

IN DEFENCE OF AUGUSTINE: HOW *FEMINA* IS *HOMO*

Since I began my research on Augustine's and Thomas Aquinas' theological anthropology nearly 30 years ago (in 1961), my evaluation of Augustine's doctrine concerning women's nature and role has changed¹). Today, I appreciate Augustine's "feminism", in the sense that he, like Clement of Alexandria before him, strove to include women in Godlike humanity, *in spite of* their femaleness. Augustine's major writings, like *De Genesi ad litteram*, *De Trinitate* and *De civitate Dei*, advocate women's human equivalence as strongly as possible within the limits of his patriarchal culture. Before, I was dismayed by Augustine's definition of female subservience as a Godwilled part of the creational order. My present, more *positive* assessment of Augustine results from a more *negative* judgment of his doctrinal framework, namely the malecentred *conformity* of both scriptural texts and their subsequent interpretation.

In my perspective as a feminist theologian, i.e. talking about God from female gendered experience, a main stumbling block in traditional Christianity is the fundamental exclusion of femaleness at the divine level. Given the interaction between concepts of divinity and humanity in verbalising theology and theological anthropology, God is normally described as andromorphic or metasexual, with corresponding attribution of Godlikeness to male human beings or sexless human souls. In this Godlanguage, women *qua* females are excluded from fully human *imago Dei*, and thereby from exemplary humanity. When modern theological anthropology has left such dualistic androcentricity, considering both men *and* women in their equivalent diversity as being created in God's image, this *accommodation* to post-patriarchal culture is based upon patristic "feminism"²).

In fact, present biblical interpretation uses three equality strategies,

¹) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, *Subordination et Équivalence*. Nature et rôle de la femme d'après Augustin et Thomas d'Aquin, Oslo-Paris, 1968. Updated, new editions: *Natura e ruolo della donna in Agostino e Tommaso d'Aquino*, Assisi, 1979. *Subordination and Equivalence*. The Nature and role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Washington DC., 1981. *Equivalencia y subordinación según san Agustín*, Naturaleza y papel de la mujer, in *Augustinus* 30 (1985) 97-197 (Augustine-part).

²). Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN (ed.), *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, Oslo, 1990.

which were introduced by Clement of Alexandria and further elaborated by Augustine:

1. The sexual differentiation expressed in Gen. 1, 27b: "male and female he created them", is *disconnected* from the consecutive blessing of fertility in 1, 28 and *linked* to the preceding image text of 1, 26-27a: "Let us make Adam (collective male) in our image, according to our likeness ... And God created Adam in his image, in the image of God he created him".

2. Paul's argument for men's preeminent Godlikeness in I Cor. 11, 7: "For man should not cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man", is *veiled*. Gen. 1, 26-27a is here combined with God's formation of Adam from clods in the soil, referring to Gen. 2, 7. In I Cor. 11, 8-9, Paul asserts man's theomorphic precedence in terms of woman's derivative formation from Adam's rib, as "an aid fit for him", according to Gen. 2, 18, 21-23.

3. The *negating* citation of Gen. 1, 27b in Gal. 3, 28: "there is not male and female, for you are all one (collective male) in Christ", is interpreted as *including* women instead of *abolishing* femaleness. It is of note that this text presents a mixture of reverting to creational perfection defined as *presexual*, and salvational attainment of Christomorphic sonship in perfect *maleness*.

PATRISTIC "FEMINISM"

Christianity starts from what I call "redemptional democracy", where both women *and* men are saved in Christ through baptism and resurrection. Since Christ is incarnated in perfect humanity, i.e. male Godlikeness, women's equivalence in the order of redemption implies that they achieve Christlike *maleness*, as expressed in Eph. 4, 13: "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". This early Christian theme of *becoming male* as a prerequisite to, and consequence of, salvational conformity with the new Adam, Christ, is most succinctly expressed at the end of the Gospel of Thomas (114): "Simon Peter said to them, Let Mary (Magdalene) leave us, for women are not worthy of Life'. Jesus said, I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit (cf. Gen. 2, 7) resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven".

Sometimes disregarded by modern scholars as “heterodox” (because of “feminist” embarrassment?), the motif of *woman transformed into man* is quite logical as resulting from a Christocentric mixture of divine Sonship and perfect manhood. A striking example of women’s internalisation of androcentric Christlikeness is provided by the Egyptian desert Mother, Amma Sarra (4th century). Talking to some great visiting anchorites, she refers to her Godgiven charismatic authority in these terms: “I am a man, and you, you are women”³). In fact, the theme of perfect maleness is found more often in Christian than in gnostic sources⁴). Since women’s transformation into Christlike maleness is reserved for the order of redemption, this theme is inapplicable as an inclusive device *already* from creation. Given the basic incompatibility of Godhead and femaleness, the *innovating* patristic move from an exclusively redemptive Godlikeness to one equally attributable to women at creation is realised through a *genderfree* definition of *imago Dei*⁵). Theomorphic quality is here connected to the spiritual and thereby sexless human soul, sexual differentiation being understood as restricted to the bodily sphere. It follows that women *too* are created as Godlike by possessing a human rational capacity, thus being identical to men in intellect and virtue. This approach, which I call “asexual feminism”, is initiated by Clement of Alexandria. He is the *first* author I have found who connects Gen. 1, 27b to the preceding image-text of 1, 26-27a, in order to include women within Godlike humanity from initial creation. Clement also introduces what I call the “feminist falsification” of Gal. 3, 28, using the text’s presexual element to ensure women’s theomorphic privilege. Clement avoids a direct problematisation of men’s exclusive image quality by virtually ignoring I Cor. 11, 7. The first part of this text is cited only once in his writings, and then referring to androcentric sociology. It is important to note that two basic tenets of traditional doctrine are upheld by this stratagem: the scission between divinity and femaleness remains unchallenged by an asexual definition of *imago Dei*, correlated with a metasexual God-concept. Women’s Godlikeness is affirmed in

³) Sarra 9. In Jean-Claude GUY, *Les Apophtegmes des Pères du Désert*, Begrolles, 1966, 229.

⁴) Karl VOGT, “Devenir mâle”, aspect d’une anthropologie chrétienne primitive, in *Concilium* 202 (1985) 95-107.

⁵) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, *Imago Dei*, privilège masculin? Interprétation augustinienne et pseudo-augustinienne de Gen. 1, 27 et I Cor. 11, 7, in *Augustinianum* 25 (1985) 213-234.

spite of their female inferiority, so that creational gender hierarchy remains unaffected.

The leading Father of Greek theology, Gregory of Nyssa, includes women in Godlike humanity by restricting the image of God at creation to presexual privilege. His argument for what I call "sexless equality" is a mitigated variant of encratite protology, where the original perfection of humankind is understood as either all-male, presexual or asexual. In consequence, gender differentiation, or more precisely, femaleness, is explained as a *cause* or *consequence* of primeval sin. *Enkrateia*, i.e. sexual abstinence, is therefore indispensable for restoring humanity to initial, Godwilled wholeness⁶). In this perspective, Gregory distinguishes *two* stages of God's creation: the first is purely spiritual in God's image, expressed in Gen. 1, 26-27a. This original presexual perfection is to be restored in the order of redemption, a typical encratite theme. The second phase, the creation of sexually differentiated bodies according to Gen. 1, 27b-28, is by Gregory connected to the formation of Adam and his woman in Gen. 2, 7, 18, 21-23. This introduction of animal physicality, which assimilates humanity with beasts, is motivated by God's *foreknowledge* of the first sin. Subhuman mortality as consequence of the fall is to be counteracted by equally *subhuman* fecundity⁷).

Gregory's twofold anthropology is "feminist" in the sense that by placing Adam's formation in Gen. 2, 7 on the *same* secondary level as derived woman's origin according to Gen. 2, 18, 21-23, he severs the traditional link between theomorphic humanity and exemplary maleness. It is therefore logical that the combination of Gen. 1, 26-27a and 2, 7, as expressed in I Cor. 11, 7, is entirely alien to Gregory's thought. In contrast, he regularly invokes Gal. 3, 28 in favour of presexual Godlikeness, to be restored in Christ by reverting to initial creation, *before* Gen. 1, 27b-28. From a 20th-century feminist point of view, Gregory's doctrine is particularly inapplicable, not only because he enforces the traditional disparity between Godhead and femaleness, but mainly because his definition of perfect humanity excludes both male and female gender. In fact, Gregory's double Adam and Eve are not properly human beings but *hybrid* creatures, with angellike, spiritual image quality and beastlike, sexually differentiated corporality.

⁶) Giulia SFAMENI GASPARRO, *Enkrateia e antropologia*. Le motivazioni protologiche della continenza e della verginità nel cristianesimo dei primi secoli e nello gnosticismo, Roma, 1984.

⁷) *De hominis opificio* 16; 22. PG 44, 177-186; 204-205. *De anima et resurrectione*. PG 46, 145-149.

It is important to remember that this theory of twofold creation was upheld by major theologians like Maximus Confessor and John of Damascus, thereby surviving in Greekorthodox doctrine throughout the Middle Ages.

AUGUSTINE AS "FEMINIST"

In comparison with Clement of Alexandria's inclusion of genderfree women in creational Godlikeness and Gregory of Nyssa's exclusion of gender from theomorphic humanity, Augustine's *holistic* definition of both maleness and femaleness as properly human marks a high point of patristic "feminism". Confronting Manichaean dualism and encratite duality, this leading Father of Latin theology affirms the *unity* of creation. In *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine strives to combine the two creation accounts by an intricate exegesis (an arduous task, since the hypothesis of two different biblical sources here was first proposed in 1711 by Henning Bernhard Witter).

Augustine distinguishes between two modes of God's *unique* creation act: the instant, seminal *informatio* expressed in Gen. 1, and the successive *conformatio* described in Gen. 2. By this device, Augustine is able to connect sexual differentiation according to Gen. 1, 27b-28 with the preceding image text in 1, 26-27a. It follows that the formation of Adam and his woman in Gen. 2, 7, 18, 21-23 is linked to the creation of theomorphic humanity. This protological leap from Gregory's divisive scheme is "feminist" in the sense of including the female human being, *femina/mulier*, in the Godlike human prototype, *homo*. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Augustine's holistic effort is hampered by his neo-Platonic spiritualism, in that he endorses Gregory's genderless definition of the image quality, *in spite* of rejecting its presupposed dual creation. The ensuing logical *incoherence* in Augustine's anthropology is particularly visible in his "feminist" efforts to incorporate female human beings in andromorphic or asexual Godlikeness.

Augustine is the *first* church Father I have found who directly confronts I Cor. 11, 7 by affirming that women *too* are created in God's image. It is of note that all patristic exegesis understands this text as literally stating men's *exclusive* Godlikeness. Augustine's scriptural dilemma results from his inclusive interpretation of theomorphic humanity, by connecting Gen. 1, 26-27a and 27b. Refusing to accept

the Pauline denial of women's *imago Dei*, Augustine takes refuge in allegorical exegesis, previously used by Origen to ease the embarrassing corporeity and especially femaleness in Gen. 1, 27b. Consequently, Augustine neutralises Paul by explaining his *mulier* in terms of *lower* human reason, which is not theomorphic, in contradistinction to *higher* reason, figured by Paul's Godlike *vir*. Augustine's main proof-text is here Gal. 3, 28, correctly understood in its combined presexual and andromorphic equality, but even more illogically used than by Clement of Alexandria, since the *negated* citation of Gen. 1, 27b is invoked to include women as Godlike by *attaching homo* of Gen. 1, 26-27a to *femina* of 1, 27b⁸).

Augustine's "feminist falsification" is further elaborated in *De Trinitate*. According to the first creation account human nature as such, which includes both sexes, has been made in the image of God. Consequently, woman is not excluded from Godlikeness: "Ad imaginem quippe dei naturam ipsam humanam factam dicit quae sexu utroque completur, nec ab intelligenda imagine dei separat feminam". Nevertheless, Augustine's insertion of Paul's *mulier* through the stratagem of attributing to her a genderfree *mens*, sharpens the conflict between rational Godlikeness and inferior femaleness. This anthropological split is not found in Paul's *uir*, where male precedence from creation conforms to his theomorphic excellence. It follows that the traditional incompatibility between Godhead and femaleness remains unchallenged by Augustine's inclusive definition of *imago Dei* in manlike disguise. Women are not Godlike *qua* females: "cum autem ad adiutorium distribuitur, quod ad eam ipsam solam attinet non est imago dei; quod autem ad uirum solum attinet, imago dei est tam plena atque integra quam in unum coniuncta muliere"⁹). Augustine's validation of Gen. 2 in terms of *conformatio* therefore strengthens malecentred identification of patriarchal sex roles and Godwilled gender hierarchy, which is partly concealed in Gregory of Nyssa's double creation.

In *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine firmly underlines that Eve's and therefore all women's *raison d'être* as female human beings is their subordinate and passive procreative function: "aut si ad hoc adiutorium gignendi filios non est facta mulier uiro, ad quod ergo adiutorium facta est? si, quae simul operaretur terram, nondum erat labor, ut adiumento indigeret, et, si opus esset, melius adiutorium

⁸) *Gen. litt.* III, 22. *CSEL* 28, 1, 88-90.

⁹) *Trin.* XII, 7, 10. *CC* 50, 364.

masculus fieret. hoc et de solacio dici potest, si solitudinis fortasse taedebat. quanto enim congruentius ad conuiuendum et conloquendum duo amici pariter quam uir et mulier habitarent? ... quapropter non inuenio, ad quod adiutorium facta sit mulier uiro, si pariendi causa subtrahitur"¹⁰). Adam would have been better helped in his work by another *masculus*, a far more congenial company in his solitude than an inferior woman. The late Antique theme of friendship between equals implies an exclusively male bonding. Reshaped by encratite shunning of sexual activity, this theme persists in the medieval monastic tradition¹¹). A correlative conflict between marital love and heterosexual intercourse is pathetically expressed in Augustine's earlier *De sermone Domini in monte*: "Sic inuenitur bonus christianus diligere in una femina creaturam Dei, quam reformari et renouari desiderat, odisse autem coniunctionem copulationemque corruptibilem atque mortalem, hoc est, diligere in ea quod homo est, odisse quod uxor est"¹²). The refusal of woman as *uxor* is here unaffected by holistic enhancement of *femina* in terms of *homo*. In consequence, Augustine's backdating of women's salvational Godlikeness to the order of creation only *dissociates* spiritual equivalence from female subservience, so that women's subordination in church and society remains normative.

It is important to emphasise that Augustine in *De civitate Dei* introduces a "feminist" exegesis of Eph. 4, 13, with explicit reference to holistic creation. Since femaleness is part of initial human perfection, women will *not* be restored to Christlike humanity by resurrecting as males. Against this traditional theme, Augustine interprets perfect *manhood*, *uir perfectus*, in terms of human fulfilment, with allusion to inclusive *homo* in Gen. 1, 26-27b and referring to *conformatio* in Gen. 2. Because femaleness is part of God's creation, women will be resurrected as female human beings. Nevertheless, Augustine's viewpoint is decidedly androcentric, since he argues that the recreated beauty of female bodies will no longer disturb resurrected human males, henceforth liberated from their sinful concupiscence: "Non est autem uitium sexus femineus, sed natura, quae tunc quidem et a concubitu et a partu immunis erit; erunt tamen membra feminea, non adcommodata usui ueteri, sed decori nouo, quo non alliciatur aspicientis concupiscentia, quae nulla erit, sed Dei laudatur sapientia atque clementia, qui

¹⁰) *Gen. litt.* IX, 5. CSEL 28, 1, 273.

¹¹) Brian Patric McGUIRE, *Friendship & Community*. The Monastic Experience 350 to 1250, Kalamazoo, MI, 1988.

¹²) *Serm. Dom.* I, 15, 41. CC 35, 45.

et quod non erat fecit et liberauit a corruptione quod fecit"¹³). It is significant that Augustine does not discuss women's worldly subordination, which he is consistently eager to affirm as creationally Godwilled. Shall this condition be restored as part of perfect womanhood? Or will female subservience be suppressed together with carnal fecundity?

Augustine's validation of human femaleness invokes traditional typology, where creational gender hierarchy is *transposed* to the order of redemption: Christ as new Adam, church as new Eve. It is important to remember that this role play, which I call "theological sexology", was in fact verbalised at the early doctrinal stage when women's Godlikeness was not yet *backdated* from salvation to creation, by means of patristic "feminist" efforts. In nuptial symbolism, which remains basic both in Roman catholic and Greek orthodox christology and ecclesiology, Eve's instrumental role as Adam's helpmate is reenacted by the church's womanlike dependence on the God-Man, Christ. Theomorphic maleness is here a self-evident premiss, with its corollary exclusion of femaleness at the divine level. Referring to Eph. 5, 32 and II Cor. 11, 2, early church Fathers like Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian elaborate this new Eve in terms of a combined bride/mother, with ancillary relation to the divine agent, andromorphic Christ. It is essential to note that this sponsal imagery clearly exceeds the patriarchal gender hierarchy displayed in Eve's formation *from*, *after* and *for* Adam. The first couple consists of one autonomous and one derived partner, but *both* are human beings. In contrast, the salvational couple features a divinely supreme Lord and humanity as his submissive bride. From a present point of view, traditional typology is quite preposterous in applying Eve's inferior femaleness as *simile* for human dependency on divine omnipotence. Patriarchal gender assymetry is here transformed into manlike, divine hegemony, with resulting enforcement and legitimation of women's *submale* status.

In this perspective, it is important to note that Augustine's application of classical typology has an aspect of what I call "androcentric feminism". Although Adam's unique responsibility for humanity's collective guilt is counteracted through Christ's redemption, Eve's instrumental role in the first sin is also neutralised by the subordinate function of church/Mary as Christ's bride/mother. Christ takes human nature in the form of a *man*, but this incarnation is realised through the intermediary of a *woman*¹⁴). Augustine stresses

¹³) *Civ. Dei* XXII, 17. CC 48, 835.

¹⁴) *Fide symb.* 4, 9. CSEL 41, 12.

that the female element in the order of redemption guarantees the salvation of both sexes: "dominus autem Iesus Christus, qui uenerat ad homines liberandos, in quibus et mares et feminae pertinent ad salutem, nec mares fastidiuit, quia marem suscepit, nec feminas, quia de femina natus est. huc accedit magnum sacramentum, ut, quoniam per feminam nobis mors acciderat, uita nobis per feminam nasceretur: ut de utraque natura, id est feminina et masculina, uictus diabolus cruciaretur, quoniam de ambarum subuersione laetabatur; cui parum fuerat ad poenam, si ambae naturae in nobis liberaremur, nisi etiam per ambas liberaremur"¹⁵). The parallel of Eve and Mary is here invoked with a clear inclusive purpose of validating *both* versions of human nature, female and male. In Augustine's androcentric culture, this application of traditional typology serves to enhance *a priori* inferior femaleness. "Hominis autem liberatio in utroque sexu debuit apparere. Ergo quia uirum oportebat suscipere, qui sexus honorabilior est, consequens erat ut feminei sexus liberatio hinc appareret, quod ille uir de femina natus est"¹⁶). A perfectly adequate verbalisation in patriarchal context, Augustine's "theological sexology" becomes inapplicable when his presupposed gender hierarchy is vanishing. The current survival of traditional typology in both Latin and Greek Godlanguage, christology and ecclesiology is therefore completely anachronistic in post-patriarchal culture, and *irreconcilable* with the actual interpretation of *imago Dei* as fully equivalent in both women and men.

AUGUSTINE'S TRAGEDY

This evaluation of Augustine from a present feminist standpoint invokes some of his mature works, where God's sovereignty is not entirely dependent on humanity's sinful enslavement. Elaine H. Pagels has recently analysed Augustine's struggle against the equally shrewd, but also aristocratic bishop, Julian of Eclanum¹⁷). Based on more scholarly articles, Pagels' new book compares early Christian, gnostic and patristic exegesis of the first couple's creation and fall, concluding with Augustine's emphasis on human bondage, as expressed in his doctrine of original sin. Pagels interprets the differing views of human

¹⁵) *Ag. christ.* XXII, 24. CSEL 41, 124-125.

¹⁶) *Diu. quest.* 11. CC 44A, 18.

¹⁷) Elaine H. PAGELS, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, New York, 1988.

freedom as related to Christianity's changing status from a persecuted to an imperial religion. Her focus on the political *rationale* is quite pertinent, since feelings of guilt favour obedience towards authoritarian government. This aspect should be further explored concerning Augustine's revival as a protestant church Father during the Reformation! Pagels also explains Augustine's doctrinal success and enduring impact by the need to justify human suffering in terms of collective culpability, thus easing individual responsibility for empirical evil. Peter R.L. Brown has recently shown that from the 2nd through the 5th century human freedom is understood to be actualised by means of sexual abstinence, making the ascetic performer Christomorphic¹⁸). In fact, love of God and sexual love are in the Christian tradition considered to be *mutually exclusive* human drives. The different variants of more or less mitigated *Enkrateia*, with malecentred and/or dualistic focus, define Godwilled human perfection as absence of femaleness or corporality. It follows that Adam's initial wholeness and indivisibility is constructed as being all-male or asexual.

In spite of Augustine's rebuke of Gregory of Nyssa's corresponding double creation, his later enforcement of original sin, transmitted though sexual intercourse, maximalises the encratite ousting of sexuality from human perfection. In Augustine's anti-Pelagian polemic, his mancentred biology, where offspring is generated exclusively by male seminal power, serves to illustrate the moral union between sinful Adam and his guilty descendants. Augustine's exegesis of Rom. 5, 12: "in quo omnes peccaverunt", both presupposes and explains humanity's collective *reatus* in terms of seminal transmission. Defined as penalty resulting from Adam's sin, sexual *concupiscentia* also functions as means of contaminating humanity with collective sinfulness, *peccatum originale*, propagated exclusively through paternal seed. Augustine's antithesis Adam-Christ is here strikingly incoherent, since the total engulfing of humanity in original damnation is not counteracted by an equally universal salvation, cf. Rom. 5, 12-21.

In *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine interprets Eve's subordinate and instrumental role in seducing Adam as a *subverted* helpmate performance. Her initiative in tempting preeminent man is therefore injurious to creational gender hierarchy¹⁹). Nevertheless, Adam's status

¹⁸) Peter R.L. BROWN, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York, 1988.

¹⁹) *Gen. litt.* XI, 27; 30; 34. CSEL 28, 1, 359-360; 362-364; 368.

as Godlike human prototype and his consequent greater lucidity makes him *alone* fully responsible for the initial catastrophe. It is important to remember that Augustine emphasises the rational character of the fall, which is motivated by *superbia*, not by sexual attraction²⁰). In his allegorical exegesis, Eve represents the lower human reason, seducing the higher, manlike *ratio*²¹). By firmly excluding carnal *libido* from paradise, Augustine rebukes encratite blending of femaleness and corporality, both cause of and resulting from the first sin. On the other hand, Augustine's growing obsession with *concupiscentia*, culminating in the anti-Pelagian strife, counteracts his persisting evaluation of the body as part of human wholeness: "natura certa tota hominis est spiritus, anima et corpus; quisquis ergo a natura humana corpus alienare uult, desipit"²²).

In defence of Augustine, I call attention to some "feminist" consequences of his insistence on the Adam-Christ priority in sin and redemption. Augustine's mature writings depict Eve as an instrumental, but constant participant in the first catastrophe. In his polemic against Julian of Eclanum, the first woman is eclipsed by the ominous first man. Although Adam and Eve committed the original fault together, humanity is infected both by collective guilt and corporate punishment through Adam alone. It is significant that this disappearance of Eve is not pursued in the post-Augustinian tradition, and even less so in what I call "popular protology", where the first woman remains a main personage. Julian's argumentation invokes Eve in perspicacious ways, thus forcing Augustine to specify Eve's ubiquitous absence. It is important to note that Julian *shares* Augustine's view of Adam as principal agent in the fall, but his biological presuppositions when interpreting Rom. 5, 12 in terms of *imitatio* are less mancentred than those of Augustine. Julian underlines that this text contradicts the theory of seminal transmission, precisely because human procreation is effectuated by *both* parents and not exclusively by paternal seed. In consequence, to safeguard Adam's priority, the only possible interpretation of Rom. 5, 12 is that humanity imitates Adam in disobeying the divine command. Augustine retorts that if *imitatio* is the decisive factor, then it is Eve who is being imitated, according to Eccl. 25, 33: "a muliere initium factum est peccati". This womancentred and

²⁰) *Gen. litt.* XI, 41-42. *CSEL* 28, 1, 376-378.

²¹) *Trin.* XII, 12, 17. *CC* 50, 371-372.

²²) *Nat. orig. anim.* IV, 2, 3. *CSEL* 60, 383.

therefore absurd result of Julian's reasoning is further rebuked by Augustine with reference to androcentric physiology, stressing Adam's generative monopoly *vis-à-vis* Eve as passive receptacle of his seed²³).

Eve is equally featured when Julian discards Augustine's invocation of female suffering as proof for the existence of original sin, with reference to Gen. 3, 16. Julian defines birth-pain as a *natural* disadvantage of the feeble sex, more common in civilised women than in barbarian females, who do not suffer at all during childbirth. Augustine concedes that *feroces agrestesque mulieres* deliver more easily, but even if the intensity of pain varies, the penalty remains. A parallel difference of degree is found among men, who gain their livelihood with more or less difficulty²⁴). The question of male dominance is tricky indeed, since both interlocutors understand gender hierarchy as legitimate and normative. Julian defines female subservience as a natural condition, following women's creational ancillary role. Ingeniously, he insists that men's dominance would be evil if it were a punishment for sin. When Augustine considers male superiority as Godwilled and therefore good, he is in fact denying its penal quality. Augustine is here fought with his own weapons, and his reply is markedly evasive: "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". Against Julian, Augustine wants to demonstrate the existence of original sin by pointing to its penal effects. On the other hand, he refuses to define female subordination as a punishment, since gender hierarchy would then lose its normative value. Rather illogically, he suggests that women's secondary status is part of the creational order, but expressly mentioned only after the fall. Nevertheless, Augustine's use of the term *supplicium* is here inaccurate, given its penal connotation²⁵). Julian is further pressing Augustine to justify the lack of orgasm in paradise. The problem is quite empirical, since concomitant emission of seed is necessary for procreation in terms of *bonum originale*. According to Galen's two-seed theory, where the female component is subordinately active, creational *libido* is required also for Eve. Julian wants to demonstrate that if human perfection includes orgasmic capacity, Augustine's use of libidinous *concupiscentia* as crown witness for human degradation through original sin is

²³) *C. Iul. op. impf.* II, 56; III, 88. CSEL 85, 1, 203-205; 414-416.

²⁴) *C. Iul. op. impf.* VI, 29. PL 45, 1577-1579.

²⁵) *C. Iul. op. impf.* VI, 26. PL 45, 1561-1566, citation 1566.

obsolete. In a rather *chevaleresque* manner (and with Galenic connotation), Augustine avoids male investigation of female pleasure: "utrum autem utriusque sexus semina in muliebri utero cum uoluptate misceantur, uiderint feminae quid in secretis uisceribus sentiant; nos non decet inaniter usque ad ista esse curiosos"²⁶). Challenged by Julian, Augustine has to modify the theory of rationally controlled, coital acrobatics in paradise, as described in *De civitate Dei*²⁷). Instead of impregnation without prerequisite orgasm, Augustine reluctantly accepts a voluntarily released *uoluptas*, but strictly limited to procreative finality: "hanc si placet uobis in paradiso collocare et per talem concupiscentiam carnis, quae nec praeueniret nec tardaret nec excederet imperium uoluntatis, uobis uidetur in illa felicitate filios potuisse generari, non repugnamus"²⁸).

IMITATING AUGUSTINE

Augustine's doctrine is profoundly Christocentric, Adam's hegemony both in the fall and in the transmission of its disastrous consequences, is determined by Christ's role as unique Redemptor. In fact, Augustine's holistic protology imposes a serious problem of *théodicée*. Rejecting an evil suprahuman principle, he has to blame empirical suffering on humanity itself. Augustine is consequently more concerned with defending God's sovereignty and justice than promoting divine mercy. Contrary to Pagels, I would stress that Augustine, even in his later tragic phase, is more eager to safeguard divine liberty than to damage human freedom. I would add that Augustine's insistence on the ambivalence and complexity of human emotional drives is more realistic than the previous variants preferred by Pagels. I do definitely not share Brown's fascination with late Antique ascetic equilibrium, performed as salvational selfhelp. The presupposed concepts of human freedom, resulting from a distorting rift between Godlove and sexually expressed partnerlove, are from my feminist standpoint completely unacceptable. Augustine's true tragedy is that he is caught in this same conflict, so accurately described by Brown and Pagels, and which remains tragically unsolved in traditional

²⁶) *Nupt. concup.* II, 13, 26. CSEL 42, 279.

²⁷) *Civ. Dei* XIV, 24; 26. CC 48, 446-448; 449-450.

²⁸) *C. duas ep. pel.* I, 17, 35. CSEL 60, 451.

Christianity. Thank God, Augustine's desperate anti-Pelagian teaching was never uniformly transmitted by subsequent Latin tradition. A divine election of *massa perditionis* would in fact have obstructed the church as sacramental salvation instrument, so prominent in Augustine's mature ecclesiology.

In my 20th-century, frankly anachronistic, evaluation of Augustine, I distinguish between his imitable *intention* and his partly inapplicable doctrinal *content*. Augustine's many logical inconsistencies regarding the nature and role of women result precisely from his ceaseless striving to insert them in a doctrinal and symbolic framework where femaleness is deviant and/or alien, by differing from exemplary male or sexless humanity. Augustine's defence of human wholeness and holistic creation, defining *femina* as *homo* is imitable, his androcentric insistence of Eve's *raison d'être* as Adam's derived helpmate is in contrast inapplicable. Augustine's defence of human fecundity as creationally good, i.e. *bonum originale*, is imitable, his estrangement of sexual gratification from human love is not only inapplicable, but perfectly damaging. Augustine's ingenious device of *bene uti malo*, i.e. to neutralise bad concupiscence by good procreative intent, aggravated previous patristic sexology, where carnal intercourse was stoically limited to procreation. This refurbishing could be fairly innocuous in Augustine's biosocial context, since women's control of their own fertility was as theoretically unthinkable as practically unfeasible. When Augustinian continence is rehearsed today with a completely reversed *rationale*, connecting marital love and fruitfulness, the encratite scope of reducing sexual activity as much as possible remains unaltered. For Augustine, *amor* and *coitus* were incompatible, since affection between spouses required sexless marriage. Paradoxically, the present *magisterium's* promotion of women's periodic infertility contradicts Augustine's explicit condemnation of the same Manichaean device²⁹).

The strong survival of Augustine's female *raison d'être*, creationally restricted to motherhood or salvationally confined to virginity, proves even more paralysing. Such androcentric dualism is in magisterial documents disguised as "complementarity", a contradiction in terms since existential autonomy persists as an exclusively male prerogative. In spite of Augustine's mancentred emphasis on the paternal seed as sole transmitter of human life, traditional theological anthropology has never defined men's existence as divinely ordained to

²⁹) *Mor. eccl. cath.* II, 18, 65. PL 32, 1372. *C. Faust.* XV, 7. CSEL 25, 1, 429.

fatherhood. Given the present collapse of patriarchal sociobiology in Western civilisation, superseded ecclesiastical insistence on women's maternal priority has little effect, except when interfering with legislation. Terrified by his sexual drives, Augustine dreamed of rational wilfulness in paradise. For the first time in human history, women do not need reverting to *status innocentiae* in order to achieve reproductive selfdetermination, finally made possible by the 20th-century biological revolution.

In this context of actualised equivalence, Augustine's continuous effort to give women fully human status by inserting them as Godlike already from creation, provides a model of theological inculturation. Patriarchal gender hierarchy, which in his society was affirmed as normative *a priori*, is here corrected by God's *enhancement* of women's humanity, in spite of their inferior femaleness. From a present feminist standpoint, Augustine's "feminism" appears thwarted by his male-centred spiritualism. Defeminised equality by means of sexless *imago Dei* is today overcome by updated, inclusive definition of Godlikeness as equally pertaining to women and men, in their holistic diversity. It is essential to remember that this *aggiornamento* builds upon patristic "feminism". On the contrary, theomorphic maleness and genderfree privilege survive unchanged in traditional Godlanguage, since God is still described as andromorphic or metasexual. Augustine's protological unity, where *femina* is *homo*, can therefore serve as corrective paradigm for the needed *reinculturation* of theology. When both women and men are created in God's image, God must correspondingly be described with both male and female metaphors. The most distorting incoherence between Godlanguage and culture persists in the current enforcement of traditional typology. The salvational couple: new Adam-new Eve, dominate both Greek orthodox and Roman catholic core doctrine and symbolism. This relic from the early Christian stage of male Godlikeness, where women attain Christomorphic humanity by redemptive transformation into perfect manhood, remains fundamental in christology and ecclesiology. The refusal of ordaining women to the priesthood because of *impedimentum sexui* presupposes female incapacity of acting *in persona Christi*, since women do not possess christomorphic Godlikeness. The basic incompatibility between Godhead and femaleness excludes women from performing cultic mediation between God and humanity. Today, the majority of Christendom remains trapped in this *cul de sac*. Augustine's "feminist" application of typology can here inspire an escape. Imitating Augustine's inclusive

intention, but disregarding his androcentric premiss of male superiority, Christ's incarnation has to be reinterpreted in the sense of human fulness. It is important to stress Christ's gendered particularity as a necessary consequence of his embodied *condition humaine*, without androgynous fiction.

A correlated reformulation of ecclesiology is imposed by the actual disappearance of patriarchal plausibility structure, making typology's bridal imagery meaningless. In this situation, the obsolete new Eve of present mariology tries in vain to perpetuate superseded gender hierarchy³⁰). Mary as model for inverted female power, exercised through subservience, proves suspiciously akin to Mediterranean "mammismo", as featured in Augustine's manipulating mother Monnica. When Christianity became a mass religion, ethnological Mary emerged as a Goddess in disguise, to counterbalance andromorphic and/or metasexual monotheism. Happily enough, this venture was never theologically endorsed by Mary's divinisation. Nevertheless, recent pontifical definitions of Mary as *mater ecclesiae* react against the second Vatican council's return to patristic mariology, where Mary participates in the church's bridal maternity³¹). This attempt to monopolise the new Eve on Mary's behalf can be dismantled by reverting to Augustine's concept of the church as *mater ecclesia*, where Mary is an eminent member: "Sancta Maria, beata Maria, sed melior est ecclesia quam virgo Maria"³²).

The fundamental exclusion of femaleness at the divine level persists as main barrier for holistic human Godlanguage. Atypical use of female metaphors describing God or Christ in the Christian tradition can be used as startingpoint for a new theology. On the other hand, it is important to stress that gender hierarchy is normally upheld by attributing metaphorical womanhood to God's maternal mercy or Christ's human nature. God's sovereign justice or Christ's divine nature are consistently described as andromorphic, so that male hegemony persists unaffected³³). In her original trinitarian discourse, the late

³⁰) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, *Anthropologie médiévale et théologie mariale*, Oslo, 1971.

³¹) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, Marie dans la théologie catholique, in *Concilium* 19 (1983), 93-106. Slightly revised in Elisabeth MOLTSMANN-WENDEL, Hans KÜNG, Jürgen MOLTSMANN (eds.), *Was geht uns Maria an?*, Gütersloh, 1988, 72-87.

³²) *S. Denis*, 25, 7, 8. MAI, 162-164, citation 163.

³³) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, L'usage patristique de métaphores féminines dans le discours sur Dieu, in *Revue théologique de Louvain* 13 (1982) 205-220. God's Image, Man's Image? Female metaphors describing God in the Christian Tradition, in *Temenos* 19 (1983) 93-106.

medieval recluse Julian of Norwich starts from traditional formulations of Christ's womanlike human nature, as in Anselm of Canterbury's rehearsal of Augustine. Here Christ's comparing himself with a mother-hen in Matt. 23, 37 is combined with Paul's birthing in Gal. 4, 19, focussing their mixed fatherly authority and motherly affection: "Habet enim paternam auctoritatem, maternum affectum; sicut et Paulus et pater est et mater est"³⁴). Julian reconstructs Godlanguage by *transposing* Christ's motherhood to the preexistent level of triune Godhead³⁵). With this innovative theology, Julian metaphorically feminises the *divine*: "the second person of the trinity is our Mother in nature in our substantial creation, in whom we are founded and rooted, and he is our Mother of mercy in taking our sensuality"³⁶). Julian equally transposes her concept of divine wholeness to the *human* level, since initial creation and redemptional incarnation unify the spiritual and bodily elements of humanity. Julian's new Godlanguage thereby transcends the combined androcentric and dualistic split in traditional discourse. In contrast to Augustine, Julian affirms God's sovereignty in terms of maternal mercy, as an all-embracing election of what could be labelled "massa salvationis". Her concept of divine motherhood is expressly elaborated in order to verbalise her fundamental trust in God's universal salvation: "I will make all things well, I shall make all things well, I may make all things well; and you will see that yourself, that all things will be well"³⁷). A main achievement of Julian's new Godlanguage is to provide a divinised human model for female Godlikeness, thereby correcting androcentric typology. To divinise Mary is heresy. To feminise the Godhead as metaphorically both gynecomorphic and andromorphic *quoad nos* makes Christian theology a fully human discourse, reflecting both male and female experience.

In this perspective, I find Otto Scheel's negative evaluation of Augustine ironically off the mark: "Augustin war nicht eine eigentlich schöpferische Natur. Es prävaliert bei ihm nicht die Energie des

³⁴) *Enarr. in Ps. CI*, I, 8. CC 40, 1431. Anselm, *Oratio* 10. *Opera* II, 3, 39-41.

³⁵) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, Christ, notre mère, la théologie de Julienne de Norwich, in *Mitteilungen und Forschungs-Beiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 13 (1978) 320-329.

³⁶) Showings, ch. 58 (long version), Edmund COLLEDGE, James WALSH (eds.), *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich* 2, Toronto, 1978, 586. Translation from Middle English in Edmund COLLEDGE, James WALSH (eds.), *Julian of Norwich. Showings*, New York, 1978, 294.

³⁷) Showings, ch. 15 (short version). *Ibid.* 1, Toronto, 1978, 249. Translation, New York, 1978, 151.

Willens, sondern die Hingebung eines weiblich organisierten Gemüts. Seine Christologie hat keine wirklich neuen Momente in die christliche Theologie eingeführt"³⁸). Scheel's presumption that female-gendered Godlanguage lacks creativity is clearly refuted by Julian of Norwich and other church Mothers³⁹). Against Scheel, I would argue that Augustine's theology is a typical example of male-gendered verbalisation. His justification of God's sovereign justice has proved a doctrinal dead end, especially by transmitting encratite anxiety. On the contrary, Augustine's mature defence of God's creative goodness in terms of holistic protology makes him a model of theological inculturation. Only when we imitate his inclusive intention, without repeating his tragic content, can Augustine thrive as constructor of *sana doctrina*.

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³⁸) *Die Anschauung Augustins über Christi Person und Werk*, Leipzig, 1901, 464.

³⁹) Kari Elisabeth BØRRESEN, Women's Studies of the Christian Tradition, in Raymond KLIBANSKY, Guttorm FLØISTAD (eds.), *La philosophie du Ve au XVe siècle* 6,2. Dordrecht, 1990, 901-1002.