dealing with his interpretation of Matt. 25. 31-46, Chapter VII, will make this abundantly clear.

## 2. Our love for neighbour and God's love for us

A text from *De Doctrina Christiana* provides us with an example of the kind of unusual comparison that can crop up in Augustine. We quoted above: “the precept by which we are to love God is distinct from love for neighbour because the divine essence is superior to and above our nature”<sup>45</sup>). Augustine goes on immediately with an additional explanation of the distinction between divine and human nature: “For he (i.e. God) shows us compassion because of his own goodness; we however show compassion to one another because of his goodness. That is to say, he has compassion on us in such a way that we may enjoy him; but indeed we have compassion on one another in such a way that we may enjoy him”<sup>46</sup>). Disregarding the other elements of the text for the present, we wish to highlight a phenomenon indicated above as a possibility in relation to *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*<sup>47</sup>). Love for

<sup>44</sup>) *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 15, 4 (CSEL 25/1, 423. ML 42, 306): «In primo praecepto est castitas nuptiarum tuarum (i.e. quorum corda possidet Christus), in secundo unitas membrorum tuorum: illo amplecteris divinitatem, isto congregas societatem». Cf. more generally, the letter to his friend, Martian, on hearing that the latter had become a catechumen i.e. *Epistola* 258, 4 (CSEL 57, 608-609. ML 33, 1073): «In illo primo rerum divinarum, in hoc secundo rerum humanarum est cum benevolentia et charitate consensio. Haec duo si mecum firmissime teneas, amicitia nostra vera ac sempiterna erit; et non solum nos invicem, sed ipsi etiam Domino sociabit».

<sup>45</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 72 (CSEL 80, 26) = 1, 30, 33 (CC 32, 25. ML 34, 31-32): «Sed quoniam excellentior ac supra nostram naturam est divina substantia, praeceptum quo diligamus Deum a proximi dilectione distinctum est».

<sup>46</sup>) *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, 72 (CSEL 80, 26-27) = 1, 30, 33 (CC 32, 25. ML 34, 32): «Ille enim nobis praebet misericordiam propter suam bonitatem, nos autem nobis invicem propter illius: id est, ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur: nos vero invicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur». Cf. *Sermo* 149, 18 (ML 38, 807).

<sup>47</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 51 (ML 32, 1332): «Ad incipiendum enim

God is distinct from love for neighbour because God's nature is distinctly superior to human nature, and because God's saving power radically surpasses that of the saved. But here in *De Doctrina Christiana* the direct comparison, on the basis of which the two loves are to be distinguished, is evidently between God's love for us ("he shows us compassion... he has compassion on us") and our love for one another ("we show compassion to one another"). In fact, the extraordinary thing is that in the actual explanation of the distinction nothing at all is said of our love for God. Augustine speaks only of God's love for us: this is indubitably greater than our love for one another. Perhaps it is Augustine's intention that the human response to a more excellent love should itself be a higher love, as was the case in the text quoted above from *De Catechizandis Rudibus*: the justified are to place their hope in the justifier, not in one another<sup>48</sup>). Or perhaps his deepening understanding of the Christian Scriptures has given him an inkling that our love for God and love for neighbour may not be as far apart as he had originally imagined. This suspicion filters through in another text from the same work:

The most important reason for Christ's coming was that people might know how much God loves them. Further, knowing in this way the extent of God's love for them, people might begin to burn with love for him who loved them first, and, following Christ's commandment and example, they might love the neighbour. Christ, in loving people who were not close to him but wandering far from him, has become the neighbour<sup>49</sup>).

In Christ, therefore, the demand of a higher human response to a more excellent love — that is, God's love for us — comes close to us, indeed as close as our neighbour.

### C. A noteworthy hapax: *En. in ps. 120, 12*

In one place where Augustine distinguishes love for God and love for neighbour, some editors have felt the need to correct him. Augustine

citius nos fortasse in se divina charitas rapit, sed facilius minora perficimus». The question was: does *divina charitas* refer to our love for God or to his love for us?

<sup>48</sup>) *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 27, 55 (CC 46, 178. ML 40, 348): «... in quo Deo spes omnis ponenda est. In homine non est ponenda, qualiscumque ille fuerit. Aliud est enim ille a quo iustificamur, aliud ille cum quibus iustificamur».

<sup>49</sup>) *Ibid.*, 4, 8 (CC 46, 128. ML 40, 315): «Si ergo maxime propterea Christus advenit, ut cognosceret homo quantum eum diligit Deus; et ideo cognosceret, ut in eius dilectionem a quo prior dilectus est, inardesceret, proximumque illo iubente et demonstrante diligeret, qui non proximum, sed longe peregrinantem diligendo factus est proximus ...».

is commenting on verses 5b-7a, of this psalm 120 (121): "With the Lord at your right hand the sun cannot strike you down by day, nor the moon at night. The Lord guards you from all harm". In line with the psalm, Augustine reckons the sun and the moon as two possible sources of danger and damage. Along with the well-known sunstroke there exists also the lesser known but equally frightening "moonstroke"<sup>50</sup>). In his spiritualising interpretation Augustine then takes the sun and the moon in this threatening sense to refer to two possible stumbling-blocks or causes of offence, negative parallels to the two precepts on which the whole law and the prophets depend. The precepts, love for neighbour and love for God, are more closely defined: "the church is loved because of the neighbour; God is loved for his own sake": «*Ecclesia propter proximum diligitur, Deus autem propter Deum*»<sup>51</sup>). The sun does not strike down those who believe what they ought to concerning God, those who do not go astray in relation to wisdom itself; the ones burnt are rather those who err with regard to unchangeable and undefiled truth<sup>52</sup>).

On the other hand, someone may think that the church is just in one place and may not recognise it spread throughout the whole world. He may believe those who say: "Look, here is Christ; look, he is there" (Matt. 24. 23), as you heard now when the gospel was read. But Christ has purchased the whole world; He has paid such a great price for it. Therefore, the person who does not believe this finds his neighbour, as it were, a stumbling-block. Such a person is struck down by the moon...<sup>53</sup>).

<sup>50</sup>) On the dangers of sun and moon, see L. JACQUET, *Les Psaumes et le cœur de l'Homme. Étude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale. Volume 3: Psaumes 101 à 150*, Namur, 1979, p. 422: «A propos de ces derniers méfaits, un médecin fera la communication suivante, qui justifie aisément l'allusion du psalmiste: 'Le coup de lune, accident encore trop peu connu, consiste en une cécité passagère, produite par le rayonnement nocturne de la lune, observé chez les marins naviguant sur les Mers du Sud. 'Les rayons de la lune' peuvent être cause de crises d'asthme, maux de tête, hémorragies nasales et coliques des reins. Les sujets atteints de lésions du foie, de paludisme, sont sensibles aux rayons ... lunaires ...'». Cf. A.A. ANDERSON, *The Book of Psalms. Volume II: Ps. 73-150* (New Century Bible), London, 1972, p. 853.

<sup>51</sup>) *En. in ps.* 120, 12 (CC 40, 1797. ML 37, 1615). All the codices have this reading, but some editors have altered it to: «*Ecclesia propter Deum, in Deo proximus diligitur, Deus autem propter Deum*». That the neighbour may have been important enough to Augustine as to be able to ground love for the church could have been a stumbling-block to them.

<sup>52</sup>) *Ibid.*: «... in Deo, intellegitur figurate dictus sol ... Quisquis ergo errat in ipsa substantia veritatis, a sole uritur, et per diem uritur ... Quisquis scandalizatus non fuerit in veritate illa incommutabili et incontaminabili, a sole non uritur ...».

<sup>53</sup>) *Ibid.*: «Quisquis rursus putaverit Ecclesiam in una parte esse, et non eam cognoverit diffusam toto orbe terrarum, et crediderit eis qui dicunt, *Ecce hic est Christus*, et

Thus, love for the neighbour to the bounds of the earth is proposed as a counter-argument to the Donatists who wish to limit it to their own African church. Augustine's retort is that Christ has died for the whole world, the church throughout the whole world is his flesh.

The church is preached through the flesh of Christ, because this very flesh of Christ is the head of the Church. Whoever finds no cause of offence in the church itself and in the flesh of Christ is not struck down by the moon... He is unharmed by the moon who makes no mistake in matters concerning the church, and the flesh of the Lord, and those deeds accomplished in time on our behalf<sup>54</sup>).

It is then as if the first commandment is related to the nature of God as truth and wisdom, and the second to Christ's salvific action on our behalf, to the universal church which is his flesh. Love for neighbour may, therefore, be seen as the foundation and main characteristic of the church, the flesh of the Lord. In Augustine's ecclesiology the most important task of the church of this time is to exercise love of neighbour in its most profound life-giving form by leading as many people as possible to God and by bringing them to unity with God and with one another in Jesus Christ. The church's primary mission is to be found in inviting all, good and bad, to the banquet of the Lord. It is not therefore to be loved on its own account or for the sake of its own honour, for the church of this time will pass away<sup>55</sup>). Rather, "the church is loved because of the neighbour". It is essentially the place of love of neighbour, and its chief concern is that the neighbour, who stands for all men and women, be brought into the unity of love. This kind of church, loved for the neighbour's sake, is well portrayed in the following short text. "The

*ecce illic* (Matt. 24. 23), sicut modo audistis cum Evangelium legeretur; cum ille totum orbem emerit, quia tantum pretium dedit: ille tamquam in proximo scandalizatur, luna uritur ...».

<sup>54</sup>) *Ibid.*, (CC 40, 1797-1798. ML 37, 1615-1616): «... per carnem Christi praedicatur ecclesia, quia ipsa caro Christi caput ecclesiae est. Quisquis ibi non scandalizatur, in ipsa ecclesia et carne Christi, a luna non uritur ... Quisquis in ecclesia, et in carne Domini, et in his quae pro nobis temporaliter gesta sunt, non errat, non uritur a luna ...».

<sup>55</sup>) See T.J. VAN BAVEL, «What Kind of Church Do You Want? The Breadth of Augustine's Ecclesiology», in *Louvain Studies* vii/3 (1979) 147-171, p. 168. Although the church is relative, imperfect and transitory, Augustine can still state that «the church is preached through the flesh of Christ». Van Bavel points out this paradox: «Albeit that the authentic church is not simply identical with the empirical church, the latter coincides nevertheless with the former. Here we find identity and non-identity at the same time ... In this paradoxical situation of identity and non-identity lies the strength of Augustine's conception of the Church» (p. 167).

limbs of the baby" referred to in the text provide an image of the Christian people.

The church of Christ can give no greater proof of love than not being concerned about the honour which it seems to possess in people's estimation. There is no greater proof of love than the effort of the church to prevent the division of the limbs of the baby and to avoid lacerating the Christian frailty by dissolving the unity<sup>56</sup>).

Thus, although the expression, "the church is loved because of the neighbour" (*«ecclesia propter proximum diligitur»*), is unusual, it is illuminated when set against the background of Augustine's ecclesiology: the transitory church invites as many "neighbours" as possible to their true life in God and into the unity of love with one another. At the same time, however, the expression bespeaks another of Augustine's favourite themes, namely, the theology of the "total Christ". For "Christ, by loving people who were not close to him but wandering far from him, has become the neighbour"<sup>57</sup>). Christ is himself the neighbour. In this sense then the church, insofar as it is the flesh of Christ the Head, is loved for the sake of the neighbour, indeed for the sake of this neighbour.

### III. THE ANTI-PELAGIAN PERIOD: 410-430

At least one new characteristic enters the field at this period during which the Donatist controversy is entering its final days and ceding to the Pelagians the role of chief provocateur of Augustine's preoccupations. There is a tendency, especially noticeable in the anti-Pelagian works, to see the present as the time of love for neighbour and to understand love for God as being perfected only when he is seen face to face. Moreover, the emphasis on love for God as "the greatest and the first commandment" continues. Is this also to be explained now by the crisis Augustine has on his hands with the Pelagians? In the impossibility of perfect love

<sup>56</sup>) *Sermo* 10, 8 (CC 41, 158-159. ML 38, 96): «Sed nulla maior est in Christi ecclesia probatio caritatis, quam cum etiam honor ipse qui apud homines videtur esse contemnitur, ne membra parvuli dividantur et unitatis discidio christiana dilanietur infirmitas».

<sup>57</sup>) *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 4,8 (CC 46, 128. ML 40, 315): «... (Christus) qui non proximum, sed longe peregrinantem diligendo factus est proximus ...». In fact, the Incarnation can be seen as a vital link between the wisdom of God and the church, between love for God and love for the neighbour. E.g. see *Sermo Denis* 16, 2 (MA I, 76): «... (sapientia) assumpsit proximum nostrum, et facta est proxima nostra ... Ergo suscepit hominem sapientia, et facta est homini proxima per id quod erat proximum».

for God in this life does Augustine not find a ready argument against the proclamation of a theology over-confident of human perfectibility on earth?

A. *Love for God perfected only when He is seen face to face*

The time of our life on earth can be understood as specifically the time for love of neighbour; by taking care of and supporting the neighbour a human being comes closer to God and to the fulfilment of the precept to love him totally. We read, for example, in the seventeenth tract on the gospel of John:

By loving the neighbour and attending to his needs (i.e. by bearing one another's burdens: cf. Gal. 6. 2; and by preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: cf. Eph. 4. 2-3) you make progress in your journey. Where does your journey lead but to Him whom you ought to love with all the heart, all the soul and all the mind? We have not yet reached the Lord, but we do have the neighbour with us. Therefore, carry him with whom you live during this time of pilgrimage in such a way that you reach Him with whom you desire to remain<sup>58</sup>).

Our presentiment from this text that the love for God «*ex toto*» belongs properly only to life's journey's end is confirmed by looking at an early anti-Pelagian tract, *De Spiritu et Littera*. "Consequently", Augustine writes, "we will fulfil this first precept of righteousness by which we are commanded to love God with the whole heart, the whole soul and the whole mind — *and the other following from it (alterum consequens), concerning love of neighbour* — in that life when we shall see Him face to face"<sup>59</sup>). Such total perfection is beyond the capacities of human beings on earth. It is noteworthy that here not only is love for God understood to be realised completely only in the vision of God but also love for neighbour. The theme of love for God with heart, mind, and soul, as being fulfilled only beyond this life, is taken up again by a later

<sup>58</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17, 9 (CC 36, 175. ML 35, 1532): «Diligendo proximum, et curam habendo de proximo tuo, iter agis. Quo iter agis nisi ad Dominum Deum, ad eum quem diligere debemus *ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente*? Ad Dominum enim nondum pervenimus, sed proximum habemus. Porta ergo eum, cum quo ambulas; ut ad eum pervenias, cum quo manere desideras».

<sup>59</sup>) *De Spiritu et Littera* 36, 64 (CSEL 60, 225. ML 44, 243): «Proinde hoc primum praeceptum iustitiae, quo iubemur diligere deum *ex toto corde, et ex tota anima, et ex tota mente*, cui est de proximo diligendo alterum consequens, in illa vita implebimus, cum videbimus facie ad faciem».

anti-Pelagian text; again, neither here nor in the following texts we shall refer to is there any reason to think that love for neighbour is not also increased and intensified, when God is contemplated in vision.

Let love, however, which is the greatest among the three (i.e. faith, hope and love) not be taken away, but rather, contemplating the object of its faith and having attained the object of its hope, let it increase and be intensified. In this fulness of love that precept will be fulfilled: "you shall love the Lord your God with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind". For so long as some trace of carnal concupiscence still remains (even though it may be kept in check by continence), we do not entirely love God with all the soul (*ex tota anima*)... The righteous person will be altogether without sin when there is no longer any law in his members battling against the law of his mind (cf. Rom. 7. 23) and when truly he loves God with all the heart, all the soul and all the mind, which is the first and greatest of the commandments (Matt. 22. 37-38). Why therefore should this perfection not be required of people, even though no one can attain it in this life? For the person who does not know where to run does not run straight<sup>60</sup>).

When we set total love for God as our goal — albeit a goal unattainable in this life — we determine the way in which life's journey is to be made. Running straight to this goal means making a commitment to the neighbour; it entails carrying "him with whom you live during this time of pilgrimage in such a way that you reach Him with whom you desire to remain".

Even though there is a form of love for God shown on earth by believers, it is hardly to be compared to that love for Him which will arise when He is encountered as He is and fully known, when all covetousness in human beings will have disappeared and God will be loved even «*ex tota anima*». Our failure to please Him when we consider that we are doing so makes us conscious that something is missing in our love here. Augustine, reflecting on this in *De Spiritu et Littera*, asks:

<sup>60</sup>) *De Perfectione Iustitiae Homini* 8, 19 (CSEL 42, 17-18. ML 44, 300-301): «Caritas autem, quae in his tribus major est, non auferatur, sed augeatur et impleatur, contemplata quod credebat, et quod sperabat indepta. In qua plenitudine caritatis praeceptum illud implebitur, *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota mente tua* (Matt. 22. 37-38). Nam cum est adhuc carnalis concupiscentia, quod vel continendo frenetur, non omni modo ex tota anima diligitur Deus ... Tunc erit iustus sine ullo omnino peccato, quando nulla lex erit in membris ejus repugnans legi mentis ejus (Rom. 7. 23), sed prorsus toto corde, tota anima, tota mente diligit Deum, quod est primum summumque praeceptum. Cur ergo non praeciperetur homini ista perfectio, quamvis eam in hac vita nemo habet? Non enim recte curritur, si quo currendum est nesciatur».

Is there any other reason we are so little aware of what pleases Him than that He is too little known to us? For "now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face". Who would dare to think that, when the time will have come at which he can say: "I shall know just as I am known" (1 Cor. 13. 12), the love given to God by those who contemplate Him will then be no greater in intensity than the love of those who believe in Him now? Who would make so bold as to think that love in the present time can in any way be compared with contemplative love in heaven, as if they were near to each other? Rather, the greater the knowledge, the greater will be the love. Indeed, to the extent that there is a lack of love, a person is to be thought not yet perfectly holy<sup>61</sup>).

When God is contemplated as all in all, there will be no room for harbouring false suspicions against our neighbours, because nothing will be hidden from us. Therefore, the neighbour too will then be better known and thereby better loved<sup>62</sup>). When it comes to the nature of such love as is possible on earth, however, the description is entirely in terms of love for neighbour. In *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* Augustine had proposed the following possibility: it may be that "the love for neighbour is first to be accomplished" and that "we accomplish smaller things more easily"<sup>63</sup>). In relation to this text of *De Spiritu et Littera* the

<sup>61</sup>) *De Spiritu et Littera* 36, 64 (CSEL 60, 224. ML 44, 243): «Unde autem minus novimus quid ei placeat, nisi quia et ipse minus notus est nobis? Videmus enim nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem. Quis vero existimare audeat, cum eo ventum fuerit, Ut cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum (1 Cor. 13. 12), tantam Dei dilectionem fore contemplatoribus ejus, quanta fidelibus nunc est: aut ullo modo hanc illi tamquam de proximo comparandam? Porro si quanto major notitia, tanto erit major dilectio; profecto nunc quantum deest dilectioni, tantum perficiendae justitiae deesse credendum est».

Cf. 36, 65: «... homo, quamvis longe minus amet Deum, quam eum potest amare conspectum ...»; «Ad illam vitam iam immortalem pertineat, Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota virtute tua (Deut. 6. 5) ...».

On the question of our knowledge of God being imperfect on earth, we discover in *De Trinitate* 8, 8, 12 (CC 50, 286. ML 42, 957) the surprising assertion that nonetheless God, i.e. Love, is better known here than our «brother» is: «Diligat fratrem et diligat eandem dilectionem; magis enim novit dilectionem qua diligit quam fratrem quem diligit. Ecce iam potest notioem deum habere quam fratrem, plane notioem quia praesentioem, notioem quia interiorum, notioem quia certioem. Amplectere dilectionem deum et dilectione amplectere deum».

<sup>62</sup>) See *En. in ps.* 118, *sermo* 13, 4 (CC 40, 1707. ML 37, 1538) (Date: 422): «... plenitudinem sine ullo peccandi timore servabimus, quia et Deum plenius, cum viderimus, amabimus, et proximum, quia deus erit omnia in omnibus (1 Cor. 15. 28); nec falsae cuiquam de proximo suspicioni erit locus, ubi nullus ulli erit occultus».

<sup>63</sup>) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 26, 51 (ML 32, 1332): «Sed nescio quomodo aut pariter ista in plenitudinem perfectionemque consurgunt, aut inchoatur prius Dei amor, et prius perficitur proximi. Ad incipiendum enim citius fortasse in se divina charitas rapit, sed facilius minora perficimus».

“smaller things” that are first accomplished may be seen as the highest form of love for neighbour of which we are capable on earth. Therefore, we should not be misled by the comparison nor by the use of the word “smaller” into undervaluing love of neighbour; for the enactment of no higher or greater love than this is accessible to human beings so long as the time of faith and pilgrimage has not yet given way to that of vision and knowledge surpassing all understanding.

Now perhaps through faith good people are capable of attaining to that love greater than which none is possible in this life, as the Lord himself has borne witness; that is to say, the love with which they lay down their lives for the faith or for the brothers (cf. Jn. 15. 13). But when, after walking as they now do through faith during this time of pilgrimage (cf. 2 Cor. 5. 7), they will have come to the vision, for which we hope in its absence and wait for with patience (cf. Rom. 8. 25), then love itself will without a doubt not only surpass the love we have here but it will also be far beyond what we seek and comprehend (cf. Eph. 3. 20)<sup>64</sup>.

However, “we have not yet reached the Lord. But we do have the neighbour with us. Therefore, carry him with whom you live during this time of pilgrimage...”<sup>65</sup>). Bear his burdens, have him bear yours, strive to live in unity and peace, lay down your life for him. Such is the exhortation to the love that good people can practise in this world, despite the unrelenting tug of concupiscence and even before they have met the Lord fully in contemplation, “face to face”. But, just as love for God with all the parts of the soul, in all dimensions of human life, will be perfected only in the vision of God, so love for neighbour itself, even

<sup>64</sup>) *De Spiritu et Littera* 36, 64 (CSEL 60, 224-225. ML 44, 243): «At si credendo ad tantam dilectionem sancti pervenire potuerunt, qua certe maiorem in hac vita esse non posse Dominus ipse testatus est, ut animam suam pro fide vel pro fratribus ponerent (Jn. 15. 13): cum ab hac peregrinatione in qua per fidem nunc ambulatur (2 Cor. 5. 7), perventum erit ad speciem, quam nondum visam speramus, et per patientiam expectamus (Rom. 8. 25), procul dubio et ipsa dilectio non solum supra quam hic habemus, sed longe supra quam petimus et intelligimus erit (Eph. 3. 20)». What may be meant by the «*ipsa dilectio*» that is above our powers of imagination and that we will have for God in contemplation of Him, is put into focus if Augustine's allusion to Eph. 3. 19-20 is followed up: «until, knowing the love of christ (i.e. Christ's love for us), which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine». Christ's love, the fullness of God, God's power, these evoke and enable total «*ipsa dilectio*» for Him on our part.

<sup>65</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17, 9 (CC 36, 175. ML 35, 1532): «Ad Dominum enim nondum pervenimus, sed proximum habemus. Porta ergo eum, cum quo ambulas...».

though it is the supreme Christian hallmark in the world as we know it<sup>66</sup>), also knows a perfection beyond this world. The «*alterum con-*

<sup>66</sup>) *De Natura et Gratia* 70, 84 (CSEL 60, 298. ML 44, 290) (Date: 415) also specifies this self-giving love for others as the greatest of which we are capable in this life: «...caritas perfecta, perfecta iustitia est: sed caritas de corde puro, et conscientia bona, et fide non ficta (1 Tim. 1. 5); quae tunc maxima est in hac vita, quando pro illa ipsa contemnitur vita (cf. Jn. 15. 13) ...». This concentration on love for neighbour unto death as the greatest love possible in this world begins around the time of *In Epistolam Ioannis*, i.e. 407 A.D. Augustine speaks there of fraternal love as «perfecta dilectio» or «perfecta caritas». In *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* 1, 13, 22 (ML 32, 1321) (Date: 388), however, he had spoken of the fullness of love as conformity to God, not to this world: «Sanctificati enim plena et integra charitate flagramus, qua sola efficitur ut a Deo non avertamur, eique potius quam huic mundo conformemur». Likewise, human perfection was related to love for God: «Haec est hominis una perfectio, qua sola impetrat ut veritatis sinceritate perfruatur»: *Ibid.*, 1, 25, 46 (ML 32, 1331). It was even stated that first we are to love Christ fully, for in knowing Him is eternal life: «Quid ergo agendum est, quid quaeso, nisi ut eum ipsum quem cognoscere volumus, prius plena charitate diligamus?». *Ibid.* 1, 25, 47 (ML 32, 1331). (To be sure, in the *Retractationes* 1, 6, 4 (CSEL 36, 31) = 1, 7, 4 (ML 32, 593) (Date: 426-427), Augustine replaces this «plena» with «sincera», having grown aware that love for God will be perfectly fulfilled only in the vision of God. *Contra Adimantum* 6 (CSEL 25, 126. ML 42, 136-137) (Date: 394) sees complete perfection in love for God: «quibus mandatis perfectis etiam ad dilectionem dei crescitur, in qua est tota perfectio. nam dilectio proximi certus gradus est ad dilectionem dei».

In *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas* 45 (CSEL 84, 119. ML 35, 2137), of the following year, however, «perfecta caritas» is found in both love for God and for the neighbour. Moreover, as far as I can discover, this is the earliest instance of the actual expression «perfecta caritas» or «perfecta dilectio» in Augustine. «Cum ergo non nisi in duobus praeceptis dilectionis dei et proximi perfecta sit caritas ...». An illuminating comparison can be drawn between Augustine's definitions of «perfecta iustitia» in *De Vera Religione* 262 (CSEL 77, 67) = 48, 93 (CC 32, 248. ML 34, 164), dating from 390, and, fifteen or more years later, in *De Trinitate* 8, 8, 12 (CC 50, 287. ML 42, 958). The former reads: «Et haec est perfecta iustitia, qua potius potiora et minus minora diligimus» (where, in context, «potiora» refer to God, and «minora» to ourselves). The latter has: «Qui diligit, inquit, fratrem suum in lumine manet, et scandalum in eo non est (1 Jn. 2. 10). Manifestum est quod iustitiae perfectionem in fratris dilectione posuerit; nam in quo scandalum non est utique perfectus est». The focus in perfection has now shifted to the brother, the neighbour. In the text quoted at the beginning of this note from *De Natura et Gratia* 70, 84, we saw how «perfecta iustitia» was equated with «caritas perfecta», and that as «maxima in hac vita» this meant love as in Jn. 15. 13. As we have also seen, however, in the anti-Pelagian period Augustine makes the further point that there is a perfection both of love for God and of love for neighbour which is attainable only beyond this life: «... sed miror si non habet quo crescat (i.e. caritas maxima in hac vita), cum de mortali excesserit vita». Nonetheless, the change in focus regarding «perfecta iustitia» between *De Vera Religione* (390 A.D.) and *De Trinitate*, Book 8 (405 A.D.), can over the same period also be observed in relation to the expressions «perfecta caritas», «perfecta dilectio», and synonyms. *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* had considered the perfection of love almost exclusively in terms of love for God and had indicated that such perfection could be achieved in this life. *In Epistolam Ioannis* is replete with examples of Augustine's shift to the neighbour in speaking of the perfection of love:

1. Perfect love is loving enemies that they may become brothers: «... quae est perfectio dilectionis? Et inimicos diligere, et ad hoc diligere, ut sint fratres»: tr. 1, 9 (ML 35, 1984);

*sequens*» is fulfilled on earth by the greatest love possible to human beings, but it will be most perfectly realised only when, seeing God, we are filled with His fulness.

### B. Love for God as “the greatest and the first commandment”

When he speaks in this manner of love for God, Augustine may be doing no more than respecting Matthew’s formulation and the order he followed: «*Hoc est maximum et primum mandatum*» (Matt. 22. 38). But does he also respect Matthew’s intention that the other, the second, commandment not be understood as of secondary importance but rather as equal (ὁμοία) to the first, and as together with it grounding the entire Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22. 39-40)?<sup>67</sup>

«... quamdiu dicemus vobis: *Diligite inimicos*? ... Si fratres solum amaretis, nondum essetis perfecti»: tr. 1, 11 (ML 35, 1985-1986); «Quapropter perfecta dilectio, est inimici dilectio: quae perfecta dilectio est in dilectione fraterna»: tr. 8, 10 (ML 35, 2042); «Si ergo ad hanc perfectionem nos invitat Deus, ut diligamus inimicos nostros sicut et ipse (Christus) dilexit suos ...»: tr. 9, 3 (ML 35, 2047).

2. Perfect love is love for one another to the extent of laying down our lives for the brethren as Christ has laid down his life for us (cf. Jn. 15. 12-13; 1 Jn. 3. 16): «Perfecta ista charitas est, ut paratus sis mori pro fratre»: tr. 5, 4 (ML 35, 2014); such love begins by giving of our abundance to the neighbour in need: tr. 5, 12 (ML 35, 2018); similarly, tr. 6, 1: «Hinc (i.e. giving what one has over to the poor) exordium est charitatis. Hanc ita coeptam, si verbo Dei et spe futurae vitae nutrieris, pervenies ad illam perfectionem, ut paratus sis animam tuam ponere pro fratribus tuis». (ML 35, 2019). As we have seen, earlier texts such as *Contra Adimantum* 6 seemed to suggest that love for neighbour was the beginning and love for God perfection. Now, the highest forms of love for neighbour themselves are spoken of as perfection. Cf. *En. in ps.* 56, 1 (CC 39, 694. ML 36, 661) for which the «caritatis perfecta mensura» is represented by Jn. 15. 13: giving up one’s life for one’s friends; similarly, *En. in ps.* 102, 3 (CC 40, 1452. ML 37, 1317): «perfectio caritatis»; *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 84, 1 (CC 36, 536-537. ML 35, 1846-1847).

[*In Epistolam Ioannis*, tr. 10, 4 (ML 35, 2057) paraphrases the new commandment of Jn. 13. 34 in terms of Gal. 6. 2: «bear one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ». Augustine proceeds: «Ipsa est consummatio omnium operum nostrorum, dilectio. Ibi est finis: propter hoc currimus; ad ipsam currimus; cum venerimus ad eam requiescimus». Having characterised love for neighbour and bearing one another’s burdens as the «finis» in tr. 10, 4, however, Augustine goes on in tr. 10, 5 (ML 35, 2057-2058): «... veni ad Christum, vides inde finem omnis consummationis (cf. Ps. 118. 96) ... Quid est finis? Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est (Ps. 72. 28). Adhaesisti Deo, finisti viam; permanebis in patria». When therefore Augustine uses the terms «finis» and «consummatio» of love here, he seems to indicate that love for neighbour and for God is one in reaching its goal and finding its fulfilment «in patria». Once we have assured a proper understanding of the terms, love for God and love for neighbour as oneself, the question we will be led to address is: are they one in any sense other than coinciding in coming to perfection «in patria»?]

<sup>67</sup>) See again, Victor Paul FURNISH, *The Love Commandment in the New Testament*, p. 31: «Perhaps most significant is the apparent concern in Matthew’s version to emphasize the relatedness of the two commandments to love God and the neighbour (vs. 38-39a). To

In a sermon delivered on the feast of the Ascension (probably 412) Augustine is faced with the question why the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs twice in the Scriptures i.e. in Jn. 20. 22 and in Acts 1.8; 2.4. The preacher offers as an opinion (*«ergo arbitror, sed arbitror»*) that it is in order to commend the two precepts of love:

One love and two precepts: one Spirit and two gifts. It is not that one Spirit was given on the first occasion and another on the second, for the love that loves the neighbour is no other than that which loves God. It is not therefore a matter of two loves. With the same love we give to the neighbour we love God too. But since God and the neighbour are not the same, while they are loved with the one love (*una charitate*), those who are loved are not one and the same. Therefore, *the great love for God is first to be commended, love for neighbour is second*. But we have to begin from the second in order to arrive at the first, “for if you do not love your brother whom you see, how can you love God whom you do not see?” (1 Jn. 4. 20)<sup>68</sup>).

The tensions of distinctness in unity can be sensed in this text. There is only one love, but two beings of different natures who are loved. Augustine goes further here than to say just that Matthew states the commandment to love God first; he appears to ascribe to this commandment a certain priority on account of the fact that God is superior to

love God is underscored as the ‘great and first commandment’, but then the second is said to be ‘like’ it, which quite apparently means equal to it in importance. Moreover, in summary the Matthean version links the two commandments together as those upon which ‘all the law and the prophets depend’ (vs. 40)». Cf. K. BERGER, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu*, p. 207.

<sup>68</sup>) *Sermo* 265, 8, 9 (ML 38, 1223): «Una charitas, et duo praecepta: unus Spiritus, et duo data. Non enim alius datus est prius, et alius datus est postea: quia non alia charitas diligit proximum, quam illa quae diligit Deum. Non ergo alia charitas est. Qua charitate proximum, ipsa charitate diligimus et Deum. Sed quia aliud est Deus, aliud proximus, una charitate diliguntur, non sunt tamen unum qui diliguntur: quia ergo magna est primitus commendanda dilectio Dei, secunda dilectio proximi; a secunda autem incipitur, ut ad primam perveniatur: *Si enim fratrem quem vides non diligis, Deum quem non vides quomodo diligere poteris?* (1 Jn. 4. 20)».

This explanation for the two-fold outpouring of the Holy Spirit is repeated in *De Trinitate* 15, 26, 46 (CC 50A, 525. ML 42, 1093): «semel in terra propter dilectionem proximi, et iterum de caelo propter dilectionem Dei». However, the gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed by Christ on earth for the love of the neighbour also originates in heaven. The only difference between the two gifts is that, while Christ visibly imparted the former during his life among people on earth, the latter was made only after his Ascension into heaven. «Spiritus sanctum accipe in terra, et diligis fratrem: accipe de caelo, et diligis Deum. Quia et in terra quod accepisti, de caelo est. In terra Christus dedit, sed de caelo est quod dedit. Ille enim dedit qui de caelo descendit. Hic invenit cui daret, sed inde attulit quod daret». *Sermo* 265, 8, 9 (ML 38, 1223).

human beings. The same tendency to stress the supremacy of the first commandment is evidenced elsewhere at this time. In a letter critical of the Pelagian theories, which were highly optimistic of the natural powers of human beings, and that were then being brought to his attention, Augustine states:

For it is written: "And he said to the man: behold the filial love that is wisdom" (Job. 28. 28: LXX). Now filial love is the worship of God, and He is worshipped only by love. Therefore, *the supreme and true wisdom is in that first commandment*: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul". From this it follows that wisdom is love to God, which is poured into our hearts in no other way than through the Spirit who is given to us (cf. Rom. 5. 5)<sup>69</sup>.

But the emphasis in this letter on love for God, the first commandment, as the supreme and true wisdom, can well be explained by Augustine's preoccupation to offer against the Pelagians the irrefutable example of the highest human perfection which cannot possibly be achieved without the Spirit who is poured into our hearts (cf. Rom. 5.5). It suits his argument here to vaunt love for neighbour lightly, as the Pelagians might easily seize upon it as showing that human beings can attain perfection by their own natural created powers. In this perspective, his insistence that "the supreme and true wisdom is in that first commandment" is understandable, and he has Rom. 5.5 ready at hand to show that the fulfilment of that commandment is impossible without God's grace<sup>70</sup>). As we have just seen, at this period Augustine considers

<sup>69</sup>) *Epistola* 140, 18, 45 (= *De Gratia Novi Testamenti*) (CSEL 44, 193. ML 33, 558): «Dixit enim homini, sicut scriptum est: *Ecce pietas est sapientia* (Job 28. 28: LXX). Porro pietas cultus Dei est, nec colitur ille nisi amando. Summa igitur et vera sapientia est in praecepto illo primo: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua*; ac per hoc sapientia est caritas Dei; nec diffunditur in cordibus nostris, nisi per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis (Rom. 5.6)». (My emphasis).

Probably no great significance is to be attached to the fact that «ex tota mente tua» is missing from Augustine's quotation of Matt. 22. 37 in this letter. But, in view of Ragnar Holte's explanation of the functions of the different parts of the soul in Augustine's early period, we might have expected it most of all in this context, which is specifically concerned with love of God as direct object.

<sup>70</sup>) On Augustine's use of Rom. 5. 5 i.e. «quia caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis», see A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, «Le verset paulinien Rom. V, 5 dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin», in *Augustinus Magister* II, Paris, 1954, p. 657-665. One of the two contexts in which it is mostly employed by Augustine is «celui de la relation entre le don de la charité par l'Esprit Saint et l'accomplissement parfait

total love for God, the fulfilment of the first and the greatest commandment, as unrealisable so long as the law in our members is in contest with the law of our minds (cf. Rom. 7. 23), that is, in this life<sup>71</sup>). In fact, even the fulfilment of the second commandment, «*alterum consequens*», is understood as being perfected only when, in the vision of God, love for Him is total<sup>72</sup>).

The 65th tract on John's Gospel could also be seen as witnessing to the anti-Pelagian tendency of accentuating the commandment to love God. In comparison to Jn. 13. 34 ("you are to love one another"), Matt. 22. 37-38, recommending total love for God, appears to be presented as the "greater" commandment («*illud maius*»), as if in fact love for God were "greater" and more important than love for neighbour. Looking more closely at the text, however, reveals that Augustine is comparing Jn. 13. 34 not just with Matt. 22. 37-38, but with 22. 37-40 i.e. love for God and love for neighbour together, on both of which the whole Law and the Prophets depend.

Sisters and brothers, do not think that when the Lord said, "A new commandment I give to you: you are to love one another" (Jn. 13. 34), He passed over that greater commandment by which we are enjoined to love the Lord our God with the whole heart, the whole soul and the whole mind. It may indeed seem that He did leave that greater commandment (*illud maius*) out of account. For He said "love one another", as if this had nothing to do with the second part of that other commandment where it is said: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22. 39). In fact He says "on these two precepts depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22. 40)<sup>73</sup>).

Therefore, the commandment of love for God and love for neighbour together (Matt. 22. 37-40) is greater («*illud maius*») than that of love for neighbour alone (Jn. 13. 34). For, as the text continues, love for neighbour apart from love for God may be misunderstood by some as

et plénier de la Loi» (p. 662). In this case, Augustine means by «*caritas Dei*» «l'amour que nous avons pour Dieu» (p. 659).

<sup>71</sup>) See *De Perfectione Iustitiae Hominis* 8, 19 (CSEL 42, 17-18. ML 44, 300-301).

<sup>72</sup>) See *De Spiritu et Littera* 36, 64 (CSEL 60, 225. ML 44, 243).

<sup>73</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 65, 2 (CC 36, 491-492. ML 35, 1809): «Nolite itaque, fratres mei, putare in hoc quod ait Dominus: *Mandatum novum do vobis, ut vos invicem diligatis*, illud maius praetermissum esse mandatum, quo praecipitur ut diligamus Dominum Deum nostrum ex toto corde, ex tota anima, et ex tota mente, tamquam enim hoc praetermisso videtur dictum: *ut diligatis invicem*, velut hoc ad illud alterum non pertineat, quod dictum est: *Diliges proximum tuum tamquam teipsum*. In his enim duobus praeceptis, inquit, tota lex pendet, et prophetae».

worldly love. "But for those of sound understanding each of these two commandments is found in the other": «*Sed bene intelligentibus utrumque invenitur in singulis*». This statement removes all doubt that Augustine might have considered the commandment of love for God as separate from and superior to love for neighbour. In fact, on the one hand, unworldly love for neighbour as actually visualised by Jn. 13. 34 and Matt. 22. 39 cannot be realised unless a person is as fully as possible intent upon God. While, on the other hand, the commandment of love for neighbour is the better indicator of where, practically speaking, love has to begin and of how it is to be concretely tested.

How then is the statement of *Sermo* 265 that "the great love for God is first to be commended, love for neighbour is second" to be understood? What is the meaning of the priority of commendation given to love for God in the seventeenth tract on John's Gospel? "In enunciating the two precepts requiring this love the Lord did not first commend the neighbour and then God, but first God then the neighbour"<sup>74</sup>). It is more than probable that Augustine is here being guided by the idea, with which we shall become familiar, that love for self is genuine only if, as far as possible, the whole self is loving God, and that therefore the only true love of neighbour as oneself is dependent upon the self being intent upon God, as totally as it can. In this sense, on the level of principle, love for God is primary, for authentic love for neighbour presupposes it. For this reason, love for God is first to be commanded: «*Dei dilectio prior est ordine praecipiendi*»<sup>75</sup>). Augustine, however, does not remain on the level of principle. From another point of view, love for neighbour has precedence over love for God. As *Sermo* 265 expresses it: "We have to begin from the second in order to arrive at the first, 'for if you do not love your brother whom you see, how can you love God whom you do not see?' (1 Jn. 4. 20)"<sup>76</sup>). According to the seventeenth tract on John, love for neighbour is first put into practice: «*proximi autem dilectio prior est ordine faciendi*». Thus, on the level of practice and of action, love for neighbour comes before love for God, because in this life we do not yet see God, but we do see other human beings. However, "by loving the

<sup>74</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17, 8 (CC 36, 174. ML 35, 1531): «Neque enim qui tibi praeciperet dilectionem istam in duobus praeceptis, prius tibi commendaret proximum, et postea Deum; sed prius Deum, postea proximum».

<sup>75</sup>) *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>) *Sermo* 265, 8, 9 (ML 38, 1223): «... a secunda autem incipitur, ut ad primam perveniat: Si enim fratrem quem vides non diligis, Deum quem non vides quomodo diligere poteris?»

neighbour you will gain sight of Him (God); by loving the neighbour you cleanse your eye for the vision of God”<sup>77</sup>). Only when God is seen, as we have shown, will love for Him be complete and will “the greatest and the first commandment” be wholly fulfilled. Love for neighbour might then be seen as the way of living in this life which continuously keeps open the possibility of the fulfilment in the life to come of the commandment to love God totally. This complete love for God coincides with the vision of Him, with perfect *frui deo*, with beatitude. But, as we shall be at pains to show, the attainment of the vision of God, of *frui deo*, does not by any means entail that love for neighbour ceases. Indeed, face to face with God, the «*alterum consequens*» too is fully perfected. Love for neighbour is not “first” in the sense of being a first step which can be neglected and discarded once it has served its purpose of opening the vision of God to us.

Here it has been our purpose to concentrate on the distinction between the two levels of principle and practice; for the former, love for God is primary, not only because God is superior by nature, more trustworthy, and more worthy of obedience than human beings — the double commandment is after all the Lord’s commandment — but also because it sets the ultimate goal for all human beings, and therefore only the self loving God can love the neighbour properly; for the latter, love for neighbour comes first because it is with the neighbour that we have immediate dealings and it is in the neighbour whom we can see that the first challenge to love comes to meet us. As prior love for God «*ordine praecipendi*» has its fruits in upbuilding, perspective-opening love for neighbour on the way to God, so prior love for neighbour «*ordine faciendi*» flows into the fulness of love for God, which is both the perfect fulfilment of the commandment enabled only by God’s grace (cf. Rom. 5. 5) and the reward of eternal life and of supreme and true wisdom for those who worship Him in filial love. The emphasis here, as we stated, has been on the distinction between the «*ordo praecipendi*» and the «*ordo faciendi*». Within the former we have also emphasised the distinction between the “first” and the “second” commandment, as it occurs in *Sermo* 265, 8, 9. Such terminology Augustine has adopted from Matthew, and this text gives us no grounds for considering that he does not follow Matthew also in regarding the “first” and the “second” as of

<sup>77</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17, 8 (CC 36, 174. ML 35, 1531): «Tu autem quia Deum nondum vides, diligendo proximum promereris quem videas; diligendo proximum purgas oculum ad videndum Deum ...».

equal importance. Indeed, both commandments are fulfilled with the same love: «*Qua charitate proximum, ipsa charitate diligimus et Deum*». It is not as if the “first” commandment were given «*prius*» and the “second” «*postea*»<sup>78</sup>). The two commandments were given together and are fulfilled with the one love. But, in the «*ordo praecipendi*», love for God is “first” to be commended. In fact, it is more than likely this same point that Augustine is stressing in *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17,8 when paradoxically he does employ the terms «*prius*» and «*postea*» as indicating a certain order of commendation of the two commandments. “In enunciating the two precepts requiring this love the Lord did not first commend the neighbour and then God, but first God then the neighbour”<sup>79</sup>). This manner of speaking has been rejected in relation to the giving of the two commandments in *Sermo* 265, 8, 9. Despite its one and only appearance here, however, there is nothing in the tract on John’s Gospel to indicate that «*postea*» is anything more than a mere synonym for *Sermo* 265’s “second” to be commended. There is no reason to assume that Augustine can be discovered in this one instance to drive a wedge between love for God and love for the neighbour, as if the former, being first («*prius*»), were therefore more highly and more warmly to be commended, and with the latter, love of neighbour, as it were, limping along behind («*postea*»). Nor is it to be presupposed that the neighbour is in some way disadvantaged by coming only “second” after God in the «*ordo praecipendi*». Contrary to our initial suspicions, the neighbour in fact benefits by being placed “second” or «*postea*» in this order.

RAYMOND CANNING O.S.A.

<sup>78</sup>) *Sermo* 265, 8, 9 (ML 38, 1223): «*Non enim alius datus est prius, et alius datus est postea: quia non alia charitas diligit proximum, quam illa quae diligit Deum. Non ergo alia charitas est*».

<sup>79</sup>) *Tractatus in Evangelium Ioannis* 17, 8 (CC 36, 174. ML 35, 1531): «*Neque enim qui tibi praeciperet dilectionem istam in duobus praeceptis, prius tibi commendaret proximum, et postea deum; sed prius deum, postea proximum*».