

FORMA PETRI - PETRUS, FIGURA ECCLESIAE: THE USES OF PETER

Professor van Bavel's studies have probed Augustine's Christology and his monastic rule. Over the years my own studies have for the most part revolved around ecclesiological questions in general and issues of doctrinal authority in particular. During these years, Augustine has loomed large for obvious reasons but, in addition, because of involvement in ecumenical discussions in the United States, I have also made a close study of the letters of the Roman bishops up to the time of Gregory the Great¹). From these divergent paths comes this hybrid study which attempts to relate the Leonine phrase *Forma Petri* and Augustine's use of Peter as a figure of the Church.

What is to be said of Augustine's use of the word *forma*? Herbert Frohnhofen has written a brief study²) of the phrase *Forma Petri* up through the writings of Leo the Great. His article includes both the general philological background and a search for the use of the phrase in earlier Christian literature. According to Frohnhofen the polyvalent word *forma* was used to express the following: 1) the outward shape or appearance; 2) the inner shape, nature, character; 3) example, especially in the meaning of prototype or *typos*, with a relationship to meanings such as image, likeness, or sign. Further, *forma* can be related to: 4) status or state; 5) norm, rule, custom or law; and finally, 6) (rarely) a pronouncement of judgment.

Examples of all these meanings can be found in Leo, states Frohnhofen. He adds a further significant meaning: 7) order of rank, a meaning found in *ep.* 14. 11³). As for the phrase *Forma Petri*, only one instance is cited in the earlier literature, viz. in Tertullian's *De ieiunio* (10. 5). Speaking in the context of a discussion of the hours of prayer,

¹) E.G. «Doctrinal Authority in St. Augustine», *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981), pp. 133-172; «Some Elements in the Pre-History of Papal Infallibility», in EMPIE and BURGESS, ed., *Teaching Authority and Infallibility* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1980), pp. 238-58; 344-51.

²) Herbert FROHNHOFEN, «'Forma' und 'Forma Petri'. Anmerkungen zu ihrer Bedeutungsgeschichte bis zu Papst Leo dem Grossen», *TThZ* 95 (1986), pp. 208-217.

³) Leo *Ep.* 14. 11 *PL* 54. 676, «De qua forma episcoporum quoque est orta distinctio»; Tertullian *De ieiunio* 10. 5. *CCSL* 2. 1267.

Tertullian invoked the example of Peter's going to pray at the sixth hour (Acts 10. 9).

Leo himself used the phrase *Forma Petri* in two sermons and in exactly the same wording (ss. 4. 3 and 83. 2). *Transiuit quidem etiam in alios apostolos ius istius potestatis (et ad omnes Ecclesiae principes decreti hujus constitutio commeavit) sed non frustra uni commendatur quod omnibus intimetur. Petro enim ideo hoc singulariter creditur quia cunctis Ecclesiae rectoribus Petri forma proponitur*⁴). Frohnhofen interprets this usage in the special Leonine meaning he earlier delineated above, viz. n° 7 «order of rank» with notable emphasis, of course, on Peter's pre-eminent rank in the Church, placed as he is over all the other *rectores* in the Church. Making this much more explicit, I can see in this expression the idea of Peter as authority figure, connected intimately with the Roman church, endowing it with both its scriptural and historical justification for its supreme authority in the Church and at the same time expressing the inner nature of the Church as an authoritarian and (for the Romans) centralized structure.

I looked in vain for similar usages of this expression in later Roman letters through those of Gregory the Great. I found a variety of uses of the word *forma* but not explicitly *Forma Petri*. To cite a few instances: Others were urged or ordered to follow the example and the leadership of the Roman see, as when Pope Felix (483-492) wrote to Thalasio, an archimandrite of Constantinople, noting that, as in his profession of the Catholic faith he followed the «form» of the Apostolic see, so he must follow the example of Peter⁵).

For his successor Gelasius (492-496), the Roman way and faith are the way and the faith of Tradition which must be followed: the *forma* and *traditio* of the ancestors; *forma traditionis antiquae; secundum veterum formam*. And, as noted, this «ecclesiastical form», this «ancient tradition» and «old form» were all those of the apostolic see⁶).

Such expressions and variations on them were common enough

⁴) Leo *Tract.* 4. 3 and 83. 2. *CCSL* 138. 19; 138A. 520; *SC* 200. 62, 270-272. The phrase in parentheses is found in *Tr.* 4. 3, but not 83. 2.

⁵) Felix *Ep.* 16 JK 614 Thiel *Epistolae romanorum pontificum genuinae...*, p. 274.

⁶) Gelasius *Ep.* 12. 9 JK 632 Thiel, pp. 356-57. «Forma and Traditio». Letter to the emperor Anastasius. «Forma Traditionis» *Ep.* 18. 4 JK 678 Thiel, p. 385; *CSEL* 35. 466-467 (Collectio Avellana); Letter to the bishops of Dardania. «Secundum veterum formam»: *Ep.* 26. 6 JK 664 Thiel, p. 402; *CSEL* 35. 383. A letter to the bishops of Dardania; *Ep.* 14. 1 JK 636 Thiels, p. 362. A letter to the bishops of central Italy. «Ecclesiastical form»: *Ep.* 6. 5 JK 621 Thiel, p. 330; *CSEL* 35. 363.

but the one I found the most intriguing comes from an early letter of Pope Vigilius, from the period before his own prolonged time of troubles in Constantinople. In a letter to Profuturus of Braga (538), he insisted that no believer could be ignorant of the fact that «the Roman church was the foundation (*fundamentum*) and the *forma* of the churches, from which all the churches have taken their beginning»⁷). In one form or another, expressions about the Roman church as the foundation and point of origin of other churches, especially the western churches, go back quite a way. Already in *ep.* 59. 14 (a.d. 252), Cyprian in a much discussed phrase had spoken of the *ecclesia principalis, unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est*. But in what sense is the Roman church the *forma ecclesiarum*? Within Frohnhofen's spectrum of meanings of *forma*, the intent surely is to stress subordination and command. All churches come from Peter/Rome and are subordinate to the Roman church. There is as well a strong note of exhortation to imitation as well as to obedience.

While all the Apostles were chosen in similar fashion, Vigilius continued, Peter was pre-eminent over all the others. His original name was Cephas and he was head (*caput*)⁸) and *princeps* of all the Apostles. *Quod in capite praecessit, in membris sequi necesse est. Quamobrem sancta Romana ecclesia eius merito Domini voce consecrata et sanctorum Patrum auctoritate roborata, primatum tenet omnium ecclesiarum*. One need not be a philological specialist to see that in the Roman sources, of which Vigilius' letter is typical, references to Peter will unfailingly be reminders of the authority of the Roman church.

FORMA IN AUGUSTINE

The next step in this inquiry was to see if there were similar usages of the word *forma* in Augustine. It should be noted that the issue is simply that of a similarity of usage, not of identity of usage since the phrase *Forma Petri* is not to be found in Augustine. The question then is not whether Augustine was a source for or an influence upon the later Roman usage. It involves a comparison of how the Roman sources and

⁷) Vigilius *Ep.* 1. 7 JK 907 PL 69. 19. Cyprian *Ep.* 59. 14. Bayard, ed. (Budé ed.), vol. 2, 183.

⁸) Optatus of Milevis *Contra Parmenianum* II. 2 CSEL 26. 36-37. See Y. CONGAR, «Cephas-Cephale-Caput», *Études d'ecclésiologie médiévale* (London, Variorum, 1983), originally published in 1952.

Augustine both use the word *forma* in connection with Peter and his role in the Church. Are these analogous uses? Thanks to the Augustinus-Institut of Würzburg and its staff, I found that there are no fewer than 1486 references to the word *forma* (singular only) in the works of Augustine. As will be argued shortly, the word *figura* is also essential here. There are some 770 references to it in the works of Augustine! Attention should be called once again to the effect that conscious or unconscious preoccupation with scriptural vocabulary so often has on theological terminology in these passages⁹).

Many of the usages of the word *forma* by Augustine are connected with scriptural texts, above all citations of, and allusions to, the kenotic passage in Phil 2. 6-7, the contrast between Jesus in *forma Dei* and in *forma servi*. Such references to Phil take up more than one third of all the references to the word *forma* in Augustine. *Forma* here translates the Greek *morphe*. Not surprisingly such texts are found with exceptional frequency in the Trinitarian and anti-Arian writings. A second, related scriptural text, much less frequent, but appearing in similar contexts, is the reference to Ps. 44. 3 (45. 2): *Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum*. There are also a fair number of references to Rom 5. 14, to Adam as the *forma futuri* (tupos).

Without entering into every detail, many of the usages of the word *forma* delineated by Frohnhofen can also be found in Augustine. For example, the usage of *forma* in the meaning of example. It should be noted that Augustine's writings contain some eleven references to 1 Pt 3. 21. *Quod et vos nunc similis formae (antitupos) salvos facit baptisma...* (Speaking in the context of the flood). But frequently the usage of *forma* is simply a moralistic one as in 1 Tm 4. 12: *Exemplum esto fidelium*. To monks, Augustine stressed that while Paul was not obliged to do physical labor to support himself, he did so to give good example¹⁰).

How Christians are to act is spelled out in the portrayal of the earliest Christian community of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles. Good ministers are meant to be an example to the faithful, stirring them to imitation. The *forma vivendi* will be given to others when Christ's ministers practice what they preach. The apostle John is an

⁹) FROHNHOFEN, *art. cit.*, p. 209 note 5, refers to J. DOIGNON, «La trilogie FORMA, FIGURA, EXEMPLUM, transposition du grec TYPOS dans la tradition ancienne du texte latin de saint Paul», *Latomus* 17 (1958), pp. 329-349.

¹⁰) Augustine *De opere monachorum* III. 4 CSEL 41. 537. See also *De Trinitate* VIII. 9. 13 CCL 50. 290.

example for virgins while Donatist «martyrs» would do better to take the real, i.e. Catholic, martyrs as their models¹¹).

Similarly, Augustine used the word *forma* in the meaning of custom or tradition. In the case of the disputed episcopal succession at Caesarea in Mauretania, alluded to in the Divjak letters, Augustine protests that it is still too early to condemn Honorius according to ecclesiastical practice (*forma*). When speaking of Judas and his purse, Augustine defends the custom of keeping a Church fund to help those in need. A somewhat apologetic Donatist bishop in an early and rare discussion with Augustine c. 397, admitted that it was the established practice to rebaptize Catholics who came over to them. But, as Augustine so often stressed, established practice was not sufficient reason in itself for continuing to do something otherwise very questionable. Cyprian's own views were at odds with the practice of the Church¹²).

Beyond these common and expected usages, there are others that are more peculiar to Augustine. In his earlier work, when he was more newly formed by his philosophical studies, he seemed to make use of *forma* in a more directly Platonic fashion. For example, in the *De musica*, he stated that Truth is the *forma omnium* or, at least, the *forma verorum*. The Logos is also the *forma omnium*, the Truth. From the point of view of living, the ten commandments furnish the *forma vivendi*. Perhaps some of the few later uses of this vague sense of *forma* can also be so categorized, as, for example, in *s. Guelf* 12. 1 where he characterized the resurrection of Jesus as the *forma christianae fidei*. Or again, when he calls the indwelling Spirit the «form of all things»¹³).

Another usage of *forma* found in Augustine is primarily concerned with marriage. Almost all of the relevant texts are found in the treatise *De coniugiis adulterinis* from the years 419-421 and concern the unpopular doctrine (for men) of the equality of obligations and

¹¹) «Example of earliest community»: *Sermo* 356. 1 *PL* 39. 1574. «Good ministers» «Forma fidelibus», a reference to 1 Pt 5.3? *Conf.* XIII. 21. 30 *CCSL* 27. 258; «Forma vivendi»: *De doct. chr.* IV. 29. 61 *CCSL* 32. 165; «Apostle John»: *Contra Faustum* XXX. 4 *CSEL* 25/1. 752; «Donatist Martyrs»: *Contra litt. Pet.* II. 87. 193 *CSEL* 52. 119.

¹²) *Ep.* 23*. 2 *CSEL* 88. 121; *BA* 46B. 368 «Ecclesiastical practice»; «Church fund»: *Tract.* LXII. 5 *CCSL* 36. 485; «Apologetic Donatist» *Ep.* 44. 12 *CSEL* 34. 119; «Cyprian's views»: *Ep.* 93. 38 *CSEL* 34. 482.

¹³) *De musica* IV. 5. 6 *PL* 32. 1131 «Forma omnium»; «Forma verorum»; «Logos as forma omnium»: *De vera religione* XXXVI. 66; XLIII. 81; LV. 113 *CCSL* 32. 231, 241, 259-260; «Forma vivendi»: *De mor. eccl. cath.* XXX. 62 *PL* 32. 1336; «Forma christianae fidei»: *S. Guelf* 12. 1 (*S.* 229H) *MA* 1. 479; «Indwelling Spirit»: *S.* 264. 4 *PL* 38. 1216.

restrictions for both partners in the marital state (*par forma*). It is part of Augustine's life-long struggle against the sexual double standard. «Therefore the husband must avoid entering a path of conduct which he may fear his wife will follow in imitation. However, there are some who are not pleased at the fact that in the matter of chastity, there is a single norm (*forma*) for both husband and wife. In this matter, particularly, they would rather be subject to the standards of the world than the law of Christ, because civil law does not seem to restrict men with the same bonds of chastity as it does women»¹⁴). The same point is made in other places where *forma* may be variously understood as «rule» or «pattern».

The anti-Pelagian controversy, especially its last bitter years of the polemical exchanges with Julian of Eclanum, brought its own use of *forma*, concerned with the highly-charged meaning of Adam as «example». The Pauline view of Adam as the *forma futuri* (Rom 5. 14) could be viewed in two ways. The primary and more traditional meaning earlier used by Augustine himself lay in Paul's own intuition of Christ as the New Adam, the one who was to come. But, in the Pelagian context, it could be argued, not as Pelagius had, that all sin is in imitation of Adam, but that all human beings are born infected by sin because of Adam. In one of his last works, the *Opus imperfectum* against Julian (429-430), Julian is shown frequently contesting this view of Adam as the deadly *forma futuri*. In this exchange, Augustine continued to contrast the influence of the first and the second Adam. The contrast here is not between imitating Adam by sin and imitating Christ but between being born in Adam and then reborn in Christ¹⁵).

One of the most interesting of Augustine's uses of the word *forma* is in the sacramental context. The interest stems in part from the later developments in scholastic theology in which the Aristotelian matter-form distinction was adopted as a framework for sacramental theology. Augustine's usage, as will be seen, had considerably more to do with Scripture, especially the text of 2 Tm 3. 5: *Habentes speciem (formam) pietatis, virtutem autem eius abnegantes*. (Morphosis vs. dunamis).

¹⁴) «Par forma»: *De coniugiis adulterinis* II. 8. 7 CSEL 41. 389; «Rule»: *De sermone Domini in Monte* I. 43 CCSL 35. 48; «Pattern»: *De div. quaest. LXXXIII. Q. 83* CCSL 44A. 249; see also *De bono coniugali* XIII. 15 CSEL 41. 207; *De coniug. adult.* I. 5. 5; I. 8. 8; II. 2. 2; II. 19. 20 CSEL 41. 352, 355, 383, 407.

¹⁵) *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II. 4. 9 CSEL 60. 135; *Contra Iulianum* I. 27; VI. 9 PL 44. 659, 826; *Opus imperfectum in Iulianum* II. 56, 67, 189 CSEL 85/1. 204, 212, 306; *Idem* II. 177, 190, 192, 214. CSEL 85/1. 297, 307-08, 323.

Obviously the text lends itself to Augustine's rapidly developing views of the status of the sacraments among the schismatic Donatists.

In one of his earliest efforts against them, the *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, Augustine explained the Catholic refusal to rebaptize converts from Donatism this way: «Not because we see you as holy, but that you have kept the *forma* (only). The branch although cut off and destined to shrivel up and die has also kept the *forma*. This will do no good unless it can be restored to the root». In terms of later theology, Donatist baptisms were valid but inefficacious. The same held true for the Luciferians. Referring many times to the terminology of 2 Tm 3. 5, he stressed that they had the *forma* but not the *virtus*. The form by itself was useless. Simon Magus had the *forma sacramenti* since he was baptized but definitely not the *virtus*. The Donatists too had the *forma* but denied its power by remaining aloof and separated¹⁶).

The missing *virtus* is not simply outward affiliation with the Catholic Church. Schism means cutting oneself off from the love of Christ which is the life's blood of the Body of Christ. Severing links with the Church means that you do not have the love of Christ, that you no longer adhere to Christ with a spiritual love, that you have put on Christ outwardly but do not follow his example, in his footsteps. In Pauline imagery, the severed branch must be grafted back on to the vine to regain its source of life in the root. In a striking phrase, Augustine summed up this sacramental teaching for a Donatist opponent: «The form of the sacrament is given through baptism; the form of justice (i.e. justification) through the Gospel; one without the other does not lead to the kingdom of Heaven»¹⁷).

The root is more often specified as charity or love. «You have the form but you are a branch cut off from the vine; you show the form; I am looking for the root. The fruit is not produced by the form except where the root is; but where is the root except in charity?». Another example of the occasional interchangeability of *forma* and *figura* can be seen in a text from *ep.* 232. 3 in which Augustine states that schismatic

¹⁶) *Psalmus contra partem Donati* vss. 230-236. BA 28. 182; «Luciferians»: *De agone christiano* XXX. 32 CSEL 41. 134; «Form alone useless»: *Contra litt. Pet.* I. 17. 18; 23. 25 CSEL 52. 14, 19-20; «Simon magus»: *Sermo frag. Lambot* (S. 229U. 1) *RevBen* 79. 211; *Ep. ad Catholicos* XIII. 34 CSEL 52. 276.

¹⁷) «No love of Christ»: *S. Denis* 8. 2 MA 1. 36; «No spiritual love»: *Comm. in Gal.* 38 PL 35. 2132; «Follow footsteps»: *S.* 37. 16 CSEL 41. 461; *S.* 269. 3 PL 38. 1236; «severed branch»: *Contra Cresconium* II. 1. 14 CSEL 52. 372; *Ep.* 87. 9 CSEL 34. 405; «Form of Justice»: *Contra litt. Pet.* III. 56. 68 CSEL 52. 222.

groups, insofar as they have any credibility, or indeed, any life whatsoever, live on *de sola figura originis*¹⁸).

A final, additional feature of this reasoning about the *forma sacramenti* can be seen in certain texts using the verb *formare*. It had been a patristic tradition to see in the blood and water from the pierced side of Christ on Calvary a prefiguring of the primary ecclesial sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments by which, as Augustine put it, the Church is formed. As Eve was created from the side of the sleeping Adam in Paradise according to Genesis, so the Church was formed from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death on Calvary¹⁹).

FROM *FORMA* TO *FIGURA*

Studying Augustine one sees that the ecclesiological uses of *forma* are more limited than those of *figura*. Typology, prefiguring, for Augustine were part of the complex method by which the Old Testament was read and interpreted in the light of Christ. The system, if it can be called that, had been developing for a long time with a variety of emphases, but the problematic of someone like Marcion as well as the arguments of Jewish polemicists had shown the need for some kind of spiritualizing hermeneutic which would enable Christians to lay claim to the Jewish scriptures as the profound heritage of the Christian Church, itself long since overwhelmingly of Gentile origin. To see in the Old Testament the prefiguring of the New, the revelation of the Father of Jesus Christ more often than not proclaimed in mystical and obscure terms - this was the challenge for the Christian exegete.

Individuals and things could be viewed as types and figures of the clear truth found in the teaching of Jesus and the Church. The shadow and clouds of Antiquity gave way to the bright sunshine of the Christian era. Obscure prefigurings were now fulfilled. As Augustine put it: «This manner of interpretation which has come down to us with apostolic authority, reveals to us how we are to understand the Scriptures of the two Covenants, the old and the new». He comments

¹⁸) «Charity is the root»: *Tract.* XIII. 16 *CCSL* 36. 139, reference as well to 1 Cor 13. 2. See also *ep. Io. tr.* II. 9 *PL* 35. 1994; «de sola figura originis»: *Ep.* 232. 3 *CSEL* 57. 513.

¹⁹) *Tract.* IX. 10 *CCSL* 36. 96; *S.* 218. 14 *PL* 38. 1087; *En. in Ps.* 138. 2 *CCSL* 40. 1991; *Tract.* XV. 8 *CCSL* 36. 153.

on the sacrifice of Abraham: «It means Christ, but all wrapped up and hidden, tied up in riddles». *Praefigurabantur omnia mystice*. On another occasion he concludes: «Therefore it is a mystery, a sacrament, a prophecy, a figure; therefore let us try to understand». This is the general problematic with a general methodology for approaching it, uncovering the mysteries foreshadowed²⁰).

For Augustine, however, a *figura* is not always so complex. A single aspect of some person, thing or action in the Old Testament may be seen as reminiscent of, or similar to, that of a New Testament person and the former can be claimed as a *figura* of the latter. «One thing can be indicated in many different ways». Numerology was also part of this picture. One of the favorite exercises was to interpret the 153 fish caught in the post-resurrection scene in Jn 21. Augustine comments: «In this number, as in others, having a variety of aspects, a marvelous mystery is revealed»²¹).

As Doignon has shown, there is a link, even a certain interchangeability, depending upon context, between *forma* and *figura*. The Samaritan woman for example (Jn 4), is referred to both as a *forma ecclesiae iustificandae* and as being a type of the Church. The link is seen also in the Pelagian debate when Augustine was torn between two interpretations of Adam as the *forma futuri* (Rom 5. 14). Christ was to be the one «who is to come», the second Adam, but the first Adam, the sinner, was also the *forma futuri* who brought death to his descendants. Adam was a figure of the Christ to come but Christ brought the form of life whereas Adam brought the form of death. And it was Julian who saw in Sarah a figure of the Church, *quae ecclesiae formam tenebat*. So, there are philological as well as theological reasons for affirming the real relationship between an expression like *forma ecclesiae* or *forma Petri* and Augustine's more common usage of the notion of *figurae ecclesiae*²²).

²⁰) There are many studies of patristic exegesis and typology. For example: Jean DANIELOU, *From Shadows to Reality*, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers (Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1960); Robert M. GRANT, *The Letter and the Spirit* (London, S.P.C.K., 1957); Manlio SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o Allegoria*, Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica (Studia Ephemeridis 'Augustinianum' 23) (Roma, Augustinianum, 1985). «Apostolic authority»: *De civ. Dei* XV. 2 CCSL 48. 455; «All wrapped up»: II En. in Ps. 30 S. 2. 9 CCSL 38. 209 (English translation by Edmund HILL, *Nine Sermons of Saint Augustine on the Psalms* (London, Longmans, Green, 1958), p. 130; «omnia mystice»: *Tract. IX*. 10 CCSEL 36. 96-97; «Try to understand»: S. 122. 3 PL 38. 682; S. Lambot 11 PLS 2. 796.

²¹) «One thing»: S. 4. 25 CCSL 41. 38; «Marvelous mystery»: *Ep.* 55. 31 CSEL 34. 206.

²²) See DOIGNON, art. referred to in note 9. «Samaritan woman»: *Tract. XV*. 10

FIGURAE ECCLESIAE

In Augustine's works, above all in the sermons and in the *Enarrationes*, Peter is cited as a *figura* of the Church. Although he is the one mentioned most frequently, he is far from being the only individual person or thing so characterized. A rapid look at these *figurae ecclesiae* other than Peter shows that some particular characteristic or context inspired Augustine to name that person or thing a *figura ecclesiae*.

These *figurae* are not confined narrowly within the limits of some precise theory of scriptural typology or allegorical exegesis. His pastoral and homiletic usage could be much simpler. As Augustine explained to his people, a lion is not a lamb and Christ is neither lion nor lamb in a literal sense but certain characteristics of lions, lambs and rocks are appropriately ascribed to Christ (in this case, fortitude, meekness and firmness). «Look at it this way», he advised his listeners, «one thing is made known in many ways. That cloak (i.e. the one worn by Jacob to deceive his father Isaac into thinking that he was Esau the elder son — Gn 27), indicates the Church as do the two goats because one thing is made known in many ways, albeit in this case, not in an obvious fashion but figuratively». These Old Testament references are more obscure than most. Even Julian of Eclanum, as mentioned above, in opposing Augustine could make use of similar comparisons. He called Sarah a type of the Church being carried off into Africa «by Manichaean brigands» i.e. Augustine and his friends²³).

One very common element that catches Augustine's fancy is something that points up the contrast between the new Christian Church composed of Gentiles and the Jewish Church which did not accept Christ when he came. The Samaritan woman at the well beginning the process of recognizing Christ and of conversion from her sinful ways, (*non iam iustificatae, sed iam iustificandae*) is a type of the Church, made up of non-Jews. The relevance of the woman who had been crippled for eighteen years is more obscure. His reasoning is related to numerological speculation concerning the three or the six ages of the world ($6 \times 3 = 18!$). The Trinitarian context at least allows us to appreciate speculation concerning the number three²⁴).

CCSL 36. 154; «Forma futuri»: *Ep.* 157. 20 CSEL 44. 469; *Contra Iulianum* I. 27; III. 31 PL 44. 659, 718.

²³) «Isaac and Jacob»: *S.* 4. 23, 25 CCSL 41. 37-39; «Manichaean Brigands»: *Contra Iulianum* III. 31 PL 44. 718.

²⁴) «Samaritan woman»: *Tract.* XV. 10 CCSL 36. 154; «Crippled woman»: *De Trin.* IV. 4. 7 CCSL 50. 170.

Two women in particular recur in this context as figures of the *ecclesia ex gentibus*. First there is the Canaanite woman (Mt 15. 22ff). Christ had been sent to announce the good news to the chosen people. The Gentile woman accepted this but still hoped for some of the grace overflowing the Covenant. So Jesus praised her faith and her humility. This in turn is contrasted with the pride and presumption of the Jews who too often did not listen to Jesus. Thus she is very fittingly a *figura* of the Church from the Gentiles. In a similar mode, the woman with the flow of blood who was healed by touching the fringe of Jesus' robe is also viewed as an appropriate figure. Jesus was on his way to cure the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue (Mt 9. 18f). Once again the motif of the humility of the elderly woman who remains hidden, not daring to make herself known and to ask openly but who acts, full of faith and humility, and is rewarded with a cure. «The daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue indicates the people of the Jews; but this woman is a figure of the Church of the Gentiles». The pagans are ignorant of the true God but approach Jesus with trusting faith in the mystery. She was cured even though unseen by Christ and a people he did not know. Sometimes the approach to this lesson can be rather indirect. In noting that Paul referred to himself as the «least of the Apostles» (1 Cor 15. 9) Augustine added that the edge of Jesus' cloak was the least part of his clothing but sufficient to heal the unseen woman²⁵).

The contrast between the fate of the chosen people and the graced redemption of the Gentiles finds a frequent variation in the story of Jacob and Esau, the older brother frivolously losing his heritage to the advantage of the younger brother; the greater comes to serve the lesser, an unaccountable reversal of traditional roles, unaccountable for those of carnal understanding, but not for those of spiritual. The conversion of Nineveh, its hearkening to the prophetic call to penance, much, to be sure, to the chagrin of the prophet himself, strikes a similar chord. The Adam/Christ parallelism is occasionally alluded to in this context also. The secondary parallelism is between Eve and the Church — the former born from Adam's side while he slept, the Church born from the pierced side of Christ while he slept in death on Calvary²⁶).

²⁵) See A.M. La BONNARDIERE, «La Chananéenne, préfiguration de l'Eglise», in *St. Augustin et la Bible* (Bible de tous les temps v. 3), pp. 117-143 (Paris, Beauchesne, 1986) (originally published in 1967). «Canaanite woman»: S. 77. 11 PL 38. 487; «Trusting faith»: S. Morin 7. 2 MA 1. 612; «Unseen by Christ»: *Tract.* XXXI. 11 CCSL 36. 299; «A people not known»: S. 77. 8 PL 38. 486; «Least part»: S. *Guelf.* 24. 5 MA 1. 526.

²⁶) «Reversal of roles»: *En. in Ps.* 78. 10 CCSL 39. 1105; «Carnal understanding»: S. 4. 11 CCSL 41. 27-28; «Nineveh»: *De civ. Dei* XVIII. 44 CCSL 48. 641; «Side of Christ»: *En. in Ps.* 40. 10 CCSL 38. 456.

A familiar *figura* of the Church is Noah's Ark but not for the reason that occurred so often to theologians and preachers of later ages, viz. the motif of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Linked to Peter's vision in Acts (10. 11ff) the special prefiguration envisaged is the expansion of the Church throughout the world. The Ark is a figure as well of the pilgrim Church wending its way through this world.

In an anti-Donatist context, comprehension is stressed rather than exclusivity. The theme of the Church as a gathering of saints and sinners together, the clean and unclean animals packed together in the Ark, had already been floated by Callistus of Rome to the scandal of Hippolytus. In a context similar to but different from that of anti-Donatist polemic, Augustine saw the Ark as a foreshadowing of the Church in this world, one which tolerates sinners in its midst, but does not therefore accept them into its bosom indiscriminately. The context here is Augustine's rejection of the suggestion that all comers should be baptized regardless of their moral state, a position based on the faulty premise that orthodox baptized Catholics would never be damned for eternity, however evil their lives. Thus the Catholic position was a moderate one: toleration of those already members but not a degeneration into what he characterized as *doctrinae corruptio* or *disciplinae dissolutio*²⁷).

Another important *figura* of the Church for Augustine is Mary Magdalene, especially in the post-resurrection scene in the garden near the rock tomb. Why the Lord's prohibition to her: «Do not touch me»? Augustine's answer: «To believe is to touch. Do not extend your hand only as far as Christ the man». «This is how he was touched by those who uttered the confession, saying, He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father'. This is how the Church has touched him, and the Church was prefigured by Mary Magdalene». Related expressions and thoughts are similar: «Hence let the Church which Mary represented figuratively, hear what Mary heard. We would all touch if we would all believe»²⁸).

²⁷) «Noah's Ark»: *En. in Ps.* 86. 3 *CCSL* 39. 1201; *Qev* II. 44 *CCSL* 44B. 105; «Church expansion»: *Contra Faustum* XII. 22 *CSEL* 25/1. 350; «Pilgrim Church»: *De civ. Dei* XV. 26 *CCSL* 48. 493; «No baptism for sinners until they reform»: *De fide et operibus* XXVII. 49 *CSEL* 41. 95-96.

²⁸) «To believe is to touch»: *S. Mai* 95. 5 *MA* 1. 344; «Hence let the Church»: *S.* 245. 4 *PL* 38. 1153. This sermon was probably preached eight to ten years later than the one previously cited, hence showing the durability of this theme in Augustine's preaching. See also: *S.* 143. 4 *PL* 38. 787; *Ep.* 120. 15 *CSEL* 34. 717 (All c. 410).

PETRUS, FIGURA

As with the other *figurae*, there are things attributed to Peter *per proprietatem* and other things only *per similitudinem*. The Augustinian references to Peter as a *figura ecclesiae*, although they also center around the key Matthaean text, Mt 16. 18, still have distinctively different emphases from that of the Roman letters. Here the role of Peter as a person is notably overshadowed by other considerations, above all, Peter as representative of the Church.

First, in his earlier writings against the arrogant claims of Donatists and Luciferians to be churches of the saints only, Augustine stressed that Peter, a sinner, was the one who received the keys of the forgiveness or the retention of sins. Further, he did not receive them in that singular sense that he alone could claim exclusive possession. An early treatment of this theme is: «It is not without reason that, among all the Apostles, it is Peter who represents the Catholic Church. For the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven were given to this Church when they were given to Peter. The Catholic Church therefore ought willingly to forgive her children, once they have made amends and have become strong in virtue; We see that pardon was granted to Peter who represents the Church...». Peter frequently gives examples of weakness but, obviously, not weakness beyond hope of salvation²⁹).

The scene of Jesus walking on the waters and Peter's halting efforts to come out to meet him provides a clear opportunity to furnish yet another example of Peter's weakness and dependence on Christ.

Observing this, let us, members of the Church, discern what comes from God and what from ourselves. Then we shall not waver; then we will be founded on a rock. We shall be fixed and stable against winds, rain and floods, i.e. the temptations of this world. Meanwhile, see that Peter was then a figure of ourselves; sometimes he trusts, other times he wavers; now he confessed the immortal one; now he is afraid to die. In the same way, the Church of Christ has its weak and its strong (members); it does not go on without one or the other ... When Peter confessed: «You are the Christ, the son of the living God», he indicates the strong; when he trembles and wavers, and fearing death, says that Christ must not suffer, not recognizing life, he portrays the weak

²⁹) A.M. La BONNARDIERE, «Tu es Petrus. La péripécie 'Matthieu 16, 13-23' dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin», *Irénikon* 34 (1961), pp. 451-499. «Peter as forgiven sinner»: *De agone christiano* XXX. 32 CSEL 41. 134; «Weakness»: *En. in Ps.* 138. 22 CCSL 40. 2006.

members of the Church. Therefore that one Apostle, i.e. Peter, first in rank among the Apostles and their chief, in whom the Church is prefigured, must be understood as signifying both types, i.e. the strong and the weak; for the Church does not exist without both types.

Peter's taking to the water to meet Christ also shows his faith as representative of the strong who know that faith can do what human weakness cannot. Peter represents the Church and one temptation that undermines Christians is too great an attachment to human praise and honor. Hence Peter's sinking into the sea as he ventured out toward Christ. It was Peter's faith that was praised, his confession of faith in Christ as Son of God — «For what was the man except what the psalm says: 'All men are liars'» (Ps 115. 11). All, not least Peter himself, are dependent on God's grace. He was a human being by nature, by grace a Christian and by a more abundant grace, an apostle and first of the Apostles³⁰).

Many *Tractatus* on the Gospel of John are generally considered to have been written between 414 and 416. Thus they represent a further stage in the development of Augustinian theology. The stress on Peter the forgiven sinner belongs especially to an earlier stage in which Augustine fought against the rigorist tendency not to tolerate sinners in the Church. The anti-Donatist writings also included a fairly rare citation of the list of the bishops of Rome in *ep.* 53 (c.a.d. 400), the list being taken, in Congar's view, from the anti-Donatist treatise of Optatus of Milevis. A Catholic of Cirta had been presented with a list of the bishops of Cirta by a zealous Donatist, eager for his conversion. No *traditor* was to be found in this list, he argued. The list still conveys some of the same ambiguities to be found in Optatus' own usage. Indeed, some of the uncertainty of meaning even goes back to Cyprian himself for whom Peter's chair was the symbol of unity within each local church. The fourth century added the important emphasis on the significance of communion with Rome when the North African church was rent by a region-wide schism. This particular emphasis did not survive long in Augustine's writings but that aspect which did — Peter in his function as representative of the entire Church — is already found here as well. These Roman bishops are to be numbered from

³⁰) «Observing this»: *S.* 76. 4, 6 *PL* 38. 480-81; «Peter sinks»: *S.* 75. 10 *PL* 38. 478; «All men liars»: *S.* 232. 3 *PL* 38. 1109; «First of Apostles»: *Tract.* CXXIV. 5 *CCSL* 36. 684.

Peter «to whom, as representing the whole Church, the Lord said: Upon this rock...»³¹).

PETRUS, FIGURA ECCLESIAE

As Congar points out, from this time on, the heaviest emphasis in Augustine's writings is always on Peter as the representative of the whole Church, almost as everyman, the one who speaks for all (*unus pro omnibus, pro unitate*) and who is portrayed as receiving the keys on behalf of the entire Church. One less common reference in which Peter symbolizes the Church can be seen in connection with Peter's vision in Acts 10. 13. The vision deals first of all with Jewish dietary laws but the larger implication is for the universality of the Christian message. And this is the point likewise with the Petrine representation for the Church. In Peter, the Church is being told to get up and eat. The Church must be hungry enough to go forth and «consume» the Gentile peoples and lands. The Church too has teeth! The sheet carrying the vision's clean and unclean beasts, with its four corners, is also symbolic of universality. The Gentiles were «unclean» with their errors, superstitions and sins until Christ's grace made them clean. Cleansed, they too enter the Body of Christ³²).

In a couple of places, Augustine reflects a bit upon his view of Peter as representative of the Church. «In many places in Scripture, it appears that Peter plays the role of the Church; and this is especially noticeable in that place where it is said: 'I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven...'. In another place, he comments that there are passages where something is attributed to Peter *proprie*; yet it must be noted as well that other passages make little sense unless it be clearly understood that what is attributed to Peter is being attributed to him only as a figure of the Church. To be sure, he is chosen for such a role rather than the other disciples because Peter held a *primatus* among them³³).

³¹) See Y. CONGAR, «L'interprétation de Matth. XVI, 18». Note complémentaire in BA 28 «Traité anti-Donatistes», pp. 716-17 (Paris, DDB, 1963). «List of bishops»: Ep. 53. 2 CSEL 34. 153-54. See Optatus, *op. cit.* II. 3. On Genesius, see *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire* I. Afrique, pp. 532-33 (Paris, C.N.R.S., 1982).

³²) See CONGAR, *art. cit.*, p. 717. «Church has teeth»: S. Denis 15. 3 MA 1. 72; «Vision of Peter»: S. 4. 19 CCSL 41. 34; S. 149. 6 PL 38. 802.

³³) «Role of Church»: *Idem*. «Primatus»: En. in Ps. 108. 1 CCSL 40. 1585.

Peter is the chosen spokesman and symbol because he is first in the *ordo* of the Apostles and outstanding in his love for Christ. But he is always quick to add that the Church received the keys; it is not a privilege for Peter himself personally. Would such an hypothesis make any sense? — To say that Peter alone received them but not John, James and the other Apostles? No. Peter as a *figura ecclesiae* means that what was given to one was given in fact to the Church. More forcefully, he notes that, referring to Jn 21, the questions asked of Peter by the risen Lord: «Do you love me?» are asked of every Christian. To support such an interpretation, he quotes the Matthaean saying about the keys as proof that Christ is speaking to the Church as a whole. Could they have been given to Peter alone? «But he is dead and gone. Who would now be left to bind and loose?» Obviously then he concludes that Peter stood for the whole Church. Returning to the post-resurrection scene in Jn 21, he stresses that, although the words «Feed my sheep» were said to Peter alone, Peter is not the only shepherd. In a real sense, Christ is the only shepherd, but Peter and all others are shepherds, *in Christ*, the one Shepherd³⁴).

In a metaphor going back at least to Cyprian, Peter is the symbol of unity. Peter speaks for all not just *unus pro omnibus* but *unus pro unitate* or *unitas in omnibus*. When Christ addresses one, unity is commanded. So Peter is a frequent figure of the Church, especially when the Church as a whole is being addressed or being empowered or endowed. In one place at least, Peter symbolizes the good people in the Church, as Judas symbolized the evil. In this passage also it is stated that the *sacramentum ecclesiae* is in Peter³⁵).

Without going into the age-old argument about who the rock of Mt 16. 18 was for Augustine, we should recall that Augustine himself, at the end of his life, noted his own uncertainty in his earlier work and urged readers to choose for themselves. Yet he stressed again and again that the primary analogue for the rock-like quality of the Church's foundation is Christ. How often, after citing the Matthaean text, in his scriptural orchestration, as la Bonnardière calls it, does he

³⁴) «Ordo of the Apostles»: S. 76. 1 PL 38. 479; «Other Apostles?»: S. 149. 7 PL 38. 802; «Dead and gone»: S. *Guelf.* 16. 2 MA 1. 493; «One Shepherd»: S. 46. 30 CCSL 41. 555-56.

³⁵) «Symbol of unity»: *De baptismo* III. 17. 22 CSEL 51. 213-214; «Unus pro omnibus»: *En. in Ps.* 88. S. 1. 7 CCSL 39. 1226; *Tract.* CXVIII. 4 CCSL 36. 657; «Unitas in omnibus»: S. *Lambot* 8. 3 PLS 2. 787; «Unity commanded»: S. 295. 4 PL 38. 1350; «Sacramentum ecclesiae»: *Tract.* L. 12 CCSL 36. 438.

not add immediately the text of 1 Cor 10. 4: «And the rock was Christ»? «This is where Peter comes from». And he repeats many times: Peter is from the rock, not the rock from Peter. Sermon 295 was preached on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Commenting on Ps. 103, vs. 5, «Thou didst set the earth on its foundations...», he transfers the image to the Church. «What is the firmament of the Church except its foundation? And what is the foundation of the Church, except the one of whom the Apostle says: 'No one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely Christ Jesus'». Christ is the foundation and he cannot be shaken³⁶).

When more emphasis is put on Peter himself, it is especially his confession of faith in Christ that is underscored. Peter speaks for the others. Previously when Jesus asked, they had always told him what others said of him but this time Jesus insisted that they tell him what they thought themselves. Then Peter spoke out and Christ answered: «I will build my Church. I will build you who in your answer carry the figure of the Church». The fearful Peter, sinking in the waves, «rises again» by his confession of faith. Peter who speaks for all symbolizes the strong in their faith in Christ and confession of his divinity but also in his fear and trembling represents the weak in the Church³⁷).

CONCLUSION

In summary then, it can be seen that to be a figure of the Church could be something applied to many persons and things because some aspect of that person or thing highlighted some aspect of the Church. For Augustine, Peter, though first among the Apostles, did not particularly stand forth as a symbol of authority who commanded others, but as a symbol of unity in the Church dependent on Christ's continuing gifts. In the New Testament, by Augustine's reckoning, Peter frequently represented the Church insofar as it received graces from Christ its Lord. He is a symbol of the mercy which the Church itself should show to sinners since he too was a forgiven sinner who

³⁶) «Augustine uncertain»: *Retractationes* I. 21. 1 BA 12. 400; «Where Peter comes from»: S. 295. 1 PL 38. 1349; «The foundation of the Church»: *En. in Ps.* 103, s. 2. 5 CCSL 40. 1493.

³⁷) «Who do you say?»: S. 232. 3 PL 38. 1109; «I will build you»: S. 270. 2 PL 38. 1239; «Peter rises again»: S. 76. 1 PL 38. 479; «Strong and weak»: S. 76. 4 PL 38. 480-81.

appropriately, on behalf of the whole Church, received the keys of binding and loosing. Here as so often Augustine's picture of the Church involves humility rather than triumphalism, the humility of a sinful Church which must daily pray: «Forgive us our sins».

Though Augustine did not make use of the phrase *Forma Petri*, his use of Peter as a figure of the Church comes most commonly in homiletic contexts. *Figura* here performs the same function as *forma* in the Roman literature, although our examples of the latter are usually in an epistolary context. The two uses by Leo of *Forma Petri* come in his homilies but his words as well as those of Vigilius' view of the Roman church as the *fundamentum* and *forma* of all the churches show the use of the Peter image in a context of authority and command. The Roman church is the example that all other churches are to follow. As the Roman bishops had stressed for decades, the Roman church alone had preserved the apostolic tradition in all its manifold details. Therefore if a local church's order and liturgy differed from Rome's, then that local church had strayed from the apostolic norm. It could only be restored by following the Roman example in all ways. This was of the essence of the Roman meaning of *Forma Petri*.

Augustine's ecclesial traits exemplified by Peter are quite different. In the Roman view, Peter's authority and example were invoked to promote greater uniformity in the Church after the Roman model. In Augustine's mind, on the other hand, Peter represented a human Church containing many weak and a few strong members. Both Peter and the Church needed to be built up on the rock that was Christ.

Washington D.C.

Robert B. ENO, s.s.