

Augustine's View on Women.

Is it meaningful to investigate the thought of an author who lived at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century regarding women? If one expects to find there an answer to modern questions, the answer will be: no. But if one wishes to reconstruct the history which precedes the modern problematic, then such a study can be useful. Any historical reconstruction is very difficult for it supposes the specialization of many sciences, such as history of culture, law, society, philosophy, art, archeology, epigraphy etc. Even then the concrete circumstances of life in antiquity will escape us. Just to know the literary sources is a very demanding task, since they differ so much from each other. They range from a theological treatise to a play and each gives only a limited picture. This is the reason why general statements in this field so easily become superficial statements. It is an arduous task just to render systematically the ideas of one single ancient author, because ancient authors normally did not write in a systematic way.

In many publications, Augustine is represented as the black sheep or scape-goat in questions of feminism or sexuality. He is held responsible for the contempt of women and of sexuality, and also for the fear of both in Western culture. Recently J. Delumeau wrote: "On connaît la constatation humiliée de saint Augustin: 'Inter urinam et faeces nascimur'"¹). Besides the fact that I consider the sentence "We are born in between urine and excrements" rather as realistic than as inspiring fear, I must state that its attribution to Augustine is wrong, and that I was not able to discover its real author. It is not my intention to gloss over the shortcomings of Augustine's thought, but I wish to show what his texts say and what they do not. We have to quote many texts for without texts nothing can be proved. In doing this we must take into account a certain evolution in Augustine himself. Several times he asks his readers to reckon with that evolution. More-

¹) J. DELUMEAU, *La peur en Occident*, Paris 1978, 400: «Attiré par la femme, l'autre sexe est tout autant repoussé par le flux menstruel, les odeurs, les sécrétions de sa partenaire, le liquide amniotique, les expulsions de l'accouchement. On connaît la constatation humiliée de saint Augustin 'Inter urinam et faeces nascimur'».

over, he does not wish that one follows him blindly, since he declares himself frightened by a sentence of Horace: "A word once spoken can never return (to the speaker)":

"I do not wish that someone accepts all my opinions in such a way that he or she follows me blindly, except in those points where the reader has come to the conviction that I was not mistaken. This is the reason why I am now writing books (= the *Retractationes*) in which I revise my own works, in order to show that not even I myself have followed myself in all points. I think that — with the help of God's mercy — I have written books constantly making progress. But I did not start off in perfection, and to claim that I now, in my old age, write perfectly and without any error would be more a sign of conceit than of veracity"²).

The subordination of the weaker sex.

As a child of his time Augustine considered the woman as subordinate to the man. He adopted the prevailing idea of antiquity about the inferior condition of women in society. Valerius Maximus offers a good example of this inferiority:

"The weakness of mind (*imbecillitas mentis*) and the refusal of their desire for hard work ought to admonish women that they should rally all their efforts to work studiously at self-formation"³).

As Augustine does always after his conversion, in the question of subordination of women, he bases himself primarily on the Bible, especially on 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, do honour to your wives as is due to the weaker vessel". In one of his early works, Augustine writes that the man is the more honourable (*honorabilior*) sex⁴). The use of

²) *De dono perseverantiae* 21,55. PL 45,1027-1028: «Quamvis neminem velim sic amplecti omnia mea, ut me sequatur, nisi in iis in quibus me non errasse perspexerit. Nam propterea nunc facio libros, in quibus opuscula mea retractanda suscepi, ut nec meipsum in omnibus me secutum fuisse demonstrarem, sed proficienter me existimo Deo miserante scripsisse, non tamen a perfectione coepisse; quandoquidem arrogantius loquor quam verius, si vel nunc dico me ad perfectionem sine ullo errore scribendi jam in ista aetate venisse». *Epist.* 143,4. CSEL 44,254: «Sed angit me plane Horatiana sententia 'Nescit vox missa reverti'. Hinc est, quod periculosissimarum quaestionum libros de genesi et de trinitate diutius teneo».

³) VALERIUS MAXIMUS, *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri* 9,1,3: «feminas ... imbecillitas mentis et graviorum operum negata affectatio omne studium ad curiosiorem sui cultum hortatur conferre».

⁴) *De div. quaest.* 83, q. 11. CCL 44A, 18: «Hominis autem liberatio in utroque sexu

this word is not frequent. On the other hand, he speaks always of the female sex as weaker, using various terms: *infirmior* (= physically weak), *imbecillior* (= in need of support), *fragilitas* (= frailty), *delicator* (= having a delicate constitution)⁵). Speaking of the weaker sex, Augustine means in the first place physical weakness. He does so particularly in his sermons on the feast of female martyrs. The enemy supposed that Perpetua and Felicitas were not able to endure the hardness and cruelty of persecution because of the weakness of their sex, but he was seriously mistaken⁶).

Besides physical weakness Augustine seems to consider women intellectually inferior to men. In a work which he himself characterizes as sketchy annotations which should still be worked out, he writes:

"There is a natural order among human beings: wives have to serve their husbands, and children their parents. Justice reigns there also, and that justice consists herein that the weaker intellect serves the stronger intellect. The person who prevails intellectually should have a greater dominance. This is a question of justice in all forms of dominance and servitude"⁷).

This is the only text in which Augustine asserts explicitly that women are intellectually inferior to men. Another text regarding this subject is written completely in the conditional mood:

"Eve could have been on a lower intellectual level than Adam, and she could perhaps have lived still according to the corporeal senses... It may be that she had to receive the true knowledge of God through the guidance and the service of her husband"⁸).

debut apparere. Ergo quia virum oportebat suscipere, qui sexus honorabilior est, consequens erat ut feminei sexus liberatio hinc appareret, quod ille vir de femina natus est».

⁵) Some of these expressions apply also to good-class men who never had to work hard: Augustine, *Praeceptum* 3,4 (ed. L. VERHEIJEN, *La Règle de S. Augustin*, Paris 1967, I, 422): «qui venerunt ex moribus delicatoribus».

⁶) S. 282,2,2. PL 38,1285: «... istae tantarum virtutum atque meritorum, non solum feminae, verum etiam mulieres fuerunt. Quarum altera et mater, ut ad infirmitatem sexus impatientior adderetur affectus, ut in omnibus eas hostis attentans, tanquam non valentes dura et crudela persecutionis onera sustinere, cessuras sibi continuo... Sed illae interioris hominis cautissimo et fortissimo robore omnes ejus obtuderunt insidias».

⁷) *Quaest. in Hept.* I,153. CCL 33,59: «Est etiam ordo naturalis in hominibus, ut serviant feminae viris et filii parentibus, quia et illic haec iustitia est, ut infirmior ratio serviat fortiori. Haec igitur in dominationibus et servitutibus clara iustitia est, ut qui excellunt ratione, excellent dominatione».

⁸) *De Gen. ad Litt.* XI, 42(58). CSEL 28¹,377: «... mulier addita est, quae parvi intellectus esset et adhuc fortasse secundum sensum carnis, non secundum spiritum mentis

We see here that Augustine leaves the possibility of intellectual inferiority open, without making any categorical statement.

It is not easy to say whether Augustine considered women intellectually inferior to men yes or not. There are more arguments against than for such an inferiority. In one of his earliest writings, Augustine treats the same question of relationships between husband and wife with those between parents and children, but his answer differs from the above quoted text of the *Quaest. in Heptat.* The term domination is used only for the relationship between parents and children, whereas the relationship between husband and wife is described as "the man being the head of the wife through sincere love"⁹). In his letters and sermons, Augustine clearly considers women as intellectually equal to men. His theological works which are not always easy to understand, are destined to both sexes. Among the nineteen letters written to women, we find not only theological treatises, but also a request to Fabiola to help him in a thorny affair, and the offer made to a certain Maxima to make copies of all his works for her. We see his mother Monnica taking part in the philosophical dialogues at Cassiciacum. When she expresses substantially the same ideas as Cicero, her son praises her:

"Mother, you have attained the top of philosophy"¹⁰).

He esteems her mind (*mens*) perfectly capable of true philosophy. When she asks if it is becoming for women to participate in philosophical discussions, her son refers to the fact that in the past there were also female philosophers, and he adds that her philosophy pleases him very much¹¹). Moreover, Augustine mentions the existence of convents for women where capable women take care of the moral formation of the sisters as well as of their intellectual formation through instruction

viveret ... fortassis illa hoc nondum perceperat, quod fit in agnitione dei et viro regente ac dispensante paulatim fuerat perceptura».

⁹) *De moribus eccl. cath.* I,30,63. PL 32,1336: «Tu feminas viris suis, non ad explendam libidinem, sed ad propagandam prolem et ad rei familiaris societatem, casta et fideli obedientia subijcis. Tu viros conjugibus, non ad illudendum imbecillio rem sexum, sed sinceri amoris legibus praeficis... parentes filiis pia dominatione praeponis».

¹⁰) *De beata vita* 2,10. CCL 29,70-71: «Ipsam, inquam, prorsus, mater, arcem philosophiae tenuisti».

¹¹) *De ordine* I,11,31. CCL 29,105: «Numquidnam in illis quos legis libris etiam feminas umquam audivi in hoc genus disputationis inductas? ... Nam et feminae sunt apud veteres philosophatae et philosophia tua mihi plurimum placet». ib. II,1,1. ib. 106: «tanta mihi mens eius apparuerat, ut nihil aptius verae philosophiae videretur».

(*instruendis mentibus*)¹²). The most explicit text, however, is found in the *Confessions*:

"In her mind regarding intellectual understanding, the woman certainly possesses a nature equal to that of the man"¹³).

In order to demonstrate that Augustine holds a lesser intellectual capacity for women, a number of scholars base themselves on texts in which Augustine elucidates certain oppositions within one and the same human mind. Augustine sets man over against woman as the mind over against the concupiscential faculty, as reason over against soul, as the leading mind over against rational action. They forget that all these texts have a figurative meaning, as we will see later. It is true that one can use a symbol only if it has some ground in reality. The crucial question is then: What is the ground of this figurative speech? According to me, the ground is not intellectual female inferiority, but rather the social inferiority of women.

Female subordination within marriage.

Augustine maintains always that woman as well as man is created by God. The female body is not created by some evil power:

"God himself created the body and the soul of the women, the shape of the members of her body, all her interior organs and all her senses"¹⁴).

There is nothing in the female body that had to be shunned by Jesus Christ¹⁵). God created the woman as a helpmate equal to the man (Gen. 2,18). This help consists primarily in giving birth to children¹⁶).

¹² *De moribus eccl. cath.* I,33,70. PL 32,1340: «... praesunt singulae gravissimae probatissimaeque, non tantum in instituendis componendisque moribus, sed etiam instruendis mentibus peritae ac paratae».

¹³ *Conf.* XIII,32,47. CCL 27,270: «... sic viro factam esse etiam corporaliter feminam, quae haberet quidem in mente rationalis intelligentiae parem naturam».

¹⁴ *De Gen. ad litt.* IX,15 (28). CSEL 28¹,288: «Certissime tamen dixerim... ipsiusque feminae corpus et animam conformationemque membrorum, omnia viscera, sensus omnes et quidquid erat, quo illa et creatura et homo et femina erat, nonnisi illo opere dei factum».

¹⁵ *S.* 51,2,3. PL 38,334: «Tu dicis, ad nascendum utquid elegerit feminam. Respondetur tibi: Imo ad nascendum cur fugeret feminam? Puta me non posse ostendere quid elegerit, ut de femina nasceretur; tu ostende quid fugere in femina debuit... Sed hoc nobis ostendit, ut scilicet in nullo sexu de se desperaret humana creatura».

¹⁶ *De Gen. ad litt.* IX,3 (6). CSEL 28¹,271: «Si autem quaeritur, ad quam rem fieri oportuit hoc adiutorium, nihil aliud probabiliter occurrit quam propter filios procreandos».

We may not be surprised that Augustine insists strongly on procreation. The first reason of this is his discussion with Manicheism which rejected radically procreation. The second reason is that in choosing procreation as the first meaning of the creation of man and woman, Augustine makes an end to his own hesitations. Before 410, he was not so sure that the creation of both sexes had a corporeal goal. He left the question open, and inclined to the opinion that the union of man and woman had possibly a spiritual character, namely the bringing forth of spiritual fruits, i.e. good works done in honour of God¹⁷). The following often-quoted text is to be read in that light:

“If the woman were not created as a help for the man by giving birth to children, for which other kind of help should she then have been created? It was not to help the man in tilling the land, for there (= in paradise) was no labour which required help. If such a help were needed, the help of a man would have been more appropriate. The same can be said of consolation that one needs when loneliness depresses. If it is a question of living together and communication, then the living together of two friends would be preferable to that of man and woman. And if living together of two friends supposes that the one rules and the other obeys — otherwise discord of will can break the peace — even then it was possible to preserve the order within creation. One of the friends could have been created before the other, or the second could have been taken from the first man... If one rejects giving birth to children as the reason why woman was created, I do not see for which other help the woman was made for the man”¹⁸).

The tone of this text is very radical. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to draw conclusions from it too quickly. Elsewhere in his works, Augus-

¹⁷) *De Gen. c. Man.* II,11,15. PL 34,204: «... femina ... facta dicitur in adiutorium viri, ut copulatione spirituali spirituales fetus ederet, id est bona opera divinae laudis».

¹⁸) *De Gen. ad litt.* IX,5 (9). CSEL 28¹,273: «Aut si ad hoc adiutorium gignendi filios non est facta mulier viro, ad quod ergo adiutorium facta est? Si, quae simul operaretur terram, nondum erat labor, ut adiumento indigeret, et, si opus esset, melius adiutorium masculus fieret. Hoc et de solacio dici potest, si solitudinis fortasse taedebat. Quanto enim congruentius ad convivendum et conloquendum duo amici pariter quam vir et mulier habitarent? Quodsi oportebat alium iubendo, alium obsequendo pariter vivere, ne contrariae voluntates pacem cohabitantium perturbarent, nec ad hoc retinendum ordo defuisset, quo prior unus, alter posterior, maxime si posterior ex priore crearetur... Quapropter non invenio, ad quod adiutorium facta sit mulier viro, si pariendi causa subtrahitur». See P. AGAËSSE - A. SOLIGNAC, *La femme, la sexualité et le mariage dans le De Genesi*, in: *Bibliothèque augustinienne* 49 (Paris 1972) 516-530.

tine insists frequently on the consoling role of women and on friendship between married people.

We will speak later of friendship in marriage, and turn now to the question of consolation. Investigating why people choose to be married, Augustine states that marriage remains always a good, be it that some choose it as an obligation, others as a remedy of their infirmity on the sexual level, and still others as a consolation in human existence¹⁹). Very often, he impresses the bad example of Job's wife upon the faithful of Hippo: she failed seriously in her role of helpmate of her husband, for instead of consoling him in his suffering she incited him to rebell against God²⁰). Man and woman have to be a source of consolation for one another even in the sexual domain by meeting one another's sexual desires, so that fidelity among them may be preserved²¹). Consolation means also rest. Among the pleasures in human life which we enjoy licitly, Augustine enumerates: a man seeking rest in his house, in his family, with his wife and with his children²²). If a husband has a good wife, he finds rest in her company; if he has a bad wife, he runs into the streets²³).

The foregoing texts do not hold Augustine back from maintaining the subordination of the wife to her husband for this is the order of creation. A wife has to serve her husband. Female subordination has in the first place a corporeal character: the woman is according to her sex orientated to the man. Augustine bases himself on Gen. 3:16: "You shall direct yourself towards your husband, and he will lord it over you". The natural order is constituted by the order of creation:

"There can be no doubt that the man shall lord it over the woman according to the natural order, rather than vice versa"²⁴).

¹⁹) *De bono vid.* 8,11. CSEL 41,317: «Nuptiarum igitur bonum semper est quidem bonum; sed in populo dei fuit aliquando legis obsequium, nunc est infirmatis remedium, in quibusdam vero humanitatis solacium».

²⁰) *En. 2 in ps.* 29,7. 55,20. 90, s. 1,2. 93,19. 103, s. 4,7. 132,5. CCL 38,179. 39,692-693. 1256. 1320. 40,1526. 1930. *In epist. Joh.* 6,7. PL 35,2023.

²¹) *S.* 51,13,22. PL 38, 345: «Caeterum qui uxoris carnem amplius appetit, quam praescribit limes ille, liberorum procreandorum causa ... Sed si non possunt (aliquando jam ista diximus), exigant debitum; non progrediantur ultra debitores suos. Et femina et vir infirmitatem suam in se consolentur».

²²) *En. in ps.* 40,5. CCL 38,453: «... ad innocentem hominem veniamus; adquiescit in domo sua, in familia sua, in coniuge, in filiis».

²³) *En. in ps.* 35,5. CCL 38,325: «Bonum est ut vel in domo sua requiem habeat. Si autem patitur foris inimicos, intus forte malam uxorem, procedit in publicum».

²⁴) *De nupt. et concup.* 1,9,10. CSEL 42,222: «Nec dubitari potest naturali ordine viros potius feminis quam viris feminas principari».

However, even within the natural order, Augustine makes a distinction between the situation before and after the Fall. In the original order of creation the woman was orientated towards the man, but this was an act of love, and love leaves no room for a domination which is a burden to the other. Burdensome domination is a consequence of the Fall. After the Fall something has changed, although the love command remained:

"It is not fitting to believe that before the Fall the woman was created in such a way that the man should not lord it over her, and she had not to turn towards him by serving him. But the words of Gen. 3:16 can be rightly explained in the following sense: they evoke the idea of a service connected with a certain life situation (*condicio*) rather than that they evoke the idea of a service through love. This life situation can be compared with the service by which later human beings have become the slaves of other human beings, for that service is also a consequence of sin. The apostle says: 'Serve one another in love' (Gal. 5:13), but never he will say: 'Lord it over one another'. Therefore, married people are able to serve one another in love, but the apostle does not allow the woman to lord it over the man (1 Tim. 2:12). God's judgment adjudged rulership rather to the man. But the reason why the husband became the lord of the wife did not lie in her nature, but in her guilt"²⁵).

We see here a radical maintenance of subordination of the woman. However, the distinction between *condicio* (= actual situation, condition, lot) and *natura* (= the original state of things) is not without some importance. Augustine is here probably influenced by Ambrosiaster who writes:

"Because the woman as a person is inferior to the man as a result of a condition of life, not as a result of nature, she is subordinate to the man"²⁶).

²⁵) *De Gen. ad litt.* XI,37 (50). CSEL 28¹,372: «Neque enim et ante peccatum aliter factam fuisse decet credere mulierem, nisi ut vir ei dominaretur et ad eum ipsa serviendo converteretur. Sed recte accipi potest hanc servitutem significatam, quae cuiusdam conditionis est potius quam dilectionis, ut etiam ipsa talis servitus, qua homines hominibus postea servi esse coeperunt, de poena peccati reperiatur exorta. Dixit quidem apostolus: 'per caritatem servite invicem', sed nequaquam diceret 'invicem dominamini'. Possunt itaque coniuges per caritatem servire invicem; sed mulierem non permittit apostolus dominari in virum. Hoc enim viro potius sententia dei detulit et maritum habere dominum meruit mulieris non natura, sed culpa».

²⁶) AMBROSIASTER, *Ad Ef.* 5,33. CSEL 81³, 119: «Mulier autem, quia persona inferior est conditionis causa, non naturae, viro subiecta; timere autem eum iubetur».

Augustine's intention becomes more clear from his comparison with slavery: slavery is not natural; it is an unnatural situation due to the sinfulness of humanity, particularly by its bellicosity. God gave the human being dominance over animals, but not over other human beings:

"A human being shall not dominate another human being... Nobody is the slave of a human being in virtue of the nature in which he has been created originally"²⁷).

The modern reader expects now that Augustine will elaborate his distinction between nature and condition in the sense that the original order between man and woman should be restored by us. But unfortunately he does not do so. The social hierarchy caused by sin, which is in fact a disorder, is for him the real situation of life on earth, and this order ought to be respected:

"Although the differences between nations, life situations and sexes are abolished by the unity of faith, yet these differences remain in existence within our mortal relationships with one another, because our body is still dead because of sin (Rom. 8:10). On our way through this life, we have to keep this order. The apostles too prescribe it: they gave salutary prescriptions how Jews and Greeks had to live with one another according to their national differences, how masters and slaves had to live according to the difference of their social situations, how men and women had to live according to the difference of their sex"²⁸).

Elsewhere we read:

"God submits the female to the male creature, the less powerful to the more powerful being, the more needy to the more rich person"²⁹).

It is evident that such texts have become unacceptable in our day, for

²⁷) *De civ. dei* XIX,15. CCL 48,682: «Rationalem factum ad imaginem suam noluit nisi inrationabilibus dominari, non hominem homini... Nullus autem natura, in qua prius Deus hominem condidit, servus est hominis...».

²⁸) *Ep. ad Gal. exp.* 28. CSEL 84,93: «Tamen quia adhuc mortuum est corpus propter peccatum, differentia ista vel gentium vel conditionis vel sexus iam quidem ablata est ab unitate fidei, sed manet in conversatione mortali eiusque ordinem in huius vitae itinere servandum esse et apostoli praecipunt, qui etiam regulas saluberrimas tradunt, quemadmodum secum vivant pro differentia gentis Iudaei et Graeci et pro differentia conditionis domini et servi et pro differentia sexus viri et uxores».

²⁹) *De Gen. ad litt.* VIII,23 (44). CSEL 28¹,262: «...subdit primitus omnia sibi, deinde creaturam... femineam masculinae, minus valentem valentiori, indigentiori copiosiori».

they promote a status quo of social hierarchy. That is the negative side of these texts. But there is also a positive undertone, namely Augustine's refusal to consider the subordination of one human being to another as something natural, and his view of faith as the abolition of such subordinations. On precisely this point we find a difference of opinion between the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum and Augustine. Julian's thought has a more rationalistic character, and in that line he considered the subordination of women to men as totally natural according to Gen. 3:16. Augustine replies him:

"Why do I need to discuss with you the question whether the domination of the man is to be considered as a punishment for the woman or whether it belongs to the order of nature? In creating the human being God did not mention this order, but He did so in punishing the human being. According to you, God would have spoken these words ... as a command, and not as a judgment"³⁰).

What does the subordinate situation of woman contain? First that she as a servant (*ancilla*) has to serve and to obey her husband as lord (*dominus*)³¹). Augustine refers to the Paulinian text: "The man is the head of the woman" (1 Cor. 11:3 and Eph. 5:23) and also to 1 Peter 3:1.6: "Wives should be obedient to their husbands ... like Sarah, who was obedient to Abraham, and called him her lord".

The wife is not allowed to behave haughtily vis-à-vis her husband, but should follow the example of Christ and Mary who both were a model of humility³²). In his *Confessions*, Augustine portrays his mother Monnica, by telling how she impressed upon her female friends who blamed their husbands' lives, that they had to consider the marriage-contract as an official record whereby they were made servants. But from the same passage it appears that Monnica did not submit herself slavishly to her husband, for when he was angry, she did not resist him; but when he was smoothed and tranquil, she gave an account of her actions³³). These last words show a certain independence of Monnica

³⁰) *C. Jul. o.i.* VI,26. PL 45,1566: «Quid opus est ut tecum inde configam, utrum ista dominatio viri poena sit feminae an ordo naturae? Quem tamen ordinem non commemoravit Deus, quando condidit, sed quando punivit... Prorsus Deus... jubendo non damnando dixerit: 'Ad virum tuum conversio tua, et ipse tui dominabitur».

³¹) *S.* 332,4. PL 38,1463. *S.* 392,4,4. PL 39,1711-1712. In his letters, Augustine addresses also women as *domina*.

³²) *S.* 51,11,18. PL 38,343.

³³) *Conf.* IX,9,19. CCL 27,145: «Sed noverat haec non resistere irato viro, non tantum facto, sed ne verbo quidem. Iam vero refractum et quietum cum opportunum

vis-à-vis her own husband. Unfortunately, no specimen of a marriage-contract of that time has been preserved. From Augustine's texts, however, we can deduce that it contained at least two clauses, namely that procreation was the first goal of marriage and that wives had to be obedient to their husbands. The custom that the man had to buy a wife did not longer exist in Augustine's time, although some authors have drawn this (wrong) conclusion from a text in which Augustine sees the church as a servant ransomed by Christ in order to make her his wife³⁴).

Obedience is not the only duty of the wife. She has also the task to keep the peace among people³⁵). The peace between wife and husband is for Augustine an image of the Spirit of God who brings peace in the human heart. He describes marital peace as follows:

"When two natures are in conflict with one another, then it is a difficult and dangerous job to restore the order. We would have a false peace, if the man were submitted to a domineering woman. The right order exists there where the woman is submitted to the man as master, with the following difference however: man and woman do not have a different nature, for the woman is made out of the man"³⁶).

Moral superiority of women.

In theory it should be so that the man as head of the woman surpasses her by his example of a morally good life. He should be the

viderat, rationem facti sui reddebat, si forte ille inconsideratius commotus fuerat. Denique ... inter amica conloquia illae arguebant maritorum vitam, haec earum linguam, veluti per iocum graviter admonens, ex quo illas tabulas, quae matrimoniales vocantur, recitari audissent, tamquam instrumenta, quibus ancillae factae essent, deputare debuisse».

³⁴) S. 37,6,7. CCL 41,454: «Ipsa enim quamquam mater familias, tamen ancilla se esse non dedignatur. Attendat pretium suum, diligat dominum suum ... tabulas matrimoniales instrumenta emptionis suae deputat».

³⁵) C. *Faust.* XXII,31. CSEL 25¹,625: «Ut cum in ceteris actibus ad humanam pacem pertinentibus mulier viro debeat servitutem, huius unius rei, qua sexus utriusque ... carnali commixtione concernitur, similem in se habeant potestatem vir in uxorem et uxor in virum».

³⁶) *En. in ps.* 143,6. CCL 40,2077: «Non enim contraria natura contra aliam naturam pugnat, sed tamquam in domo maritus et uxor. Si adversus se dissentiant, molestus et periculosus labor; si maritus vincatur et uxor dominetur, pax perversa; si autem uxor marito dominanti subiciatur, pax recta; non tamen aliud ex alia natura, quia ex homine facta mulier viro».

leader and she the companion (*comes*) on their journey towards God³⁷). Augustine interprets in this sense 1 Cor. 11:7: "The woman is man's glory"³⁸). But from his experience as a bishop, he knows all too well that mostly men are not the spiritual leaders of their wives, and that it is women who carry their husbands to a higher moral life. He does not shrink away from lecturing men and to incur their rage:

"Some one will say: 'She is not a whore, but she is my concubine. — You who are saying this, do you have a wife? — Yes, I have. — In that case, whether you will or not, she is a whore. If you have a wife and you have at the same time sexual intercourse with another woman, go, and tell her that the bishop has insulted you. Whosoever she may be, she is a whore'"³⁹).

The bishop finds comfort in the words of Gal. 4:16: "Telling you the truth has made me your enemy":

"If it is necessary, I prefer being your enemy to being an enemy of justice. I impress on your wives to guard you. They are my daughters just as you are my sons... I do not wish that Christian women have patience with their adulterous husbands and remain indifferent in such a situation... One orders a woman to tolerate her adulterous husband. But what kind of justice is this? I ask you: Why? Why? You answer: Because I am a man. But are you truly a man? Then prove it by your strength. Conquer your lust (*libido*). Where is your masculinity if your wife is stronger than you?"⁴⁰).

Although Augustine mentions sometimes the moral weakness of both sexes, he addresses his reproaches particularly to men. They feel themselves superior and think that they can do with impunity all that they

³⁷) *De coni. adult.* II,8,7. CSEL 41,389: «Christianis equidem loquor, qui fideliter audiunt 'Caput mulieris vir', ubi se agnoscunt duces, illas autem comites esse debere».

³⁸) *De cat. rud.* 18,29. CCL 46,154: «Fecit illi etiam adiutorium feminam ... ut haberet et vir gloriam de femina, cum ei praeiret ad deum, seque illi praeberet imitandum in sanctitate atque pietate».

³⁹) *S.* 224,3,3. ed. LAMBOT, *Rev. Bén.* 79(1969)203: «Dicere habet nescio quis: 'Sed meretrix non est, concubina mea est'. Habes uxorem, qui hoc dicis? Habeo. Illa ergo, velis nolis, meretrix est. Vade, et dic quia iniuriam tibi fecit episcopus, si habes uxorem, et alia tecum dormit. Quaecumque illa est, meretrix est». *S.* 9,4. CCL 41,113: «Timeo ne ego ipse adversarius sim quibusdam quia haec loquor. Quid ad me pertinet? Fortem me faciat qui terret ut loquar».

⁴⁰) *S.* 392,4,4-5,5. PL 39,1711-1712: «Si necesse est ut inimicus sim vobis, melius vobis opto esse quam iustitiae. Commendo vos custodiendos etiam uxoribus vestris. Filiae meae sunt, sicut et vos filii mei estis... Nolo talem patientiam habeant christianae mulieres; prorsus zelent viros suos... Et imperatur feminae ut ferat adulterum virum! O iustitia! Quare, rogo te? Quare? Quia ego sum vir. Vir es? In fortitudine tua probemus, quia vir es. Vir es? Vince libidinem. Quomodo vir, quo uxor est fortior?».

want, whereas they are unreasonably exacting vis-à-vis their wives. They excuse themselves by saying that their body makes fidelity impossible, as if "women do not have a body or do not experience the passionate ardour of youth"⁴¹). Nevertheless, women show a greater self-control and conjugal fidelity:

"It is deplorable that many husbands are surpassed by their wives. Wives remain chaste and men do not even want to be chaste... The wife struggles and conquers (her passions)... Man, go to school to her in order to learn that a chaste life is possible, for a woman is able to be chaste"⁴²).

The male's pretension "I am unable to be chaste" is in Augustine's eyes something criminal and discriminating. A woman can be chaste; does she not have a body?⁴³). Therefore, because of their higher moral dignity women possess masculine qualities:

"There is also something masculine in women, by which they are able to subject their feminine lust, to serve Christ and to control their concupiscence"⁴⁴).

Augustine praises the masculine mind (*virilis animus*) and the strength of mind (*virtus mentis*) of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, and he finds that men would do better to follow these women than to admire them⁴⁵).

The conclusions from the so far quoted texts are:

- 1) Augustine maintains strongly the social and physical subordination of women.

⁴¹) *De coni. adult.* II,20,21. CSEL 41,408: «Neque enim carnem non habent feminae ... Quin immo cum a feminis utique habentibus carnem tantam flagitant castitatem, ut, quando ab uxoribus diutissime peregrinantur, velint eas ab adulterino concubitu incontaminatas fervorem transigere iuventutis». Augustine does not agree with Julian who wishes to deny the presence of libido in women: *C. Jul.* V,23. PL 44,798.

⁴²) S. 132, 2,2. PL 38,735: «Et tamen quod dolendum est, multi viri a feminis vincuntur. Servant feminae castitatem, quam viri servare nolunt... Femina pugnat, et vincit... Quia vero illa potest, doceat te quia fieri potest».

⁴³) S. 9,12. CCL 41,130: «Scelus est ut vir dicat: 'Non possum'. Quod femina potest, vir non potest? Quid enim, illa carnem non portat?».

⁴⁴) *De vera rel.* 41,78. CCL 32,239: «Hoc et feminis praecipi potest non maritali, sed fraterno iure, quo iure in Christo nec masculus nec femina sumus. Habent enim et illae virile quiddam, unde femineas subiugent voluptates, unde Christo serviant et imperent cupiditati».

⁴⁵) S. 280,1,1. PL 38,1281: «Quid enim gloriosius his feminis, quas viri mirantur facilius quam imitantur? ... secundum interiorem hominem, nec masculus, nec femina inveniuntur; ut etiam in his quae sunt feminae corpore, virtus mentis sexum carnis abscondat».

- 2) It is very questionable, however, whether he assumes also an intellectual inferiority of women.
- 3) His appreciation of the moral superiority of women is incontestable. Especially this last point shows that it is incorrect to say that Augustine depicts women as the great seducers. Although Eve was seduced first by the snake, this does not mean that Adam was less guilty than she was⁴⁶). Some authors refer here to the following text:

“In every woman, whether it be in a wife or in a mother, one should shun Eve”⁴⁷),

but they forget to mention the context of these words. They appear in a letter in which Augustine protests against an excessive mother-fixation. A “possessive” mother does not give to her son the freedom to follow his own vocation. The son has to show thankfulness and love for his mother, but he should not allow to be seduced by her. Also men are accused of seduction by Augustine. He distributes fairly the roles of the paradise story over both sexes:

“When the wife seduces her husband to an evil action, she is for him an Eve. When the husband seduces his wife to an evil action, he is for her a devil. Either she is for him an Eve, or he is for her a snake”⁴⁸).

Woman as the image of God.

“In many respects animals surpass us, human beings, but not in intellect, in which we are created in the image of God”⁴⁹).

All human beings, even the most wicked slave⁵⁰), are images of God in

⁴⁶) *De civ. dei* XIV,11 (2). CCL 48,433: «... nec ideo minus reus, si sciens prudensque peccavit. Unde et apostolus non ait: ‘Non peccavit’, sed: ‘Non est seductus’».

⁴⁷) *Epist.* 243,10. CSEL 57,577: «Sed (mater) non vult sequi? Non impediatur. Non vult converti in melius? Cave, ne in deterius pervertat et evertat. Quid interest, utrum in uxore an in matre, dum tamen Eva in qualibet muliere caveatur?».

⁴⁸) *En. in ps.* 93,20. CCL 39,1321-1322: «Quare non facis quod faciunt et alii? ... Et hoc forte non in platea tibi dicit amicus, sed in domo uxor, aut forte maritus uxori fideli bonae et sanctae, deceptor ipsius. Si mulier marito, Eva est illi; si vir uxori, diabolus est illi; aut ipsa tibi Eva est, aut tu illi serpens es».

⁴⁹) *En. in ps.* 54,3. CCL 39,657: «Porro autem, carissimi, meminisse debemus ad imaginem Dei nos esse factos, nec alibi quam in ipso intellectu. Nam in multis rebus a bestiis superamur; ubi autem homo ad imaginem Dei factum se novit, ibi aliquid in se agnoscit amplius esse quam datum est pecoribus».

⁵⁰) *En. in ps.* 96,12. CCL 39,1364: «Quando irasceris nequissimo servo tuo, hoc nomen illi imponis: ‘Satanas, diabolus’; hoc illi dicis. Fortasse in hoc erras, quia homini hoc dicis, et immoderata ira raperis ad conviciandam imaginem Dei».

virtue of their rational mind through which they are capable of distinguishing good from evil, justice from injustice, truth from falsehood⁵¹). The image of God is not situated in the body; it is something interior, there where faith, hope and love reside⁵²). Man and woman do not differ in the spiritual character of their common human nature, but they differ bodily:

"In the original situation of the human being, the woman also possessed her own mind, and certainly this mind was rational, because she too was a human being. She too was created in the image of God because of her mind. In view of the unity of the alliance (between man and woman) Holy Scripture declares: 'God created the human being (*homo*) in the image of God' (Gen. 1:27)"⁵³).

Some years earlier Augustine wrote:

"Which person somewhat instructed in the Catholic doctrine, does not know that it is in the body that some are male and some female, not in the highest aspect of the mind (*spiritus mentis*)⁵⁴) in which we are renewed after the image of God (Eph. 4:23)? Elsewhere the apostle teaches once more that God is the maker of both sexes, saying: 'Neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man by the woman. But all things are of God' (1 Cor. 11:11-12)"⁵⁵).

⁵¹) *En. 2 in ps. 29,2*. CCL 38,176: «Quia intellegit et sapit, quia discernit bonum a malo; in hoc factus est ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei». *En. in ps. 42,6*. CCL 39,479: «Ergo intellegimus habere nos aliquid ubi imago Dei est, mentem scilicet atque rationem... Ipsa est qua capimus iustum et iniustum; ipsa est qua discernimus verum a falso».

⁵²) *En. in ps. 48, s. 2,11*. CCL 39,574: «Imago Dei intus est, non est in corpore ... ubi est fides, ubi est spes vestra, ubi caritas vestra, ibi habet Deus imaginem suam».

⁵³) *De Gen. ad litt. III,22(34)*. CSEL 28¹,89: «... sic et in ipsa prima conditione hominis secundum id, quod et femina homo erat, habebat utique mentem suam eandemque rationalem, secundum quam ipsa quoque facta est ad imaginem dei. Sed propter unitatem coniunctionis, fecit deus, inquit, hominem ad imaginem dei. Ac ne quisquam putaret solum spiritum hominis factum, quamvis secundum solum spiritum fieret ad imaginem dei, fecit illum, inquit, masculum et feminam, ut iam etiam corpus factum intellegatur».

⁵⁴) For Augustine *spiritus* is a general term, and *mens* a further specification of the human mind; the expression *spiritus mentis* indicates the most spiritual aspect of the human being. See P. AGAËSSE, *Anima, animus, mens, spiritus*, in: *Bibliothèque augustinienne* 16 (Paris 1955) 581-583, and: 'Spiritus' dans le livre XII du De Genesi, in: *Bibliothèque augustinienne* 49 (Paris 1972) 559-566.

⁵⁵) *C. Faust. XXIV,2*. CSEL 25¹,723-724: «Nam quis catholica veritate instructus ignorat secundum corpus esse alios homines masculos, alias feminas, non secundum spiritum mentis, in quo renouamur secundum imaginem dei? Verumtamen quia utrumque

We mentioned already Augustine's statement in the *Confessions* that the woman by nature possesses a mind equal to that of the man⁵⁶). Referring to Eph. 4:23-24: "You must be renewed in the highest aspect of your mind, and you must put on the new human being that has been created after God", Augustine comments:

"What? Do women not possess this renewal of the mind in which the image of God resides? No. Who can contend something like that?"⁵⁷).

As long as Augustine sticks to the text of Genesis, he has no difficulty to maintain the image of God for women. But problems arise when he has to explain 1 Cor. 11:7: "A man, however, should not cover his head, since he is the image and the glory of God; but woman is man's glory".

Why does Paul call only the man image of God, and not the woman also? As usual Augustine tries to do justice to both Scriptural texts, and to reconcile them. He bases himself on Gen. as an incontestable affirmation that human nature, which is but complete in both sexes, has been made in the image of God, and that one cannot exclude woman, when the question is to understand the image of God. How then can Paul mention man alone as the image of God?⁵⁸). Augustine solves this problem by stating that Paul uses figurative speech (*figura* = a rhetorical technical term: a figure of speech which contains allusions to another reality)⁵⁹). Something that takes place on a bodily level (*in corpore*),

deus fecit, rursum idem apostolus testis est, ubi dicit: 'Neque mulier sine viro neque vir sine muliere in domino; sicut enim mulier ex viro, ita et vir per mulierem; omnia autem ex deo'.

⁵⁶) *Conf.* XIII,32,47. CCL 27,270. See note 13.

⁵⁷) *De opere monach.* 32,40. CSEL 41,594: «Renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestrae et induite novum hominem, eum qui secundum deum creatus est'. Quid ergo? Mulieres non habent hanc innovationem mentis, ubi est imago dei? Quis hoc dixerit?».

⁵⁸) *De Trin.* XII,7,10. CCL 50,364: «Sed videndum est quomodo non sit contrarium quod dicit apostolus non mulierem sed virum esse imaginem dei huic quod scriptum est in genesi: 'Fecit deus hominem ad imaginem dei; fecit eum masculum et feminam; fecit eos et benedixit eos'. Ad imaginem quippe dei naturam ipsam humanam factam dicit quae sexu utroque completur, nec ab intellegenda imagine dei separat feminam». See my article: Woman as the image of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate* XII, in: *Signum Pietatis. Festgabe für C.P. Mayer OSA zum 60. Geburtstag*. Herausg. von A. ZUMKELLER. Würzburg 1989, 267-288.

⁵⁹) *De util. cred.* 3,5. CSEL 25¹,8: «Secundum allegoriam (ergo traditur), cum docetur non ad litteram esse accipienda quaedam, quae scripta sunt, sed figurate intellegenda». *De doct. christ.* III,5,9. CCL 32,82: «... cavendum est, ne figuratam

such as the covering of the head, alludes to something that takes place on a spiritual level (*in mente*). The latter level is to be found in the human mind, where we discover distinct activities or aspects: one activity consists in giving guidance, and the other in being guided. Only woman can symbolize the aspect of being guided, for she is sexually subordinate to the man. That a symbol is at stake, follows clearly from the fact that both activities are found in every human mind, in that of a man as well as in that of a woman. Man and woman have the task to keep the right order of the mind, i.e. not to allow that the lower activity domineers over the higher one.

In his oldest interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:7, Augustine starts from the tripartition: mind-soul-body. The mind has to lead the soul (= *pars animalis*, the general life-principle). The woman is an example of this reality, since she is subordinate to the man. Even in this early text, Augustine cautions that the control of the mind over the soul must take place in every human being⁶⁰). We find the same reasoning in a subsequent text. After having stated that also woman is the image of God, Augustine declares that because of her bodily sexual characteristics she signifies the concupiscential aspect of the human being⁶¹), which must be subordinate to the mind:

locutionem ad litteram accipias». See E. AUERBACH, *Figura*, in: *Archivum Romanicum* 22(1938) 437-489. C.P. MAYER, *Die Zeichen in der geistigen Entwicklung und in der Theologie Augustins II*, Würzburg 1974, 338: «Wir haben also im Grunde genommen nur zwei Weisen der Textinterpretation bei Augustin, eine eigentliche (*proprie*) oder wörtliche (*ad litteram*) und eine übertragene (*figurata*) oder geistige (*ad spiritum*)». Suzanne POQUE, *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d'Augustin d'Hippone I*, Paris 1984, p. xviii: «'Image' désigne un rapport, mais aussi témoigne d'un écart, avec le réel concerné ... Cependant une fonction pleinement symbolique est assumée par l'image linguistique, en ce qu'elle est présentation de deux réalités différentes, qu'unit entre elles une relation parfois étroite, parfois ténue ...».

⁶⁰) *De Gen. c. Man.* II,11,15-12,16. PL 34,204-205: «... virilis ratio subjugaret sibi animalem partem suam, per quod adiutorium imperaret corpori. Ad hujus rei exemplum femina facta est, quam rerum ordo subjugat viro; ut quod in duobus hominibus evidentiis apparet, id est in masculo et femina, etiam in uno homine considerari possit: ut appetitum animae ... habeat mens interior tanquam virilis ratio subjugatum ... Ipsa enim cognitio, qua intelligitur in nobis aliud esse quod ratione dominetur, aliud quod rationi obtemperet; ipsa ergo cognitio veluti effectio mulieris est de costa viri, propter conjunctionem significandam».

⁶¹) See G. BONNER, *Libido and concupiscentia in St. Augustine*, in: *Studia Patristica VI* (ed. F.L. Cross), Berlin 1962, 303-314. *Concupiscentia* and *cupiditas* do not have always a negative meaning in Augustine: *En. in ps.* 118, s. 8,3. CCL 40, 1687: «multa alia reperiuntur bonae concupiscentiae testimonia». *C. duas epist. Pelag.* II,17 and 21. CSEL 60,479 and 482: «bona cupiditas».

“That what mind and concupiscence are in one single human being, where the first has to give guidance and the second has to be guided, the first has to dominate and the second has to be submitted, is symbolized in two human persons, man and woman”⁶²).

Later texts show an evolution in Augustine. The woman is no longer called a symbol of the soul or of concupiscence. Now he considers her as a symbol of an activity within the human mind itself. I think that the reason of this evolution is the fact that the former comparisons (with soul and concupiscence) can easily lead to misunderstanding, since they do not express sufficiently the natural equality between man and woman. Men and women possess the same intellectual nature, as we have seen in the *Confessions*. But even there, he says that because of her sex woman is subject to the man in like manner (*quemadmodum*) as the appetite of acting receives the skill of right-doing from the highest aspect of the mind. Something new is here in that rational activity forms part of the mind itself, be it as subordinate to a still higher intellectual activity, as (*tanquam*) the woman is subordinate to the man⁶³). The terms *quemadmodum* and *tanquam* indicate clearly a comparison, and nothing more.

In his great commentary on Genesis, Augustine specifies further the different mental activities: on the one hand we have the contemplation of eternal truth, and on the other hand the administration of temporal reality. Augustine calls the explanation of 1 Cor. 11:7 based

⁶²) *De opere monach.* 32,40. CSEL 41,593-594: «... ubi non est masculus neque femina et non intellegunt secundum carnalis sexus concupiscentiam hoc esse dictum, quia in interiore homine, ubi renovamur in novitate mentis nostrae, nullus sexus huius modi est... Illud ergo, quod de non velando capite viris praecipitur, in corpore quidem figuratur, sed in mente agitur, ubi est imago et gloria dei... Renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestrae et induite novum hominem, eum qui secundum deum creatus est. Quid ergo? Mulieres non habent hanc innovationem mentis, ubi est imago dei? Quis hoc dixerit? Sed corporis sui sexu non eam significant; propterea velari iubentur. Illam quippe significant partem eo ipso, quo mulieres sunt, quae concupiscentialis dici potest, cui mens dominatur, etiam ipsa subdita deo suo, quando rectissime et ordinatissime vivitur. Quod ergo est in uno homine mens et concupiscentia — illa regit, haec regitur; illa dominatur, haec subditur — hoc in duobus hominibus, viro et muliere, secundum sexum corporis figuratur».

⁶³) *Conf.* XIII,32,47 and 34,49. CCL 27,270-272: «Et quemadmodum in eius anima aliud est, quod consulendo dominatur, aliud, quod subditur ut obtemperet, sic viro factam esse etiam corporaliter feminam, quae haberet quidem in mente rationalis intelligentiae parem naturam, sexu tamen corporis ita masculino sexui subiceretur, quemadmodum subicitur appetitus actionis ad concipiendam de ratione mentis recte agendi sollertiam ... mentem ... renovasti ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam praestantique intellectui rationabilem actionem tamquam viro feminam subdidisti».

upon this distinction of mental activities a very subtle one. Moreover, he thinks that the foresaid subdivision of mental activities does not do justice to the idea of the image of God, for a human being is image of God only in the most spiritual activity of the mind, i.e. in the contemplation of divine truth. Therefore Augustine cautions: it is true that Paul calls only the man image of God, but he does this merely "as a *figura* of this reality (= the subordination of the mental activities)". And he continues: although two persons are used as symbols, the point is the duality within the mind of every person, since everybody's mind possesses the capacity of contemplation and action. Thus woman is not excluded from the image of God, for

"the woman also has to be renewed in the highest aspect of the mind unto the knowledge of God after the image of Him who created her (Col. 3:10)"⁶⁴.

We see in this text that Augustine keeps a certain critical distance regarding this explanation of 1 Cor. 11:7 which he describes rather as the opinion of others⁶⁵).

In *De Trinitate*, however, he adopts it as his personal opinion. One passage in that book has given much offence and is sometimes qualified as a "disastrous interpretation":

"(The book Genesis) says that human nature itself, which is complete in both sexes, has been made after the image of God, and

⁶⁴) *De Gen. ad litt.* III,22(34). CSEL 28¹,88-89: «Licet enim subtilissime disseratur ipsam mentem hominis, in qua factus est ad imaginem dei, quandam scilicet rationalem vitam, distribui in aeternae contemplationis veritatem et in rerum temporalium administrationem, atque ita fieri quasi masculum et feminam illa parte consulente, hac obtemperante; in hac tamen distributione non recte dicitur imago dei, nisi illud, quod inhaeret contemplandae incommutabili veritati. In cuius rei figura Paulus apostolus virum tantum dicit imaginem et gloriam dei ... Itaque quamvis hoc in duobus hominibus diversi sexus exterius secundum corpus figuratum sit, quod etiam in una hominis interius mente intellegitur, tamen et femina, quia corpore femina est, renovatur etiam ipsa in spiritu mentis suae in agnitionem dei secundum imaginem eius, qui creavit, ubi non est masculus et femina. Sicut enim ab hac gratia renovationis et reformatione imaginis dei non separantur feminae, quamvis in sexu corporis earum aliud figuratum sit, secundum quod vir solus dicitur esse imago ... dei, sic... et femina ... quoque facta est ad imaginem dei». ib. XI,42,58. ib. 377: «Sic enim ait: 'Vir quidem non debet velare caput, cum sit imago et gloria dei; mulier autem gloria viri est', non quo mens feminae eandem imaginem capere non possit, cum in illa gratia nos dicat nec masculum esse nec feminam».

⁶⁵) *De Gen. ad litt.* VI,7(12). CSEL 28¹,178: «... sexus ipse masculi et feminae nisi in corporibus esse non potest. Quod si quisquam secundum intellectum et actionem tamquam utrumque sexum in una anima accipiendum putaverit...».

it does not exclude woman from being understood as the image of God... How then did the apostle declare that man is the image of God, and consequently is forbidden to cover his head, whereas a woman is not, and on this account is commanded to cover hers (1 Cor. 11:7)? The solution, I think, lies in that which I already said when discussing the nature of the human mind: the woman together with the man is the image of God, so that the whole substance (= the whole human nature, man and woman) is one image. But when one distributes functions and she is assigned as a helpmate, a function which pertains to her alone, she is not the image of God. However what pertains to man alone, he is the image of God just as fully and completely as he is joined with the woman into one. We have said the same regarding the nature of the human mind: if as a whole it contemplates the truth, it is the image of God. But when something of the mind is detached and a part of its attention is diverted to the handling of temporal things, it is not the image of God. Nevertheless that part which consults the truth is the image of God, but that other part, which is directed to the handling of inferior things, is not the image of God... Rational action ... ought to have a power over its head, and this is indicated by the veil which signifies that action ought to be kept in check"⁶⁶).

If one reads this text isolated from its context, it would be possible to draw the conclusion that the woman is the image of God only together with the man, but not by herself personally as Rosemary Ruether does indeed: "Woman, by herself, is not this image, but only when taken together with the male, who is her 'head'"⁶⁷). Has Augustine

⁶⁶) *De Trin.* XII,7,10. CCL 50,364: «Ad imaginem quippe dei naturam ipsam humanam factam dicit (in genesi) quae sexu utroque completur, nec ab intellegenda imagine dei separat feminam... Quomodo ergo per apostolum audivimus virum esse imaginem dei unde caput velare prohibetur, mulierem autem non et ideo ipsa hoc facere iubetur nisi, credo, illud esse quod iam dixi cum de natura humanae mentis agerem, mulierem cum viro suo esse imaginem dei ut una imago sit tota illa substantia; cum autem ad adiutorium distribuitur, quod ad eam ipsam solam attinet non est imago dei; quod autem ad virum solum attinet imago dei est tam plena atque integra quam in unum coniuncta muliere? Sicut de natura humanae mentis diximus quia et si tota contempletur veritatem, imago dei est, et cum ex ea distribuitur aliquid et quadam intentione derivatur ad actionem rerum temporalium, nihilominus ex qua parte conspectam consulit veritatem imago dei est; ex qua vero intenditur in agenda inferiora non est imago dei... Quia vero illi rationali actioni quae in rebus corporalibus temporalibusque versatur periculosa est nimia in inferiora progressio, debet habere potestatem super caput, quod indicat velamentum quo significatur esse cohibenda». See also P. AGAËSSE - A. SOLIGNAC, La doctrine augustinienne de l'image et la tradition patristique, and: L'âme image de Dieu, in: Bibliothèque augustinienne 48 (Paris 1972) 622-633.

⁶⁷) Rosemary RUETHER, *Religion and Sexism*, New York 1974, 156: «Inexplicably, Augustine must also affirm that Eve, too, has a rational nature, being likewise a

abandoned his symbolic interpretation, and did he adopt a realistic one? I do not think so. The difference between this and other Augustinian texts is that Augustine, in paragraph 10, does not explicitly mention that this interpretation is to be understood in a symbolic sense, but does so only later on in paragraphs 11 and 12:

"Paul speaks in a figurative and mystical sense about the obligation for a woman to veil her head. His words would have no meaning at all, unless they refer to some hidden mystery (*secretum sacramenti*). For as not only true reason, but also the authority of the apostle declares that the human being was not made after the image of God according to the form of the body ... or according to any part of the soul, but according to the rational mind where the knowledge of God can reside... According to this renewal (mentioned in Eph. 4:23-24 and Col. 3:9-10) we also become the children of God through the baptism of Christ... Who, then, would exclude women from this fellowship, since they are with us co-heirs of grace?... 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). Have believing women, therefore, lost their bodily sex? No. But they are renewed after the image of God there where is no sex... But because the woman differs from the man by her bodily sex, she can in conformity with religious custom symbolize by her corporeal veil ... that the image of God does not remain except in that part of the human mind in which it clings to the contemplation and inspiration of the eternal values (*rationes*). And, as is evident, not only men but also women possess this capacity"⁶⁸).

compound of spirit and body. Yet in relation to man she stands for body vis-à-vis male spirit. Moreover, Augustine persists in calling this latter her 'nature', not only with a view to sin but in the order of nature as well. Augustine defines the male as, alone, the full image of God. Woman, by herself, is not this image, but only when taken together with the male, who is her 'head'. For a more differentiated approach see Kari BØRRESEN, *Imago Dei, privilège masculin? Interprétation augustinienne et pseudo-augustinienne de Gen. 1,27 et 1 Cor. 11,7*, in: *Augustinianum* 25 (1985) 213-234.

⁶⁸) *De Trin.* XII,7, 11-12. CCL 50,366-367: «... apostolus ... ideo figurate ac mystice quia de velando muliebri capite loquebatur, quod nisi ad aliquod secretum sacramenti referatur inane remanebit... Sicut enim non solum veracissima ratio sed etiam ipsius apostoli declarat auctoritas, non secundum formam corporis... neque secundum quamlibet animi partem sed secundum rationalem mentem ubi potest esse agnitio dei hominem factum ad imaginem eius qui creavit eum. Secundum hanc autem renovationem efficimur etiam filii dei per baptismum Christi ... Quis est ergo qui ab hoc consortio feminas alienet cum sint nobiscum gratiae cohaeredit... non est iudeus neque graecus, non est servus neque liber, non est masculus et femina; omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu? Numquidnam igitur fideles feminae sexum corporis amiserunt? ... ibi renovantur ad imaginem dei ubi sexus nullus est... Sed quia sexu corporis distat a viro,

The last sentence puts beyond doubt that man and woman equally are the image of God. It shows also that neither the man nor the woman is the image of God on account of the body or the sex. Moreover, the woman is here not taken together with the man, but she is considered as an individual person. This being so, how should we interpret Augustine's statement:

"Taken together with the man, the woman is the image of God ... as a helpmate for the man she is not the image of God"?

In other words, why can a man fully symbolize the image of God, and a woman cannot? The answer is to be sought in the fact that the image of God consists in the highest activity of the mind, i.e. in the contemplation of the divine, and this climax of human life is incompatible with subordination. One cannot impose limits to the contemplation of the divine, for it is God-oriented, and there is no authority above God. On the contrary, the part of the mind which is diverted to the government of temporal actions needs an authority over it, otherwise it could be absorbed by inferior realities. This subordination within the mind (present in every single human being) can be symbolized by man and woman, since woman is socially subordinate to man according to Augustine. The guiding man and the guided woman are symbols of the hierarchical order which reigns between contemplation and action. This is the figurative sense mentioned again and again by Augustine. The mistake made by many modern authors is that they confuse the symbolic and the realistic levels. Augustine does not deny that the woman personally and realistically is the image of God. This is confirmed by two other passages of the same book:

"This discussion ... must only be listened to ... in order to understand that the apostle ... intended something (= the tension between contemplation and action) to be sought in each individual human being"⁶⁹),

and:

rite potuit in eius corporali velamento figurari pars illa rationis quae ad temporalia gubernanda deflectitur ut non maneat imago dei nisi ex qua parte mens hominis aeternis rationibus conspiciendis vel consulendis adhaerescit, quam non solum masculos sed etiam feminas habere manifestum est».

⁶⁹) *De Trin.* XII,12,19. CCL 50,373: «... quamvis in diverso sexu duorum hominum aliquid tamen significare voluisse quod in uno homine quaeretur».

"Therefore, in their minds (= of man and woman) a common nature is recognized"⁷⁰).

Another important idea occurs in *De Trinitate*. Augustine refuses to compare woman with sensory activity:

"It does not escape me that some eminent defenders of the Catholic faith before me ... asserted that the man was the mind, but that the woman was the bodily sense".

He rejects this view on account of Gen. 2:20 which says that woman is created as a helpmate "equal to the man". Bodily sense does not express this equality, for it is common to us and the beasts. Augustine prefers something that transcends the animal level, namely the human mind. Woman is the symbol of something within the human mind. A second reason for the rejection of this opinion is that the serpent is a much more appropriate symbol of bodily sense, since Gen. 3:1 tells us that the serpent is the most crafty of all the beasts⁷¹).

From an analysis of *De Trinitate* book XII it appears clearly that Augustine considers woman as a symbol of the active aspect of the mind on account of her subordination to the man. Although his conception of social female subordination is no longer acceptable for us today, his description of the active aspect of the mind is neither something banal nor is it so denigrating for women as we may think. The most important human activities are science (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*). Science however is subordinate to wisdom. Wisdom is directed to the contemplation of the divine, while science — without which life on earth becomes impossible — is directed to the good use of this world. Science is needed to acquire the virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice. There is no morally good life without these virtues. Consequently, rational knowledge of temporal realities is very valuable, and its importance increases if one takes into account

⁷⁰) *De Trin.* XII,8,13. CCL 50,367: «Ergo in eorum mentibus communis natura cognoscitur».

⁷¹) *De Trin.* XII,13,20. CCL 50,373: «Nec me fugit quosdam qui fuerunt ante nos egregii defensores catholicae fidei... in homine uno... virum mentem, mulierem vero dixisse corporis sensum... In omnibus bestiis et volatilibus scriptum est non esse inventum viro adiutorium simile illi et tunc est ei mulier facta de latere. Propter quod ego non putavi pro muliere sensum corporis esse ponendum... sensumque corporis magis pro serpente intellegendum existimavi». Augustine has here in mind AMBROSE, *De parad.* 2,11-3,12 and 15,37. CSEL 32¹, 271-272 and 331.

that only few people are capable to attain the highest form of contemplation. Woman is the symbol of this science⁷²).

A last remark regarding Augustine's interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:7 is that we may not take it too rigidly, for he himself relativizes it:

"Whether Paul's words are explained in this, or that, or in some other way ... one thing is clear: our mind has to be formed progressively by God's eternity, truth and love"⁷³).

And more explicitly in the following text:

"The words 'He created them male and female' are immediately followed by this statement: 'And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and hold sway over it'. It is true that we can quite properly give this a spiritual meaning. However, we cannot interpret 'male' and 'female' as something similar to that which we find also in one human being, since there is in the individual a ruling element and a ruled one. But as it is evident from their sexual difference, man and woman are created so as to increase and to multiply by begetting children ... When the Lord was asked whether it was permitted to dismiss a wife for any cause whatever (Mt. 19:3) ... his reply had nothing to do with the mind which commands and the body which obeys, or the rational soul which rules and the irrational concupiscence which is ruled, or the contemplative virtue which is preeminent and the active virtue which is subject to it, or the intellectual power of the mind and the body's senses. The Lord's answer explicitly concerned the marriage bond which binds the two sexes to one another"⁷⁴).

⁷²) *De Trin.* XII,13,21-15,25. CCL 50,374-380. See also *De Trin.* XIII, 19,24. CCL 50*,415-417: «Si ita inter se distant haec duo ut sapientia divinis, scientia humanis attributa sit rebus, utrumque agnosco in Christo... Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est... Nec ista duo sic accipiamus quasi non liceat dicere vel istam sapientiam quae in rebus humanis est vel illam scientiam quae in divinis». G. MADEC, *Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra. Le principe de cohérence de la doctrine augustinienne*, in: *Recherches augustinienes* 10 (1975) 77-85.

⁷³) *De Trin.* XII,13,21. CCL 50,374: «Sed sive isto sive illo sive aliquo alio modo accipiendum sit quod apostolus virum dixit imaginem et gloriam dei, mulierem autem gloriam viri, apparet tamen cum secundum deum vivimus, mentem nostram in invisibilia eius intexam ex eius aeternitate, veritate, caritate proficenter debere formari».

⁷⁴) *De civ. dei* XIV,22. CCL 48,444: «Nam cum scriptura dixisset: 'masculum et feminam fecit eos', continuo subdidit: 'Et benedixit eos Deus dicens: Crescite et multiplicamini et implete terram et dominamini eius' et cetera. Quae omnia quamquam non inconvenienter possint etiam ad intellectum spiritalem referri, masculum tamen et feminam non sicut simile aliquid etiam in homine uno intellegi potest, quia videlicet in eo aliud est quod regit, aliud quod regitur; sed sicut evidentissime apparet in diversi sexus corporibus, masculum et feminam ita creatos, ut prolem generando crescerent... Neque enim de spiritu qui imperat et carne quae obtemperat, aut de animo rationali qui regit et

A final argument why we should not attach a realistic significance to the male as a symbol of the mind's contemplative activity, is the fact that Augustine refers also to women as symbols of contemplative life. Mary and Rachel are for him archetypes of contemplation, in opposition to Martha and Lia who designate active life⁷⁵).

My conclusion is that Augustine never denied women the dignity of the image of God, and this not only on the level of grace (there is neither man nor woman in Christ), but also on the level of creation (the woman possesses the same rational mind as the man). Therefore, he did not shrink from attributing female symbols to God:

“(The psalmist) made God father; he made God also mother. God is father because He created, because He calls, because He commands, because He governs. God is mother, because God cherishes, because God nourishes, because God suckles, because God embraces⁷⁶).

The female sex is no defect, but nature.

We find some ancient authors who assumed that after all the woman had to be a man. One supposes that they were influenced by Gnosticism or Neoplatonism⁷⁷). But it is also possible that this opinion goes back to Aristotle who considered “the female as an imperfectly developed male” (in the middle ages this became: *mas occasionatus*). According to Aristotle both the male and the female are principles of the process of procreation, in which the male is the forming principle and the woman procures the material elements. The menstruation blood possesses only the nutritive soul, whereas the male seed is constituting the soul invested with apperception and sensitivity. Conse-

inrationali cupiditate quae regitur, aut de virtute contemplativa quae excellit et de activa quae subditur, aut de intellectu mentis et sensu corporis, sed aperte de vinculo coniugali, quo invicem sibi uterque sexus obstringitur». Cf. *De contin.* 9,23. CSEL 41,169: «Sicut ecclesia, inquit, subdita est Christo, ita et mulieres viris suis in omnibus... Nec tamen mulier a corpore vel carne accepit exemplum, ut ita esset subdita viro, sicut spiritui caro».

⁷⁵) Anne-Marie LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Les deux vies. Marthe et Marie*, in: *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, Paris 1986, 411-425.

⁷⁶) *En. 2 in ps.* 26,18. CCL 38,164: «Ipsam fecit patrem, ipsam fecit matrem. Pater est, quia condidit, quia vocat, quia iubet, quia regit; mater, quia fovet, quia nutrit, quia lactat, quia continet». On this point, I disagree with F.K. MAYR, *Trinität und Familie in De Trinitate XII*, in: *Revue des Etudes augustiniennes* 18 (1972) 51-85, p. 65.

⁷⁷) H.-I. MARROU - A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Le dogme de la résurrection des corps et la théologie des valeurs humaines selon l'enseignement de saint Augustin*, in: *Revue des Etudes augustiniennes* 12 (1966) 111-136, p. 128. K. THRAEDE, *Frau*, in: *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 8, 242-243.

quently, there is something lacking in the female principle. Aristotle calls this a lack of "warmth", not warmth in a physical sense, but in a pneumatic sense⁷⁸).

Other authors refer to the acts of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, in which the following vision of Perpetua is told:

At that moment, an Egyptian with a repugnant appearance came to me. He should fight against me together with his henchmen... One stripped my clothes off, and see I was changed into a man"⁷⁹).

Some consider this text as echoing Gnosticism; others believe that it is an anti-Gnostic allusion to Eph. 4:13: "We become the perfect Man, unto the mature age of Christ's fulness"⁸⁰). This latter interpretation is strongly defended by Augustine. He radically rejects any literal interpretation of Perpetua's being changed into a man. Her fight was not a bodily but a spiritual one. Moreover, one should distinguish a real body from the phantasm of a body as reproduced in our memory or in a dream:

"I have also to say something to you about the accounts of martyr's visions, because you have thought it proper to use their testimony (in favour of your opinion that the soul is something bodily). Saint Perpetua, for example, seemed to herself in a dream wrestling with an Egyptian, after having been changed into a man. Now, who can doubt that it was her soul in that apparent bodily form, and not her physical body, which of course remained in its own female sex and lay on the bed with her senses steeped in sleep, while her soul was struggling in the similitude of a man's body?... Was that likeness a veritable body?... If it were a real body, why did it not preserve the form of its vagina? For in that female body no male genitals were found"⁸¹).

⁷⁸) ARISTOTELES, *De generatione animalium* 736b-737a, ed. A.L. PECK, Aristotle generation of Animals (The Loeb Classical Library) London 1963, 170-175, and Introduction, XXXVIII-LXX.

⁷⁹) *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, ed. C.J. VAN BEEK, Nijmegen 1936, 26.

⁸⁰) E. CORSINI, *Proposte per una lettura della 'Passio Perpetuae'*, in: *Forma Futuri*, Studi in onore del card. M. Pellegrino, Torino 1975, 481-541, p. 507.

⁸¹) *De nat. et orig. an.* IV,18,26. CSEL 60,405-406: «De conscriptis visionibus martyrum dicendum tibi est aliquid, quoniam tu etiam inde testimonium adhibendum putasti. Nempe sancta Perpetua visa sibi est in somnis cum quodam Aegyptio in virum conversa luctari. Quis autem dubitet in illa similitudine corporis animam eius fuisse, non corpus, quod utique in suo femineo sexu manens sopitis sensibus iacebat in stratis, quando anima eius in illa virilis corporis similitudine luctabatur? Quid hic dicis? Verumne erat corpus illa viri similitudo an non erat corpus...? Si corpus erat, cur non servabat vaginae suae formam? Neque enim in illius feminae carne virilia reppererat genitalia».

In other texts, Augustine explains the vision of Perpetua always in the sense of becoming conformed to Christ (Eph. 4:13) through martyrdom⁸²). In the same line lies Augustine's refusal of the opinion of some of his predecessors who held that at the resurrection women will be changed into men:

"Because of these sayings 'Until we reach the perfect Man, the stature of the full maturity of Christ' (Eph. 4:13) and 'Being shaped into the likeness of God's Son' (Rom. 8:29), some people suppose that women will not keep their sex at the resurrection. According to them, all will possess the male sex, since God made the man out of clay, but the woman out of man. For my part, I think that they who do not doubt the resurrection of both sexes, have a deeper understanding. To be sure, there will be no sexual lust in that life... All defects will be removed from our bodies, but their nature will be preserved. Now, a woman's sex is not a defect; it is nature. This nature, however, will be free of intercourse and childbirth. The female organs will be there, be it no longer subserving their former use. They will be part of a new beauty... The Lord himself expressly stated that the female sex will be there, when He said 'They are not married', referring to women, and 'They do not marry wives', referring to men (Mt. 22:30)... When Paul says that we all will 'attain the perfect Man' ... nothing prevents us from supposing that the mention of 'man' implies 'woman' also. 'Man' is here used for 'human being', just as the verse 'Blessed is the man who fears the Lord' (Ps. 112:1) obviously includes the women who fear Him"⁸³).

⁸²) S. 281,2,2. PL 38,1284: «... sibi beata Perpetua de se ipsa revelatum esse narravit, virum se factam certasse cum diabolo. Illo quippe certamine in virum perfectum etiam ipsa currebat, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi».

⁸³) *De civ. dei* XXII,17-18. CCL 48,835-837: «Nonnulli propter hoc, quod dictum est: 'Donec occuramus omnes in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi' et 'Conformes imaginis filii Dei', nec in sexu femineo resurrecturas feminas credunt, sed in virili omnes aiunt, quoniam Deus solum virum fecit ex limo, feminam ex viro. Sed mihi melius sapere videntur, qui utrumque sexum resurrecturum esse non dubitant. Non enim libido ibi erit... Corporibus ergo illis vitia detrahentur, natura servabitur. Non est autem vitium sexus femineus, sed natura, quae tunc quidem et a concubitu et a partu immunis erit; erunt tamen membra feminea, non adcommodata usui veteri, sed decori novo... Et cum locus esset, ut diceret (Iesus): 'De qua enim me interrogatis, vir erit etiam ipsa, non mulier', non hoc dixit, sed dixit: 'In resurrectione enim neque nubent neque uxores ducent, sed sunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo' ... Nuptias ergo Dominus futuras esse negavit in resurrectione, non feminas... 'In mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi'... Verum si hoc ad resurrectionis formam, in qua erit unusquisque, referendum esset, quid nos impediret nominato viro intellegere et feminam, ut virum pro homine positum acciperemus? Sicut in eo quod dictum est 'Beatus vir qui timet Dominum', utique ibi sunt et feminae, quae timent Dominum». Cf. S. 243,6,6. PL 38,1146.

Rosemary Ruether interprets this text in an anti-feminist sense: "The sexual organs of women will be transformed in some mysterious way". Her interpretation is partial, for Augustine does not say that the female organs as such will be transformed or lose their beauty, but only that at the resurrection libido and procreation will no longer have a function. And this does not apply to women alone, but to men as well⁸⁴).

Even after death, there will be a relationship between soul and body⁸⁵). Consequently, a relationship between husband and wife will remain in our risen state. Augustine states in an early work: If I ask a good Christian if he wishes to live together with his wife in the Kingdom of Heaven, he will passionately reply: Yes, of course, I do. In this text, he speaks also of an "angelic transformation", but later he retracts this expression, because he finds it misleading: human beings will never change into angels⁸⁶). Augustine reproaches a certain Cornelius, who consorts with a host of whores, on the pretext of sorrow at the death of his wife, not to love her sincerely:

"For if you were loving her truly, you would wish to be with her after death"⁸⁷).

And to the widow Italica the bishop of Hippo writes that we do not lose our deceased; on the contrary, we will know them better after the resurrection, and therefore they will be even more dear to us; we will love them without any fear to become ever separated from one another⁸⁸).

⁸⁴) Rosemary RUETHER, *Sexism and God-Talk*, London 1983, 249: «... humans will rise in male and female bodies. The sexual organs of women will be transformed in some mysterious way, however, so they will no longer excite lust or be fitted to childbearing... Thus the female is allowed into the Christian Heaven only by having the specifically female parts of her body 'transformed' from their old 'uses' in sex and childbearing to 'a new beauty'».

⁸⁵) *De civ. dei* XIII,19-20. CCL 48,401-404. See A. ZUMKELLER, *Aurelius Augustinus Schriften gegen die Pelagianer III*, Würzburg 1977, 509-510.

⁸⁶) *De serm. Dom. in monte* I,15,41. CCL 35,45. *Retract.* I,17. CCL 57,53: «Sed quisquis ea sic accipit, ut existimat ita corpus terrenum, quale nunc habemus, in corpus caeleste resurrectione mutari, ut nec membra ista nec carnis sit futura substantia, procul dubio corrigendus est». Cf. ib. I,19,5. ib. 57-58.

⁸⁷) *Epist.* 259,5. CSEL 57,615: «Nam utique, si amares, cum illa esse post mortem desiderares, quo profecto non eris, si, qualis es, talis eris».

⁸⁸) *Epist.* 92,1. CSEL 34²,437: «... quosdam nostros migrantes non amisimus, sed praemisimus, ad eam vitam esse venturos, ubi nobis erunt quanto notiores tanto utique cariores et sine timore ullius discessionis amabiles».

Equal conjugal rights, but unjust laws.

It is not possible to expose fully Augustine's conception of marriage in this article, but some aspects of it are important for our subject. Augustine has defended always that marriage is something good, especially against Manicheism.

"Married life is praiseworthy and it has its own place within the Body of Christ"⁸⁹).

Marriage also is to be considered as a vocation⁹⁰). Augustine writes:

"That which food means for the well-being of the human person, sexual intercourse means for the well-being of humanity, and both are not without bodily delectation"⁹¹).

However, sexuality is not an unambiguous good in Augustine's eyes. It is also a redoutable and powerful force. He renders this force with the term *libido*, which is not to be confused with delectation. It is not easy to translate the word "*libido*": approximately it means "blind lust". *Libido* does not form part of the opposition between body and mind; it is not to be equated with the body, for *libido* lays hold of the whole person. It has to do with the sinful brokenness which is present in every human being, and results or manifests itself in moral disorder.

"One rightly defines *libido* as follows: it is a carving of the soul for temporal realities, which are preferred to eternal goods"⁹²).

Therefore, *libido* can affect all areas of life:

"There are many different *libidines*. Some have a proper name, others are nameless",

such as the *libido* of intemperance, of vengeance, of covetousness, of stubbornness, of conceit, of domination. But according to Augustine, nowhere is the disorder as great and fundamental as in sexual excita-

⁸⁹) S. 354,4,4. PL 39,1564: «Est enim conjugalī vita laudabilis, et habet in corpore Christi locum suum». Cf. E. SCHMITT, *Le mariage chrétien dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin*, Paris 1983.

⁹⁰) S. 304,3,2. PL 38,1396: «Habet, habet, fratres, habet hortus ille dominicus, non solum rosas martyrum, sed et lilia virginum, et conjugatorum hederas... Prorsus, dilectissimi, nullum genus hominum de sua vocatione desperet: pro omnibus passus est Christus».

⁹¹) *De bono coni.* 16,18. CSEL 41,210: «Quod enim est cibus ad salutem hominis, hoc est concubitus ad salutem generis, et utrumque non est sine delectatione carnali».

⁹²) *De mendacio* 7,10. CSEL 41,428: «Etenim *libido* quoque ipsa recte definitur appetitus animi, quo aeternis bonis quaelibet temporalia praeponuntur».

tion, which escapes radically the control of the will. This disorder (be it not this alone) is a consequence of sin, which was and still is disobedience to God⁹³). A husband can be guilty towards his own wife by immoderate desire, passional violence, or egoistic love of pleasure⁹⁴). Libido in itself is not a sin, but is called sin in a broader sense, namely as a consequence of sin or as a possible cause of sin⁹⁵). Human craving has to be subordinate to a higher goal, or in other words: it should be in control. Within marriage, that goal is procreation. Within the limits of procreation, sexual intercourse out of libido involves no guilt. Sexual intercourse with one's own partner merely out of libido, is for Augustine a venial sin. His argumentation is based upon an one-sided interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:6: "This is a concession (*secundum veniam*), not a command". The word *venia* can be translated as "concession", but also as "remission (of sin)". Augustine adopts only the latter translation. Venial sin or guilt, however, should not be exaggerated in this case. Augustine mentions intercourse merely out of libido in the same breath as a harsh word, some coarseness in associating with one another, or an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Such sins are remitted by giving alms or by praying the Our Father⁹⁶). But Augustine never regarded the disharmony of libido as something "natural", although — during the Pelagian controversy about the year 420 — he admits for the first time the possibility of libido in paradise, be it as subordinate to reason and will⁹⁷).

⁹³) *De civ. dei* XIV,15-16. CCL 48,438: «Est igitur libido ulciscendi, quae ira dicitur; est libido habendi pecuniam, quae avaritia; est libido quomodocumque vincendi, quae pervicacia; est libido gloriandi, quae iactantia nuncupatur. Sunt multae variaeque libidines, quarum nonnullae habent etiam vocabula propria, quaedam vero non habent. Quis enim facile dixerit, quid vocetur libido dominandi...? Cum igitur sint multarum libidines rerum, tamen, cum libido dicitur neque cuius rei libido sit additur, non fere adsolet animo occurrere nisi illa, qua obscenae partes corporis excitantur».

⁹⁴) *C. Jul.* II,7,20. PL 44,687: «Quid ergo de Ambrosio iudicabis, qui intemperantem in conjugio adulterum quemdam appellat uxoris?».

⁹⁵) *De nupt. et conc.* I,23,25. CSEL 42,238: «... modo quodam loquendi peccatum vocatur, quod et peccato facta est et peccatum, si vicerit, facit... cum iam in regeneratis non sit ipsa peccatum...».

⁹⁶) *S.* 9,18. CCL 41,143-144: «Illa dico quotidiana peccata ... verbum durum, aut cum labitur aliquis in risum immoderatum... Quando tu uti uxore amplius quam necessitas procreandorum liberorum cogit volueris, iam peccatum est. Et ipsa talia peccata quotidiana elemosinae mundant».

⁹⁷) *De nupt. et conc.* II,35,59. CSEL 42,318: «Hinc si forte erubuerit et dixerit tantam pacem felicitatis illius tantumque ordinem in his rebus esse potuisse, ut numquam carnis concupiscentia voluntatem illorum hominum praeveniret... hoc si dicit, saltem considerat nunc in hominibus non esse quod dicit. Et si non vult concedere vitium esse libidinem, dicat saltem per illorum hominum inoboedientiam etiam ipsam vitiatam esse carnis concupiscentiam».

The first duty of husband and wife is to live together in harmony. Therefore, they have to satisfy one another's normal and healthy sexual wishes, even without the intention of procreation. Sexual intercourse is a protection of marriage in Augustine's eyes. In the line of Paul's statement

"The wife has no rights over her own body, but the husband has them; in the same way, the husband has no rights over his own body; the wife has them" (1 Cor. 7:4),

Augustine defends the equal right to sexual intercourse of husband and wife:

"While in all other matters belonging to social peace, the wife ought to obey her husband, in this one matter in which the difference of sex plays a role because of a different bodily constitution by which the bodily union is performed, they have equal power over one another. The man has power over the woman, and the woman over the man"⁹⁸).

Augustine calls this right also "mutual servitude"⁹⁹). Men did not like this expression, but Augustine blazes out at men who claim this right only for themselves:

"You are the lord, and she is the servant. God has created both of you... It is true, the bishop has signed your matrimonial contracts which declare that your wives are your servants. When I talked about the difference of sex and sexual intercourse, you were glad, you leapt for joy, you were proud because of these words 'A wife has no power over her own body, but the husband has'. You thought to yourselves: see, I am the lord. But listen also to that which follows, listen to the words which you do not wish to hear: 'In the same way, the husband has no power over his own body, but the wife has'"¹⁰⁰).

⁹⁸) *C. Faust.* XXII,31. CSEL 25¹,625: «Ut cum in ceteris actibus ad humanam pacem pertinentibus mulier viro debeat servitutem, huius unius rei, qua sexus utriusque carnali sorte discernitur et carnali commixtione concernitur, similem in se habeant potestatem vir in uxorem et uxor in virum».

⁹⁹) *De bono coni.* 6,6. CSEL 41,195: «Debent ergo sibi coniugati non solum ipsius sexus sui commiscendi fidem liberorum procreandorum causa, quae prima est humani generis in ista mortalitate societas, verum etiam infirmitatis invicem excipiendae ad illicitos concubitus evitandos mutuam quodam modo servitutem».

¹⁰⁰) *S.* 332,4. PL 38,1465: «Tu dominus es, illa ancilla: Deus fecit utrumque... Verum est: istis tabulis subscripsit episcopus. Ancillae vestrae sunt uxores vestrae, domini estis uxorum vestrarum. Sed quando venit ad illud negotium, quo sexus discernitur, et sexus sibi uterque miscetur: 'Uxor non habet potestatem corporis sui, sed vir'. Gaudebas, erigebas te, jactabas te. Bene dixit apostolus... Quia ego sum dominus. Laudasti. Audi

If wife and husband have the same rights, then they have too the same obligations. On this point, Augustine accuses the Roman law of injustice and discrimination towards women. The woman is punished because of adultery, but the man goes scot-free. Although our information about Roman jurisdiction in Augustine's time is very poor, from the bishop's texts we can conclude that men and women were treated very discriminatingly:

"I mention some actions which are lawfully perpetrated, such as adultery and drunkenness. But they are not lawful according to the law of God. Who has ever been put on trial for entering the brothel of a whore? Who has ever been accused before a public court because he lapsed into licentiousness and voluptuousness seduced by his female players on the lyre? Is a charge ever made for misdemeanour against a married man because he interfered with his female slave? But all this applies to the court, not to heaven; I mean: to the earthly law, not to the law of the Creator of the earth"¹⁰¹).

And Augustine concludes that it is a good thing that there is still a law which orders: "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17. Rom. 7:7) He is well aware of the fact that the unfaithfulness of the husband constitutes an injustice vis-à-vis the wife, and that it hurts and wounds her deeply. He finds that all too often "wounds are changed into jokes as if by magic" in this matter. Men think that they can lightly skip over their adulterous relationships¹⁰²). By accusing men, Augustine knows that he will incur their rage, but laconically he declares:

"Despise Augustine, but fear at least Christ"¹⁰³).

Men do not admit that the same laws apply to them as to women, and they prefer the civil law to the law of Christ:

quod sequitur, audi quod non vis, rogo ut velis. Quid est hoc? Audi: 'Similiter et vir', dominus ille, 'similiter et vir non habet potestatem corporis sui, sed mulier'.

¹⁰¹) S. 153,5,6. PL 38,828: «Non dico amplius: fornicari, inquam, inebriari. Haec dixi quae licite committuntur, sed non Dei legibus. Quis enim aliquando ad iudicem ductus est, quia meretricis lupanar intravit? Quis aliquando in publicis tribunalibus accusatus est, quia per suas lyristrias lascivus immundusque defluxit? Quis aliquando habens uxorem, quia ancillam suam vitiavit, crimen invenit? Sed in foro, non in coelo; in lege mundi, non in lege creatoris mundi».

¹⁰²) S. 9,11-12. CCL 41,129-131: «Loquitur ergo ille (= Christus) interius et dicit, et consolatur filiam suam huiusmodi verbis: 'De iniuriis viri tui torqueris, quid tibi enim fecit? Dole, sed ipsum noli imitari'... Si quis volutatus fuerit cum ancillis suis, amator, blande accipitur, convertuntur vulnera in ioca».

¹⁰³) S. 392,2,2. PL 39,1710: «Contemnitur Augustinus, timeatur vel Christus».

"They say, we are men. Has the dignity of the male sex to take quietly the insult of being bracketed with women in the question of punishment for adultery?"

Augustine replies:

"Properly speaking, men should be punished more severely than women, because their lewdness is greater and worse on account of their pride and unbridled boasting".

They have no reason to go on at the faults committed by women. Augustine refers then to a decree of the emperor Antoninus who stated that a husband was not allowed to accuse his wife, if he himself did not set an example of morally good life¹⁰⁴). Augustine protests also against the civil law for permitting remarriage while the partner is still alive¹⁰⁵).

In that time, the established order put much greater pressure on a woman than on a man. Augustine mentions some aspects of this pressure, such as the surveillance of the parents and the husband, the female sense of shame and honour, and further the civil laws¹⁰⁶). The only counter-balance of the current jurisdiction is Christian doctrine. Augustine summons wives to appeal to Christ and to the church instead to a civil judge against their unfaithful husbands¹⁰⁷). As appears from the following passage, this could seriously change the conjugal relationship:

"To men is permitted that which is not permitted to women: see here the conviction of nearly all women. For women are accustomed to hear that women by chance found in the company of their slaves, have to appear in court. Never, however, have they heard that a man caught with his female slave, had to appear in court, although it is the same sin... Today, a husband experiences that his wife knows how to hold her own, and how she dares to express

¹⁰⁴) *De coni. adult.* II, 8,7. CSEL 41,388-389: «Sed nos viri sumus. An vero sexus nostri dignitas hanc sustinebit iniuriam, ut, cum aliis feminis praeter uxores nostras si quid admittimus, in luendis poenis mulieribus comparemur? ... tanto gravius eos puniri oportuerit... Quae cum ita sint, numquid ideo minor est, ac non potius maior et peior virorum impudicitia quam inest illis superba et licentiosa iactantia?».

¹⁰⁵) *De nupt. et concup.* I,10,11. CSEL 42,223: «Nec sterilem coniugem fas sit relinquere, ut alia fecunda ducatur. Quod si quisquam fecerit, non lege huius saeculi, ubi interveniente repudio sine crimine conceditur cum aliis alia copulare conubia... sed lege evangelii reus est adulterii, sicut etiam illa, si alteri nupserit».

¹⁰⁶) *S.* 9,12. CCL 41,130-131.

¹⁰⁷) *S.* 392,4,4. PL 39,1711: «Interpellate contra illos ecclesiam. Non dico, iudices publicos, non proconsulem, non vicarium, non comitem, non imperatorem, sed Christum».

her opinion more frankly. In former days, she thought that unfaithfulness was permitted to the man. But in the church she learned that this was not permitted at all. That is the reason why a husband experiences now that his wife speaks her mind more freely, and reproaches him: 'That which you do, is not permitted. We have both heard it (in the church). We are both Christians, is it not so...? You can deceive me, but you cannot deceive Christ to whom we both belong. When a husband hears such words to which he is not accustomed, he furiously attacks me... Perhaps he will say: 'What has come over my wife now? What has happened? Did the bishop visit my house? Or did my wife visit the church this or that day?'"¹⁰⁸).

Love within marriage.

More than one author blames Augustine for advocating a dualism between the biological and the social order, between sexuality and love. W. Molinski writes: "Augustine ranges sexuality under the animal domain, and he does attach no specific human character to it"¹⁰⁹).

If one takes into consideration that during nearly sixteen years Augustine lived together with a woman, whom he loved sincerely and with whom he had a son, this is strange. His concubinage was a faithful one, recognized by the Roman law as a marriage, be it of a lower rank than a fully lawful marriage. Augustine's wife belonged quite probably to a lower class than he, and for this reason he could not marry her in a fully lawful way as ordained by the emperor Constantine¹¹⁰). We do not know much about the relationship between Augustine and his wife. We know that Alypius tried to keep Augustine from marrying "because then they could not with undistracted leisure live together in the love of

¹⁰⁸) S. 9,4. CCL 41,115-116: «Ita invadens omnia consuetudo pro lege observatur, ut iam et mulieribus forte persuasum sit, licere hoc viris, non licere mulieribus. Solent enim audire adductas mulieres esse ad forum, quae forte cum servis inventae sunt. Adductum virum ad forum, quia inventus est cum ancilla sua, numquam audierunt, cum sit par peccatum... Et si forte hodie acriorem quisquam passus fuerit uxorem suam et liberior murmurantem, cui iam videbatur quia licebat viro, et audivit in ecclesia quia non licet viro, si ergo passus fuerit uxorem suam liberior iam, ut diximus, murmurantem et dicentem sibi: 'Non licet quod facis. Simul audivimus. Christiani sumus... Et si me fallis, non fallis eum cuius sumus, non fallis eum qui nos emit'. Haec atque huiusmodi audiens ille quae non solet... in me fit insanus. Irascitur, maledicit. Fortassis etiam dicat: 'Quomodo factum est ut huc ille veniret, aut uxor mea ipso die in ecclesiam procederet?'».

¹⁰⁹) W. MOLINSKI, in: *Sacramentum Mundi* I, 1969. Freiburg 1967.

¹¹⁰) A. SOLIGNAC, *Augustin et la mère d'Adéodat*, in: *Bibliothèque augustinienne* 13 (Paris 1962) 677-679.

wisdom". Alypius felt remorse and disdain regarding his momentary sexual experience with a woman. Augustine defends his own married life with the following arguments: married men have also devoted themselves to the quest of wisdom; they have served God acceptably; they retained and loved their friends; there is a considerable difference between momentary sexual intercourse and the joys of stable continual married life. He finds life without a wife not life, but punishment¹¹¹). The separation from his wife touched him deeply, as appears from his own description:

"The woman with whom I lived together was torn from my side, as a hindrance to my marriage. On the spot where my heart clung to her, it was torn and wounded, and remained bleeding... The wound caused by the separation from my first wife did not heal up. But after having burnt vehemently and caused much pain, the wound continued festering and brought about as it were a cooler but more desperate pain"¹¹²).

Moreover, Augustine's justification of a good concubinage, — i.e. based upon lasting mutual faithfulness and without excluding child-birth —, as a true marriage, may be seen as a delicate allusion to his own conjugal life¹¹³). Therefore, it seems unlikely that Augustine who takes a pride in having been faithful to his wife during all these years, would have ignored all about personal love and intimate relationship. The personal character of his conjugal relationship appears sufficiently from his wife's vow to God never to know any other man. The relationship between husband and wife is an expression of the social nature of human being, as is shown by Augustine's commentary on Gen. 2:18: "It is not good that the human being should be alone":

"God created the human being as one single being; not with the intention that the man, left to himself, should remain alone, bereft of human society. On the contrary, by creating the human being as

¹¹¹) *Conf.* VI,12,21-22. CCL 27,87-88.

¹¹²) *Conf.* VI,15,25. CCL 27,90: «... et avulsa a latere meo tamquam impedimento coniugii cum qua cubare solitus eram, cor, ubi adhaerebat, concisum et vulneratum mihi erat et trahebat sanguinem... Nec sanabatur vulnus illud meum, quod prioris praecisione factum erat, sed post fervorem doloremque acerrimum putrescebat et quasi frigidius, sed desperatius dolebat».

¹¹³) *De bono coni.* 5,5. CSEL 41,193: «Solet etiam quaeri, cum masculus et femina, nec ille maritus nec illa uxor alterius, sibimet... copulantur ea fide media, ut nec ille cum altera, nec illa cum altero id faciat, utrum nuptiae sint vocandae. Et potest quidem fortasse non absurde hoc appellari conubium, si usque ad mortem alicuius eorum id inter eos placuerit et prolis generationem... non tamen vitaverint».

one single individual, it was God's intention that the unity of human society and the bonds of human union be emphasized, for in this way human beings are bound together not only by likeness in nature, but also by the affection of kinship... The human being is created as one individual, but it was not left alone. For there is nothing that is more divided by perversion, but also nothing more social than the human race... Furthermore, the fact that the woman was made for the man from his own side, shows us clearly how affectionate (*cara*) should be the union of husband and wife"¹¹⁴).

The use of the words "affection" and "affectionate" indicates that marriage is not merely based on human social character, but also on love. In the light of Gen. 2:24 "They will be two in one flesh" Augustine develops this idea:

"Male and female are said to be one either on account of their being joined together in marriage, or because of woman's origin, since she was created from the man's side. The apostle appeals to this first example instituted by God in the beginning, when he admonishes husbands that each one of them should love his wife (Eph. 5:25-31)"¹¹⁵).

The natural unity between man and woman as depicted in the paradise story is the model of conjugal union (*societas*): "Therefore, the first natural bond (*copula*) of human society is husband and wife" and "The marriage of male and female is good ... not merely on account of the begetting of children, but also on account of the natural society itself of both sexes"¹¹⁶). Already in classical Latin the term *socialis* had the meaning of "conjugal". When Adam listened to Eve in paradise, this

¹¹⁴) *De civ. dei* XII,22 and 28. CCL 48,380 and 384: «Unum ac singulum creavit, non utique solum sine humana societate deserendum, sed ut eo modo vehementius ei commendaretur ipsius societatis unitas vinculumque concordiae, si non tantum inter se naturae similitudine, verum etiam cognationis affectu homines necterentur... factus est unus, sed non relictus est solus. Nihil enim est quam hoc genus discordiosum vitio, tam sociale natura... Quod vero femina illi ex eius latere facta est, etiam hic satis significatum est quam cara mariti et uxoris debeat esse coniunctio».

¹¹⁵) *De civ. dei* XIV,22. CCL 48,444: «... homines duos diversi sexus videmus et novimus, unum autem dici vel propter coniunctionem vel propter originem feminae, quae de masculi latere creata est. Nam et apostolus per hoc primum, quod Deo instituyente praecessit, exemplum singulos quosque admonet, ut viri uxores suas diligant».

¹¹⁶) *De bono coni.* 1,1 and 3,3. CSEL 41,187: «Prima itaque naturalis humanae societatis copula vir et uxor est... Bonum ergo coniugii... quod mihi non videtur propter solam filiorum procreationem, sed propter ipsam etiam naturalem in diverso sexu societatem».

was on account of their conjugal relationship (*sociali necessitudine*). And even then it was a question of love:

"God filled the place of Adam's rib with flesh. The word flesh indicates the loving affection (*affectus dilectionis*) by which everyone loves his own soul, and the obligation to be not hard on it by contempt"¹¹⁷).

Conjugal love in paradise was a love without inordinate libido. Consequently, Augustine considered it as an ideal for married people who renounce freely sexual intercourse as in the marriage of Joseph and Mary, for

"It is not libido which makes somebody a wife, but it is conjugal love (*caritas*) and the bond and affection of the heart"¹¹⁸).

Love of course, is not the privilege of marriage in paradise or of its imitation through sexual continence; also a normal everyday marriage is to be seen in the light of love. In one of his earlier works, Augustine had stated that perfect love consists in loving nothing else than God, but later he retracted this, declaring:

"If this were true, how can the apostle say: 'Nobody ever hated his own flesh' (Eph. 5:29). With these words Paul admonishes husbands to love their wives"¹¹⁹).

Elsewhere he writes:

"The soul works through the senses ... and it does all it can in order to bring about the union (*copulatio*) of both sexes. It realizes union in a twofold nature through society and love (*amor*)"¹²⁰).

He praises God

¹¹⁷) *De Gen. c. Manich.* II,12,17. PL 34,205: «Sane in locum illius costae carnem adimplevit, ut hoc nomine insinuaretur dilectionis affectus, quo diligit quisque animam suam, et non est durus ut eam contemnat».

¹¹⁸) *S.* 51,13,21. PL 38,344: «Non itaque propterea non fuit pater Joseph, quia cum matre Domini non concubuit; quasi uxorem libido faciat, et non charitas coniugalis». *De nupt. et concup.* I,11,12. CSEL 42,224: «Vinculum inter illos coniugale... firmitus erit... non voluptariis corporum nexibus, sed voluntariis affectibus animorum». Cf. J. DOIGNON, Une définition oubliée de l'amour conjugal édénique chez Augustin 'piae caritatis adfectus' (Gn. litt. 3,21,33), in: *Vetera Christianorum* 19(1982)25-36.

¹¹⁹) *Retract.* I,26. CCL 57,78: «Caritas proprie dicitur purgatissima et consummata, si nihil aliud amatur. Quod si verum est, quomodo ergo apostolus ait: 'Nemo umquam carnem suam odio habuit', et ex hoc admonet ut diligantur uxores?».

¹²⁰) *De quant. animae* 33,71. CSEL 89,219: «... intende quae sit vis animae in sensibus... pro copulatione sexus agit, quod potest, atque in duplici natura societate atque amore molitur unum».

“who set men over their wives, not to make play-things of the weaker sex, but in accordance with the laws of pure and honest love (*amor*)”¹²¹).

Longing is an aspect of love, and it plays an important role between an engaged couple:

“It is an established practice that the promised bride should not be given immediately. Were this so, one fears rightly that a husband should hold worthless a bride who is simply given without a delay which puts him in the position of a betrothed man craving for her”¹²²).

Conjugal love is not simply merely spiritual love. The love Augustine is defending entails also earthly aspects, be it with some reserve:

“Love your children, love your wives, even in an earthly way... When you love them humanly, love more Christ. Mark: I do not say that you should not love your wives, but that you should love more Christ”¹²³).

Even conjugal love dominated by libido is not to be reprehended without further ado. The life of such a couple can also have Christ as its foundation, although it will be confronted with a certain “fire”. Augustine does not mean the fire of hell, but the fire of tribulation, i.e. the pain caused by the loss of our loved one’s through death, or by other calamities which put an end to earthly delights. The greater the love of husband and wife for one another, the greater that pain:

“If a man loves his wife according to Christ, then who can doubt that he has Christ as his foundation? If he loves her in the way of the world with a carnal love and an unhealthy lust — just

¹²¹) *De mor. eccl. cath.* I,30,63. PL 32,1336: «Tu viros conjugibus, non ad illudendum imbecillioem sexum, sed sinceri amoris legibus praeficis».

¹²²) *Conf.* VIII,3,7. CCL 27,117: «Et institutum est, ut iam pactae sponsae non tradantur statim, ne vile habeat maritus datam, quam non suspiraverit sponsus dilatam».

¹²³) *S.* 349,7,7. PL 39,1532: «Amate filios vestros, amate conjuges vestras, etsi saeculariter... Tamen quando et humanitus diligitis, plus Christum amate. Non dico ut non diligas uxorem, sed plus dilige Christum». *ib.* 2,2. *ib.* 1530: «... licita est humana charitas qua uxor diligitur... Non solum autem ita licita est, ut concedatur, sed ita licita, ut si defuerit, reprehendatur... Haec ergo humana est. Si ergo tali quisque crudelitate effertur, ut perdat etiam humanum dilectionis affectum, et non amet filios suos, et non amet conjugem suam, nec inter homines numerandus est». *S.* 65A, ed. R. ETAIX, *Rev. Bén.* 86(1976)46: «Uxor est cuiquam; filii sunt cuiquam. Clamant: Ama nos. Responde: Amo. Dic uxori: Si non amarem, non ducerem». *S.* 81,4. PL 38,501: «Diligis eam, sicut oportet diligere uxorem: membrum tuum est». *De s. virgin.* 55,56. CSEL 41,301: «Vir et uxor amant se, quoniam vident se; et quod non vident, timent in se».

as the pagans do who are ignorant of God (1 Thess. 4:5) — even this the apostle allows as something forgivable, or rather Christ does so through his apostle. Therefore, it is possible for such a man to have Christ as his foundation, provided that he does not put this affection and sensual pleasure before Christ... Christ is his foundation, and for that reason he will be saved 'through fire' (1 Cor. 3:15). Fire will burn up such pleasures and earthly love, which because of the bond of marriage do not incur damnation"¹²⁴).

No wonder that, according to Augustine, a wife surpasses any mistress or whore "in feelings of faithfulness, in affection proper to marriage, and in more sincere and pure love"¹²⁵). Of course, conjugal love ought to have all the characteristics of true love. In the first place, this love should be gratuitous or selfless; it may not be egoistic or merely passionate. Unselfish love means for Augustine that one loves a person for no other reason than the person's self. To love a person because of something else would mean a denial of a human being's value and dignity. This is the reason why marriage does not stop to exist, when sexual intercourse falls off. Love constitutes the essence of marriage; however much accidental circumstances may change, love remains the essential ground:

"The natural union (*societas*) between both sexes is essential. Otherwise one could no longer speak of marriage in the case of aged persons, especially if either they had lost their children, or never gave birth to children. But now in a good marriage, although the partners are aged and the glow of youth withered away, the order of love between husband and wife retains its full vigour"¹²⁶).

¹²⁴) *De civ. dei* XXI,26. CCL 48,797: «Si quis autem diligit uxorem suam, si secundum Christum, quis ei dubitet in fundamento esse Christum? Si vero secundum hoc saeculum, si carnaliter, si in morbo concupiscentiarum, sicut et gentes quae ignorant Deum, etiam hoc secundum veniam concedit apostolus, immo per apostolum Christus. Potest ergo et iste in fundamento habere Christum. Si enim nihil ei talis affectionis voluptatisque praeponat... Christus est fundamentum, propter hoc salvus erit per ignem. Delicias quippe huius modi amoresque terrenos, propter coniugalem quidem copulam non damnabiles, tribulationis ignis exuret».

¹²⁵) *S.* 51,16,26. PL 38,348: «Ubi vincit uxor, nisi affectu fidei, affectu conjugii, affectu sincerioris castiorisque charitatis?».

¹²⁶) *De bono coni.* 3,3. CSEL 41,190: «Alioquin non iam diceretur coniugium in senibus, praesertim si vel amisissent filios vel minime genuissent. Nunc vero in bono licet annoso coniugio, etsi emarcuit ardor aetatis inter masculum et feminam, viget tamen ordo caritatis inter maritum et uxorem». For the context see note 116.

Neither sterility, nor an incurable illness, nor a prolonged absence of one of the partners because of captivity for example, can affect the essence of marriage¹²⁷). This holds even more in the case of poverty or the loss of bodily beauty:

“Wives should not love their husbands because they are rich or of a high social rank, or belong to a noble family, or possess bodily charm, but rather because they are faithful, religious, honest and good”¹²⁸).

Unselfish love is always oriented to the person, and not to that which a person possesses:

“You feel ashamed when your wife loves you because of your riches, or if she would meditate on adultery when you become poor. You wish that your wife loves you unselfishly”¹²⁹).

However rich and powerful a man may be, he is not allowed to break with his wife, even if she has insulted him, or if he wishes a more beautiful wife¹³⁰). It is simply heartless when a girl loves the gifts of her betrothed more than himself. Then the gift is no longer a pledge which brings them nearer to one another, but a cause driving a wedge between them. The betrothed gave this love-token expecting to be loved himself in his gift¹³¹).

Therefore, Augustine rejects the definition of marriage given by Julian of Eclanum. He finds the latter's definition too exclusively centered on sexual intercourse and procreation, not on love:

¹²⁷) *De coni. adult.* II,10,9. CSEL 41,392: «Quid? Si enim aliquo diuturno et insanabili morbo corporis teneatur coniux, quo concubitus impeditur? Quid? Si captivitas vel vis aliqua separet?». cf. ib. 16,17 and 19,20. ib. 403 and 407.

¹²⁸) *De nupt. et concup.* I,13,15. CSEL 42,228: «... ut eis mariti non ideo placeant, quia divites, quia sublimes, quia genere nobiles, quia carne amabiles, sed quia fideles, quia religiosi, quia pudici, quia viri boni sunt».

¹²⁹) *En. in ps.* 53,10. CCL 39,654: «Erubesceres si te uxor tua propter divitias amaret; et forte si tibi paupertas accideret, de adulterio cogitaret. Cum ergo te a coniuge gratis amari velis, tu Deum porpter aliud amabis?».

¹³⁰) *En. in ps.* 149,15. CCL 40, 2189: «Venit ad nos homo de saeculo potens, offendit illum uxor sua, aut forte concupivit alterius pulchriorem, aut alteram ditiozem... audit: non permittit Deus dimittere uxorem».

¹³¹) *In epist. Joh.* 2,11. PL 35,1995: «Certe hoc amaret quod dedit sponsus; tamen si diceret: 'Sufficit mihi annulus iste, jam illius faciem nolo videre', qualis esset? Quis non detestaretur hanc amentiam? Quis non adulterinum animum convinceret? Amas aurum pro viro, amas annulum pro sponso... Ad hoc utique arrham dat sponsus, ut in arrha sua ipse ametur».

"Julian has given a bad definition of marriage, because the essence of marriage is not identical with sexual intercourse"¹³²).

According to Julian Joseph and Mary were not really married, but according to Augustine they were because there was real love for one another. From some examples given by Augustine, it appears how far unselfish conjugal love can go, although he does not wish to answer the question whether the actions he mentions are morally good or bad. He asks if Abraham's wife was allowed to have sexual intercourse with the king in order to save her husband's life?¹³³). He mentions also a case which happened at Antioch under the Roman emperor Constantius II: a man should be put to death because he could not pay an important sum of money, but out of love for her husband his wife had sexual intercourse with a very rich man in order to raise the money needed¹³⁴). Unselfish love between wife and husband becomes even the model of our love for God. The betrothed who attaches more value to the gift than to the person of the beloved, warns us of our task to love God more than His gifts:

"Appreciate all created things, and praise them. In this way, you will love the Creator... Love Him who created the world for you. However, there is something more that He wishes to give to you, namely Himself"¹³⁵).

This theme occurs repeatedly in Augustine's sermons:

"If you wish to be loved gratuitously by your wife, why then do you love God because of something else?"¹³⁶).

"Remember what a chaste heart in human marriages means for God. Of course, we speak about human marriage. A husband who loves his wife because of her portion, does in fact not love her. A wife who loves her husband because he has given something or even much to her, does not love him in a chaste way. A rich man

¹³²) *C. Jul.* V,16,62. PL 44,818: «Vides ergo quam inconsiderate nuptias definieris, dicendo 'eas aliud non esse nisi corporum commixtionem'». See E.S. LODOVICI, *Sessualità, matrimonio e concupiscenza in sant' Agostino*, in: R. CANTALAMESSA, *Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel cristianesimo delle origini*, Milano 1976, p. 263-265.

¹³³) *C. Faust.* XXII,37. CSEL 25¹,631.

¹³⁴) *De serm. Dom. in monte I*,16,50. CCL 35,55-56: «Nihil hinc in aliquam partem disputo. Liceat cuique existimare quod velit; non enim de divinis auctoritatibus deprompta historia est. Sed tamen narrato facto non ita respuit hoc sensus humanus».

¹³⁵) *In epist. Joh.* 2,11. PL 35,1995: «... approbare et laudare (creaturas) ut ames creatorem... Ama illum qui fecit. Plus est quod tibi vult dare, id est, seipsum».

¹³⁶) *En. in ps.* 53,10. CCL 39,654: «Cum ergo te a coniuge gratis amari velis, tu Deum propter aliud amabis?».

who became poor, remains even so your husband. Many wives have loved more intensely their husbands after the confiscation of their possessions. Many good marriages have been consolidated by misfortune of the husband. Wives did not forsake their husband, but have shown that they loved nothing else more than himself, and they gave themselves more up to him. If a wife unselfishly loves a husband of flesh and blood and loves him chastely, and if the husband loves his wife in the same way ... in what manner should we then love God"?¹³⁷).

Even a love of the most suspicious character, only looking after a beautiful body, is for Augustine an occasion to illustrate our love for God:

"Let us in lower things pay attention to that which they can tell us about higher things. The lowest earthly love by which one pursues bodily beauty, shows us something from which we can ascend to higher and purer realities. For example, a licentious and voluptuous man loves an extremely beautiful woman. Bodily beauty excites him. Nevertheless, he is seeking something more than this; he longs after mutual love. If he hears that this woman hates him, his passion and craving for beautifully shaped limbs damp. In a certain sense, he gives his intentions up, and he feels an aversion for that woman. He feels himself insulted, and begins to hate that which he loved so much. Is there anything changed in that beautiful body? Is not all which seemed so attractive to him still there? Yes, all is still there. He burnt with desire for that which he saw. But in his heart he desired something more which he did not see, namely love. If he were sure that she loved him in return, he would even desire her more strongly. She sees him, he sees her, but no one sees love. Nevertheless, everybody loves love which is not seen. Ascend above this troubled covetousness in order to remain in the most pure love. You do not see God. Love Him, and you possess Him"¹³⁸).

¹³⁷) *En. in ps.* 55,17. CCL 39,690: «Dicam, fratres: in istis humanis coniugiis considerate cor castum quale sit ad Deum. Certe humana coniugia sunt; non diligit uxorem suam, qui propter dotem illam diligit; non maritum caste diligit, quae propterea diligit, quia aliquid donavit, aut quia multum donavit. Et divus maritus, et pauper factus maritus est. Quam multi proscripti a castis uxoribus amplius dilecti sunt? Probata sunt multa casta coniugia calamitatibus maritorum; ne aliud amare quam maritum putarentur, non solum non deseruerunt, sed amplius obsecutae sunt. Si ergo maritus carnalis gratis diligitur... et uxor carnalis gratis diligitur, si caste diligitur, Deus quomodo diligendus est?».

¹³⁸) *S.* 34,4-5. CCL 41,425: «In inferioribus attendamus, quod in superioribus inveniamus. Ipse amor infimus atque terrenus, ipse amor sordidus et flagitiosus, qui corporis pulchritudines consecratur, aliquid nos admonet unde ad superiora et mundiora surgamus. Amat aliquis lascivus et impudicus pulcherrimam feminam. Movet quidem

Friendship within marriage.

From love to friendship is only one step. For friendship is nothing else but mutual love, according to Augustine. Friendship is: to love and to be loved. Its characteristic is benevolence, i.e. to will the well-being of the beloved person. Augustine describes more than once conjugal love as friendship. Stoic authors have done this before him. Augustine's texts, however, are less known.

It is noteworthy how Augustine sees the Fall in the light of friendship between Adam and Eve. Consolation, union of heart, benevolence, and friendship play a role in the story of the Fall:

"Adam did not wish to grieve Eve, who without his comfort (*consolatio*) could have languished, and even could have perished totally because of being on bad terms with her husband, if she got estranged from his heart... Prompted by friendly benevolence (*amicalis benevolentia*), Adam sinned"¹³⁹).

In Augustine's representation of paradise, there were only two human beings, and in that very beginning they were entirely thrown on each other's society; they stood face to face as human being before human being, as person before person, as husband before wife. They had the task to build up society, and therefore Adam listened to his wife on account of their conjugal relationship¹⁴⁰).

Friendship between husband and wife was not limited to paradise. Even now it remains a great task. Explaining the first of the seven

corporis pulchritudo, sed intus quaeritur amoris vicissitudo. Si enim audiat quod illa oderit eum, nonne omnis ille aestus et impetus circa membra pulchra frigescit, et ab eo quod intenderat quodam modo resilit, avertitur, offenditur, odisse etiam ipse incipit quod amabat? Numquid forma mutata est? Nonne ibi sunt omnia quae illexerant? Ibi sunt. Et tamen ardebat in eo quod videbat, et de corde exigebat quod non videbat. Si vero cognoscat quia vicissim amatur, quomodo vehementius inardescit! Videt illa illum, videt ille illam, amorem nemo videt. Et tamen ipse amatur qui non videtur. Erigite vos ab ista lutulenta cupiditate, ut maneatis in illuminatissima caritate. Deum non vides. Ama, et habes».

¹³⁹) *De Gen. ad litt.* XI,42 (59). CSEL 28¹,378: «Ita et Adam, posteaquam de ligno prohibito seducta mulier manducavit eique dedit, ut simul ederent, noluit eam contristare, quam credebatur posse sine suo solacio contabescere, si ab eius alienaretur animo, et omnino illa interire discordia... sed amicali quadam benivolentia...». However, Augustine does not approve of this kind of friendship for it leads to a transgression of the divine will.

¹⁴⁰) *De civ. dei* XIV,11. CCL 48,433: «Ita credendum est illum virum suae feminae, uni unum, hominem homini, coniugem coniugi, ad Dei legem transgrediendam ... sociali necessitudine paruisse».

commandments related to the love of neighbour: "Honour your father and mother" (Ex. 20:12), Augustine tells us why we should do so:

"For the first thing a baby sees when opening its eyes, are its parents, and life begins with their friendship"¹⁴¹).

Elsewhere he declares that two things are necessary in this life, namely health and friendship:

"We should esteem highly health and friendship, and we may never hold these in contempt. Health and friendship are natural goods. God created the human being so that he could exist and live: that is health. But in order that human being should not be alone, it desires friendship. Now, friendship begins with wife and children, and then it reaches out to strangers"¹⁴²).

Augustine asserts in the same sermon that the friendship between husband and wife will always survive and will be there even in immortal life. Friendship supposes trust and faith in one another. We can perceive outward signs of love, but never we see love itself. For this reason, all love requires faith. This process applies also to conjugal love as friendship:

"Without faith friendship will wholly perish, since it consists in nothing else than in mutual love (*amor*). If one does not believe first that the other has shown us a token of friendship, one would completely be unable to receive any token of friendship from another person. When friendship perishes totally, neither the bonds of marriage, nor of relationship and affinity will remain in the heart, because all these rest on a friendly unanimity. Husband and wife will not be able to have mutual love, if they do not believe that they love one another, because love itself is invisible"¹⁴³).

¹⁴¹) S. 9,7. CCL 41,121: «Ad parentes enim suos homo aperit oculos, et haec vita ab eorum amicitia sumit exordium». See P. BROWN, *Augustine and sexuality*. (The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, Colloquy 46), Berkeley 1983, p. 3: «A capacity for intimacy, above all, *fides*, for mutual trust and reliability in friendship, derived not merely from the post-conversion experience of the celebrate bishop, but from late adolescence onwards, can be heard in these phrases — a tone as subtle, but as unmistakable as the ring of good crystal».

¹⁴²) S. *Denis* 16,1. MA I,75: «Necessaria sunt in hoc mundo duo ista, salus et amicus; ista sunt, quae magni pendere, quae non debemus contemnere. Salus et amicus, naturalia bona sunt. Fecit deus hominem, ut esset et viveret: salus est; sed, ne solus esset, amicitia quaesita est. Incipit ergo amicitia a coniuge et filiis, et progreditur ad alienos».

¹⁴³) *De fide rerum invis.* 2,4. CCL 46,4: «Si auferatur haec fides de rebus humanis... tota itaque peribit amicitia, quia nonnisi mutuo amore constat. Quid enim eius poterit ab aliquo recipere, si nihil eius creditum fuerit exhiberi? Porro amicitia pereunte neque conubiorum neque cognationum et affinitatum vinculo in animo servabuntur, quia et in

Also in his book *De bono coniugali* Augustine describes a good marriage as friendship:

"Forasmuch as each human being is a part of the human race, and human nature is something social possessing a great natural good (namely marriage) as well as the power of friendship, God wished to create all human beings out of one. In this way they should be kept together socially, not only by equality of nature, but also by bond of kindred. The first natural bond of human society is the bond between husband and wife... Even without sexual intercourse ... there can be a bond of friendship between them as between brother and sister"¹⁴⁴).

And in the same work he insists once more on friendship within marriage:

"Truly we must consider that God gives us some goods which are to be sought for their own sake, such as wisdom, health and friendship. But also that He gives other goods which are necessary for the sake of something else, such as learning, food, drink, sleep, marriage, sexual intercourse... Marriage and sexual intercourse are necessary for the sake of friendship, since on these rests the propagation of the human race, in which friendly fellowship is a great good... Through lawful as well through unlawful sexual intercourse ... the Creator makes that numerous progeny and abundant succession do not fail, out of which new holy friendships can be constituted"¹⁴⁵).

It is not easy to know what Augustine means exactly by the expression "holy friendships". The most important idea in this text, however, is that both marriage and sexual intercourse are oriented to a higher and greater good, namely friendship between husband and wife. Their

his utique amica consensio est. Non ergo coniugem coniunx vicissim diligere poterit, quando se diligi, quia ipsam dilectionem non potest videre, non credit».

¹⁴⁴) *De bono coni.* 1,1. CSEL 41,187-188: «Quoniam unusquisque homo humani generis pars est et sociale quiddam est humana natura magnumque habet et naturale bonum, vim quoque amicitiae, ob hoc ex uno deus voluit omnes homines condere, ut in sua societate non sola similitudine generis, sed etiam cognationis vinculo tenerentur. Prima itaque naturalis humanae societatis copula vir et uxor est... Poterat enim esse in utroque sexu etiam sine tali commixtione... amicalis quaedam et germana coniunctio».

¹⁴⁵) *De bono coni.* 9,9. CSEL 41,199-200: «Sane videndum est alia bona nobis deum dare, quae propter se ipsa expetenda sunt, sicut est sapientia, salus, amicitia; alia, quae propter aliquid sunt necessaria sicut doctrina, cibus, potus, somnus, coniugium, concubitus; hinc enim subsistit propagatio generis humani, in quo societas amicalis magnum bonum est... sed multis etiam per illicitos concubitus luxuriantibus bono creatore de malis eorum faciente, quod bonum est, non desit numerositas proles et abundantia successionis, unde sanctae amicitiae conquirantur».

interrelation is that of means to an end. From this and other texts, we may conclude that Augustine sees the whole of the relationship between married people — and not its sexual aspect in itself — as friendship; this speaks well for the high esteem in which he held Christian marriage¹⁴⁶). Augustine uses conjugal friendship as an example which illustrates how much we should love peace:

“May peace not be a bitter companion for us, but a sweetheart and friend, with whom we share our heart as an inviolate nuptial bed, and in whose company we find trust and rest. May peace be our beloved whose embrace comforts us and with whom we live in indissoluble friendship”¹⁴⁷).

I think that these texts show unquestionably that Augustine considered married life as a personal relationship through which husband and wife participate intimately in one another's life.

“They are joined one to another side by side, walking together, and looking together towards the goal of their journey”¹⁴⁸).

Augustine does not approve the interpretation of Mt. 6:3 “Your left hand must not know what your right is doing” in the sense that left hand stands for “wife”, since women in managing the home generally are rather tenacious of money, so that they are kept in the dark when their husbands in pity spend something upon the needy. He finds this interpretation absurd and ridiculous. Are not both called by the Lord to do works of mercy? Consequently, husband and wife should not conceal their good works for each other. Rather they should invite one another to communion in faith¹⁴⁹). But the personal conjugal relations-

¹⁴⁶) I agree with G. Bonner that Augustine does not describe physical sexuality in itself as friendship, but I attach a bit more importance to Augustine's view on friendship between husband and wife. See G. BONNER, *Augustine's Attitude to Women and 'Amicitia'*, in: *Homo Spiritualis. Festgabe für L. Verheijen* (ed. C. MAYER - K. CHELIUS), Würzburg 1987, p. 274: «... it is difficult to believe that Augustine, or any of the Fathers, could have anticipated the modern attitude which sees the emotions accompanying physical sexuality as having a positive value as bond between two individuals independent of the begetting of children».

¹⁴⁷) *S.* 357,1. PL 39,1582: «Sit ergo pax dilecta nostra et amica, cum qua sit castum cubile cor nostrum; cum qua sit fida requies et non amarum consortium, cum qua sit dulcis complexus et inseparabilis amicitia».

¹⁴⁸) *De bono coni.* 1,1. CSEL 41,187: «Lateribus enim sibi iunguntur (vir et uxor), qui pariter ambulant et pariter quo ambulant intuentur».

¹⁴⁹) *De serm. Dom. in monte* II,2,7. CCL 35,97: «Quasi vero soli viri christiani sint, et non hoc praeceptum etiam feminis datum sit... Quapropter non sibi debent occultare bona opera sua, quibus invitandi sunt ab invicem, ut alter alterum possit ad christianae fidei communionem invitare».

hip is not limited to communion in faith. It manifestst itself also on a material and bodily level. Marriage entails a communion of material goods, i.e. the common patrimony, to which the wife as well as the husband has a right:

"If you possess the love which a wife ought to have, then your husband possesses nothing which you do not possess at the same time"¹⁵⁰).

When the husband is in financial difficulties, the wife should be able to renounce her patrimony out of love for him. Even if the love between husband and wife is only a question of bodily beauty, each of them loves more intensely when love is reciprocated. If a lover feels himself rejected, his love will change into rage, because he does not receive back what he gives. And Augustine remarks laconically:

"Nobody loves a dead body however beautiful it may be"¹⁵¹).

Caresses form part of the intimate relationship of a married couple. When the king Abimelech wanted to have Rebekah, the pretty wife of Isaac, as his wife, he discovers that she is not Isaac's sister as pretended by the latter, but his wife, for looking out of the window the king saw Isaac fondling Rebekah. Augustine comments this story as follows:

"The king would not have known that Rebekah was Isaac's wife, had he not seen him fondling her. It is not becoming to do so with a woman who is not your wife... Holy men do not act in this way thoughtlessly, but with discretion. They bend down in a certain manner to the weaker female sex by saying or doing something charming or pleasing... This is part of the rules of courtesy. I mentioned this story expressly lest some stern advocate of insensibility should find fault with a holy man even for fondling his wife... God's prophet used bodily caresses to meet the affection of his wife"¹⁵²).

¹⁵⁰) S. 392,4,4. PL 39,1712: «Non enim potest esse ipsius, quae non sit tua, si est charitas in te, quae debet esse in uxore».

¹⁵¹) In *Joh. evang.* 32,3. CCL 36,301: «Si ergo ipsi corporum amatores redamari se volunt, et hoc eos magis delectat si amentur, quales sunt amatores animorum? ... cadaver horrescis; et quantumcumque pulchra illa membra dilexeris, sepelire festinas».

¹⁵²) C. *Faust.* XXII,46. CSEL 25¹,638: «Rex alienigena Rebeccam viri sui coniugem tunc esse cognovit, quando eum cum illa ludentem vidit: quod non cognovisset, nisi cum coniuge ille sic luderet, quomodo cum ea, quae coniux non esset, ludere non deceret. Quod cum sancti coniugati faciunt, non inaniter faciunt, sed prudenter; descendunt enim quodam modo ad feminei sexus infirmitatem, ut aliquid blanda hilaritate vel dicant vel

Husband and wife do not tolerate the presence of others, not even that of their children, when they prepare themselves for sexual intercourse¹⁵³). Bodily love is also necessarily allied with a feeling of jealousy. A lover wishes to see alone the nakedness of his beloved, and he will exclude jealously any other person from seeing the nudity of his beloved¹⁵⁴).

Conclusion.

From the study of Augustine's texts, it appears undoubtedly that the man occupies the central place in social life. The woman is always compared to and measured by the man. We must admit that Augustine's view is androcentric. Woman is the weaker sex, subordinate to the man and owing him obedience. In the question of subordination of women, Augustine is not only influenced by the social ideas of his time, but also — and perhaps more — by the Bible. He read the paradise story in a historical way: the first human beings lived in a perfect paradisaical situation; only later they degraded because of sin. Augustine starts from an idealized picture of the first human couple, whereas we modern people expect human perfection to come only in the future. What he read as a story about the beginning, we read as a story about the end. Modern science tells us that human beings began on a very primitive level, and that they developed only slowly in a long process of evolution. For Augustine it was more or less the opposite. This implies considerable differences in view and evaluation. Augustine had to base himself on the science of his day, and could not know or realize how much the biblical narratives were socially and culturally conditioned, in general and in particular regarding the relationship between male and female. For this reason it was difficult for him to consider libido as

faciant... Verum hoc, quod ad mores humanitatis pertinet, dixerim, ne quisquam durus et sine adfectu id ipsum pro crimine obiciat sancto viro... Propheta dei carnale aliquid ludit, ut eum caperet adfectus uxoris». S. 159,2,2. PL 38,868-869: «Delectant conjugales amplexus; delectant etiam meretricum. Hoc licite, illud illicite. Videtis ergo, charissimi, esse in istis corporis sensibus licitas et illicitas delectationes».

¹⁵³) *De civ. dei* XIV,18. CCL 48,441: «Nonne omnes famulos atque ipsos etiam paranympnos... ante mittit foras, quam vel blandiri coniux coniugi incipiat?... et tamen cum agitur, unde filii nascentur, nec ipsi filii, si qui inde iam nati sunt, testes fieri permittuntur».

¹⁵⁴) *En. in ps.* 33, s. 2,6. CCL 38,285: «Quisquis enim amat carnaliter, necesse est ut cum zelo pestifero amet; si forte pro magno nudam videre potuerit... numquid vult ut videat illam et alius?».

something belonging originally to human nature. However, he was not completely mistaken in his observation of libido. Many psychologists, especially of the psychoanalytic school, would agree with him in seeing sexual libido as an ambiguous force. To consider libido simply as a good would be naive; it is also a source of evil. On this point Augustine was more realistic than Julian of Eclanum.

We should not be blind for the positive aspects of Augustine's view. More than once he breaks through traditional Christian opinions, opening new perspectives and instigating further evolution. It is a pity that some of his ideas have had no greater influence on posterity. Some of these positive elements of his thought are taken over from his predecessors; others are corrections of the opinions of his predecessors. The idea of the moral superiority of women is borrowed from the best of Christian tradition. In the question of woman as the image of God, he corrects the opinion of several theologians who wrote before him. Woman is created in the image of God; she is the image of God by nature, and not only through Christ's grace conferred in baptism. The same must be said regarding the presence of the female body and sex in the resurrected state of the human being. This had been denied by influential authors before him. An important point is further his protest against the discrimination of women by civil law. In doing so he assailed social injustice in his own day. He criticized vehemently and intrepidly this kind of discrimination. Augustine's own and most important contribution to a change within the relationship between husband and wife is, according to me, his emphasis on love in married life, and even more his interpretation of the conjugal relationship as friendship. In the Christian tradition before him this was seldom or never done.

T.J. VAN BAVEL

Leuven