Augustine on Marriage and the Subordinating Work of Totus Christus

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AUGUSTINE ON MARRIAGE AND THE SUBORDINATING WORK OF *TOTUS CHRISTUS*

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Declaration and Copyright

Abstract

This thesis examines the importance of the sacrament of marriage for Augustine's ascetical vision. First, he believes the sacrament of marriage (the union of husband and wife as head and body) reveals *totus Christus* as the pattern upon which all creation has been ordered: corporeal things subject to spiritual things, and all things subject to God, just as the church is subject to Christ her head. Second, Augustine's understanding of creaturely well-being as participation in this nuptial universal order explains how and why Augustine uses marital language—paradoxically— to describe the Christian ideal of spiritual continence as bodies subject to minds, and minds subject to God. This vision of spiritual continence as participation provides the foundation for bodily continence for both the celibate individual and for continent married couples.

Part One establishes the sacrament of marriage as integral to Augustine's Christology. In support of this Chapter One provides a survey of both classical and Christian thought on marriage prior to Augustine and then proceeds to demonstrate, in the face of much scholarly confusion over the last thirty years or so, that the *magnum sacramentum* of marriage refers unambiguously and only to the union of Christ with the church, head and body. The chapter concludes with a close reading of *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Continence*, noting how his ingenious application of nuptial language to a spiritual understanding of continence allowed him to reach a moderate position on marriage in the ascetic debates of the late Fourth Century. Building on this foundation Chapter Two locates, for the first time, the sacrament of marriage within Augustine's Christology and its derivative sacramental theory. There we observe that just as all sacraments are built upon the model of Christ, that is, corporeal things guiding the attention to incorporeal as ordered by providence, marriage reveals and directs our attention to the whole Christ (*totus Christus*), indivisibly united with and governing his body the church as its head. Chapter Three examines the extensive ramifications of marriage's signification of Christ united to the church in the light of Augustine's conviction that *totus Christus* comprises the divinely-established design and governance (*ratio*) of the universe. This is illustrated through a close reading of the much-neglected *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* where, by applying the interpretive criteria Augustine himself provides within this work, one can discern the interpretive principle of *totus Christus* structuring his figurative understanding of creation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Augustine presents the operation of providence according to the interpretive principle of *totus Christus* and the way in which he presents creaturely well-being as willing participation in it.

Part Two examines Augustine's paradoxical use of nuptial language to illustrate his vision of spiritual continence. Chapter Four examines the 'nuptial' character of human participation in providence through the subordination of our bodies to our minds, and our minds to Christ. Chapter Five returns from focusing on theory to look again at actual married couples and Augustine's vision of how his nuptial/ascetic scheme guides his understanding of the Christian ideal of continent marriage.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations

ACPhQ	*American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers (New York: Paulist Press, 1946-).
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951-).
Aug(L)	*Augustiniana*
Auglex	*Augustinus – Lexikon*. C. P. Mayer, ed. (Basel: Schwabe & Co. AG, 1986-)
AugStud	*Augustinian Studies*
BA	Bibliothèque Augustiniennes
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CP	*Classical Philology*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis*
FC	The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-).
FrStud	*Franciscan Studies*
HTR	*The Harvard Theological Review*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCC	The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1953-).
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1912-).
LitTheo	*Journal of Literature and Theology*
Maynooth	*The Maynooth Review*
ModTheol	*Modern Theology*
NPNF[1-2]	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975-79).
NS	*New Scholasticism*
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, 221 volumes (1844-1855). Accessed online through the Patrologia Latina Database: http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/
PR	*Philosophy and Rhetoric*
RDC	*Revue du droit canonique*
REAug	*Revue des Études Augustiniennes*
RecAug	*Recherches Augustiniennes*
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*

RSPT	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
SPhilo	*Studia Philonica Annual*
ST	*Studia theologica*
VetChr	*Vetera Christianorum*
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WSA	*The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, N.Y.: New City Press, 1990-).
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*

Abbreviations: Augustine's Works

Abbreviation	Latin Title	English Title	Latin Edition	English Trans.
c. Acad.	*Contra Academicos*	*Against the Academics*	CSEL 63	King (1995)
c. Adim.	*Contra Adimantum Manichei discipulum*	*Against Adimantus, a Disciple of Mani*	CSEL 25.1	WSA I/19
adult. conj.	*De adulterinis conjugiis*	*On Adulterous Marriages*	CSEL 41	WSA I/9
b. conjug.	*De bono conjugali*	*On the Good of Marriage*	CSEL 41	WSA I/9; NPNF[1] 3
b. vita	*De beata vita*	*On the Happy Life*	CSEL 63	FC 1
bapt.	*De baptismo*	*On Baptism*	CSEL 51	NPNF[1] 4
cat. rud.	*De catechizandis rudibus*	*On Catechizing the Uninstructed*	CCL 46	WSA I/10
civ.	*De Civitate Dei*	*City of God*	CSEL 40	FC 8, 14, 24; Dyson (1998)
conf.	*Confessiones*	*Confessions*	CSEL 33	WSA I/1
cont.	*De continentia*	*On Continence*	CSEL 41	WSA I/9; NPNF[1] 3
Cresc.	*Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati*	*To Cresconius, a Donatist Grammarian*	CSEL 52	
doc. Chr.	*De doctrina Christiana*	*On Christian Teaching*	CSEL 80	Robertson (1958)
en. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos*	*Enarrations on the Psalms*	CCL 38-40	WSA III/14-17
ench.	*Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide spe et caritate*	*A Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love*	CCL 46	NPNF[1] 3
ep.	*Epistulae*	*Epistles*	CSEL 34, 44, 57, 58, 88	WSA III/1-4

ex. Gal.	*Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas*	*Exposition on the Letter to the Galatians*	CSEL 84	
f. et symb.	*De fide et symbolo*	*On Faith and the Creed*	CSEL 41	WSA I/8
c. Faust.	*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*	*Against Faustus Manichean*	CSEL 25.1	WSA I/20
Gn. adv. Man.	*De Genesi adversus Manicheos*	*On Genesis, against the Manichees*	CSEL 91	WSA I/13
Gn. litt.	*De Genesi ad litteram*	*Literal Interpretation of Genesis*	CSEL 28.1	WSA I/13; ACW 41-42
gr. et pecc. or.	*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*	*On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*	CSEL 42	WSA I/23
Jo. ev. tr.	*In Johannis evangelium tractatus*	*Tractates on the Gospel of John*	CCL 36	WSA III/12 (*tr.* 1-40); FC 88, 90, 92 (*tr.* 28-124)
c. Jul.	*Contra Julianum*	*Against Julian*	PL 44	WSA I/24
c. Jul. imp.	*Contra Julianum opus imperfectum*	*Against Julian, an unfinished work*	PL 45	WSA I/25
lib. arb.	*De libero arbitrio*	*On Free Will*	CSEL 74	T. Williams (1993)
mend.	*De mendacio*	*On Lying*	CSEL 41	NPNF[1] 3
c. mend.	*Contra mendacium*	*Against Lying*	CSEL 41	NPNF[1] 3
mor.	*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*	*On the Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life*	CSEL 90	WSA I/19
nupt. et conc.	*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*	*On Marriage and Concupiscence*	CSEL 42	WSA I/24
ord.	*De ordine*	*On Order*	CSEL 63	Russell (1942)
praed. sanct.	*De praedestinatione sanctorum*	*On the Predestination of the Saints*	PL 44	WSA I/26
qu. (qu. Gen, qu. Lev., qu. Num.)	*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*	*Questions on the Heptateuch*	CSEL 28/2	
reg.	*Regula: Ordo Monasterii*	*The Rule: Monastic Order*	PL 32	Lawless (1987)

retr.	*Retractationes*	*Retractions*	CSEL 36	WSA I/2
s.	*Sermones*	*Sermons*	CCL 41	WSA III/1-11
s. Dom. mont.	*De sermone Domini in monte*	*On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*	CCL 35	ACW 5
Simpl.	*Ad Simplicianum*	*To Simplicianus*	CCL 44	WSA I/12
spir. et litt.	*De spiritu et littera*	*On the Spirit and the Letter*	CSEL 60	WSA I/23
Trin.	*De Trinitate*	*The Trinity*	CCL 50/50A	WSA I/5
vera rel.	*De vera religione*	*On True Religion*	CSEL 77	WSA I/8
virg.	*De sancta virginitate*	*On Virginity*	CSEL 41	WSA I/9

THE EPITHALAMIUM

…After the prooemia there should follow a sort of thematic passage on the god of marriage, including the general consideration of the proposition that marriage is a good thing. You should begin far back, telling how Marriage was created by Nature immediately after the dispersal of Chaos, and perhaps also how Love too was created then, as Empedocles says. Once born, Marriage unites Heaven with Earth and Cronos with Rhea, Love assisting him in these operations. You should go on to say that the ordering of the universe—air, stars, sea—took place because of Marriage: this god put an end to dispute and joined heaven with earth in concord and the rite of wedlock; whereupon all things were separated and took up their proper stations.

Continuing, you should tell, as a natural sequel, how Marriage also created Zeus and set him over the kingdom of the universe; nor did he stop at the gods, but brought into being the demigods, by persuading the gods to unite with women or nymphs. You should then proceed to tell how he also made ready to create man, and contrived to make him virtually immortal, furnishing successive generations to accompany the passage of time. He is better to us than Prometheus, for Prometheus merely stole fire and gave it to us, while Marriage gives us immortality. You should develop this section by showing how it is due to Marriage that the sea is sailed, the land is farmed, philosophy and knowledge of heavenly things exist, as well as laws and civil governments—in brief, all human things.

Menander Rhetor II.401
3rd-4th Century AD

INTRODUCTION

Why this thesis

This thesis is an attempt to address the fact that Augustine scholarship lacks a comprehensive study of the theology underlying his revolutionary articulation of Christian marriage. Studies on marriage in Augustine tend to be narrow in scope, typically focusing almost exclusively on gender, social/sexual relations, or historical context. Attempts at offering a theological account of his vision of Christian marriage remain few and far-between.[1]

Argument

This thesis examines the importance of the sacrament of marriage for Augustine's ascetical vision. The argument of this thesis is twofold: First, Augustine believes the sacrament of marriage (the union of husband and wife as head and body) reveals *totus Christus* as the pattern upon which all creation has been ordered: corporeal things subject to spiritual things, and all things subject to God, just as the church is subject to Christ her head. Second, Augustine's understanding of creaturely well-being as participation in this nuptial universal order explains how and why Augustine uses marital language—paradoxically—to describe the Christian ideal of spiritual continence as bodies subject to minds, and minds subject to God. This vision of spiritual continence as participation provides the foundation for bodily continence for both the celibate individual and for continent married couples.

Scope

Part One, "Discerning the Sacrament of Marriage," establishes the sacrament of marriage as integral to Augustine's Christology. Chapter One provides background on both classical and Christian thinking on marriage prior to Augustine, and then proceeds to demonstrate, in the face of much scholarly confusion over the last thirty years or so, that the *magnum sacramentum* of marriage refers unambiguously and exclusively to the union of Christ with the church, head and body. The chapter concludes with a close reading of *On the Good*

[1] For example, Philip Reynolds' *Marriage in the Western Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) is good, but in addition to its wider focus, it contains some unhelpful ambiguity on essential points. Émile Schmitt's *Le Mariage Chrétien dans l'Oeuvre de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983) is a notable study and contains some good analysis, but is not without its problems, as we shall see.

of Marriage and *On Continence*, noting how his ingenious application of nuptial language to a spiritual understanding of continence allowed him to reach a moderate position on marriage in the ascetic debates of the late fourth century. Building on this foundation Chapter Two locates, for the first time, the sacrament of marriage within Augustine's Christology and its derivative sacramental theory. There we observe that just as all sacraments are built upon the model of Christ, that is, they are corporeal things guiding the attention to incorporeal things as ordered by providence, marriage reveals and directs our attention to the whole Christ (*totus Christus*), indivisibly united with and governing his body the church as its head. Chapter Three examines the extensive ramifications of marriage's signification of Christ united to the church in the light of Augustine's conviction that *totus Christus* comprises the divinely-established design and governance (*ratio*) of the universe. This is illustrated through a close reading of the much-neglected *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* where, by applying the interpretive criteria Augustine himself provides within this work, one can discern the interpretive principle of *totus Christus* structuring his figurative understanding of creation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Augustine presents the operation of providence according to the interpretive principle of *totus Christus* and the way in which he presents creaturely well-being as willing participation in it.

Part Two, "Observing the Sacrament of Marriage," examines Augustine's paradoxical use of nuptial language to illustrate his vision of spiritual continence. Chapter Four examines the 'nuptial' character of human participation in providence through the subordination of our bodies to our minds, and our minds to Christ. Chapter Five returns from focusing on theory to look again at actual married couples and Augustine's vision of how his nuptial/ascetic scheme guides his understanding and application of the Christian ideal of continent marriage.

Method

My approach to this thesis is founded upon two convictions, the first of which is the necessity of closely reading entire texts, searching out the scope and tone of each. This conviction drove much of the seminal work of Goulven Madec, and is currently being exemplified by scholars such as John Cavadini, Michel Barnes, and Lewis Ayres, especially regarding *The Trinity*. While this thesis makes use of my own reading of *The Trinity*, buttressed by the aforementioned scholars, most of my attention has been given to careful reading and presentation of *On the Good of Marriage*, the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, and *On Continence* (drawing on other texts as needed, of course).

The second conviction concerns the presentation of the material discovered, and reflects a former professor's dogged repetition of basic advice on writing: "Don't just *tell* me, *show* me!" This thesis could have been somewhat shorter than it is, but I hope my twofold desire to demonstrate and illustrate my argument, in Augustine's own words, has not only strengthened my thesis but also allowed Augustine's own character and tenor to shine through my own inadequate prose. I only hope that my presentation has been appropriate, like "the gold which binds together a row of gems" (*cat. rud.* 6.10).

Critical editions and abbreviations used are noted in the chart located in the opening pages of this thesis. I have modified existing translations freely and often, in the interests of greater accuracy, clarity, or both. Scriptural passages are almost always left as found in Augustine's works, but any remainders are from the *Revised Standard Version*. Any translations of modern languages are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

PART I:
DISCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

1

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND THE MAKING OF A SACRAMENT

'What is meant by this great durability of the conjugal bond?'
–De bono conjugali 7.7

INTRODUCTION

In our examination of the importance of the sacrament of marriage for Augustine's ascetical vision, in this chapter we begin our investigation with a survey of classical opinions of marriage in the ancient world, leading up to the Western debates raging around the goodness of marriage. Then, through a close reading of Augustine's contribution to this debate, *On the Good of Marriage* (c. 405 AD), we establish that he believes the *magnum sacramentum* of Ephesians 5.32 makes marriage unambiguously and exclusively a sign of Christ united with his body, the church. Also in that same treatise, written in the context of a rising ascetical tide in the West, we see him sketching out a vision of both continent marriage and the spiritual nature of true continence. The relationship between these three themes—marriage as sacrament, continent marriage, and the spiritual nature of true continence—is not immediately obvious. We conclude by finding clarity in their relationship through a close reading of his much later but closely related treatise *On Continence* (c. 419 AD) where we find these three notions articulated as a threefold vision of a single reality, Christ united with his body the church. The rest of this thesis is an explanation of how Augustine was able to get from A to B, that is, from the intuitive yet fragmented vision of *On the Good of Marriage* (405) to the much more theological and integrated vision of *On Continence* (419).

ROMAN MARRIAGE

Our purpose here is not to provide an overly-detailed or comprehensive account of pre-Christian Roman notions of marriage; this has received ample and recent attention.[1] Rather, the hope is that a brief portrait of Roman ideals for and practice of marriage will provide a useful and revealing backdrop for our presentation of the Christian debates of the late fourth- and early fifth-century. After all, Christians did not invent the institution of marriage. As Philip Reynolds explains, "The peoples of the early Church and of the early Middle Ages brought with them into the Church their own, pre-Christian laws and customs of marriage, and to a large extent these laws and customs endured."[2] We begin with an examination of the Roman ideals of marital concord, household order, and sexual relations.

Roman Ideals

Concordia

Through many changes to the details of Roman marital legislation and its attitudes towards sex, the popular ideal for the marital relationship itself remained more or less constant. On their wedding day, newly-married Roman couples would have heard well-wishers repeating the same phrase, among a few others, over and over again: *Longa concordia*![3] Students of ancient Roman marriage soon learn that the theme of marital concord or harmony (*concordia*, *harmonia*) between spouses dominates the regnant notion of married life.[4] Also expressed by various terms such as 'alliance' or 'partnership' (*societas*, *philia*), and most tellingly, 'like-mindedness' (*unanimis*), the Roman marriage bond was hoped to be one of true

[1] Notable studies on Roman marriage and family include: Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), and *idem*, "The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family," in Rawson, ed. *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 99-113; Beryl Rawson, ed, *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), and *idem*, *Marriage, Divorce, and Children*; Jean Gaudemet, *Sociétés et mariage* (Strausbourg: CERDIC 1980), and *idem*, *Le mariage en Occident. Les moeurs et le droit* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1987); Judith Evans Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian' Marriage: The State of the Question," *JECS* 2.4 (1994): 361-412, and *idem*, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); David G. Hunter, "Augustine and the Making of Marriage in Roman North Africa," *JECS* 11.1 (2003): 63-85, and *idem*, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Carola Reinsberg, "Concordia. Die Darstellung von Hochzeit und ehelicher Eintracht in der Spätantike," *Spätantike und frühes Christentum, Austellungskatalog* (Frankfurt: Das Liebieghaus, 1983); Aline Rousselle, *Porneia.* Felicia Pheasant, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*; Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Gordon Williams, "Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals," *JRS* 48 (1958): 16-29. A couple of helpful sourcebooks include: Jane F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, eds, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (London : Routledge, 1991), and Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: a sourcebook on marriage, divorce and widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[2] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, xiv.

[3] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 252.

[4] Dixon, *Roman Family*, 85f; Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian', 371; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 251; examples abound.

symbiosis, a shared life, *consortium omnis vitae*, 'a partnership for life in all areas of life.'[5] This became only more pronounced as time went by, with the Roman mindset progressing from its earlier concerns with citizenry to a more domestic emphasis on husbandry.[6] We know little of lower-class marital relationships, as most of the surviving written testimony obviously comes from the upper classes, but the evidence we do have, especially grave inscriptions, suggests they held to much the same attitude, even adopting the terminology of legal marriage, which would have been denied many of them as slaves or freedmen/women.[7] As we will see, this ubiquitous ideal for the harmonious marriage bond was appropriated by the Christians; and in the case of Augustine, it found a place of theological prominence.

The Stoics may have emphasized the completeness of the household and its connection with the state, and the Pythagoreans household harmony,[8] but the general trend in most Roman philosophy seems to have moved consistently towards advocating more or less mutual respect and unity between spouses. The first-century AD Italian Stoic, Musonius Rufus, was one of the first to dedicate serious and relatively comprehensive attention to the topic, and with him we find eloquent testimony to the fact that Romans saw marriage as much more than a means of reproduction, and that the sharing of love could also be a powerful motivation to enter into matrimony.[9] He suggested that procreation was the only justifiable reason to indulge in intercourse, and emphasized monogamy, the intellectual equality of women as compared with men, and significantly, the mutual concord and sympathy present in the best of relationships.[10] Words such as *symbiosis* and *homonoia* (concord) feature regularly in his and his students' writings.[11] Rufus' student Hierocles even went so far as to suggest that a barren couple still constituted a household, due to the value of the wife's companionship, sympathy and support.[12]

Susan Treggiari notes that, as favorable as these philosophers were to the virtues and benefits of the marriage relationship, "the pro-marriage tradition culminates in Plutarch [46-

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[5] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 10.

[6] Hunter, "Introduction", WSA I/9, p 8. Hunter cites Seneca, Plutarch, and especially Musonius Rufus as testimony.

[7] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'", 375f. See also, Beryl Rawson, "Family Life among the Lower Classes at Rome in the First Two Centuries of the Empire," *CP* 61.2 (1966): 71-83; Dixon, *Roman Family*, esp 36-59; and Sarah E. Phang, *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers (13 B.C.-A.D. 235) : law and family in the imperial army* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[8] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 198.

[9] *Ibid.*, 222.

[10] Cora Lutz, "Musonius Rufus: 'The Roman Socrates,'" *YCS* 10 (1947): 3-147, see 38-49 and 84-101 especially.

[11] Especially Dio Chrysostom in his *Oeconomicus*.

[12] Abraham Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 102. This would have been spoken protesting the fact that sterility and/or impotence were often grounds for divorce, Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 16.

120 AD],"[13] most notably in his treatise *Advice to the Bride and Groom*. As such, this letter to a pair of young newlyweds serves as a useful and unique example of the confluence of popular Roman sentiment and philosophy, as it is a popularizing compendium of general philosophical views.[14] Consonant with the Stoic Roman ideal we outlined above, Plutarch the Platonist goes farther than most Stoics when he welcomes the influence sexual energy can have on the marriage relationship. He begins by likening the effect of philosophy on marriage to music which apparently would arouse horses, compelling them to mate when in heat (*conj. praec.* 138b). Like this sweet, sensual music, philosophy, when applied to the marriage relationship, "weaves a spell over those who are entering together into a lifelong partnership (τοὺς ἐπὶ βίου κοινωνίᾳ συνιόντας), and renders them gentle and amiable toward each other" (138c). Plutarch is seeking to impart to this young couple the gift of philosophy for them both to possess in common, hoping that through its 'music' they will have "fitting harmony for marriage and the household through reason, concord, and philosophy (διὰ λόγου καὶ ἁρμονίας καὶ φιλοσοφίας)" (138c, modified). Their "docile and sweet life together" (138d) relies not on the fierce blaze of physical attraction, which is neither enduring nor constant, but their passion ought to be perpetuated "by being founded on character (τὸ ἦθος) and by gaining a hold upon the rational faculties, [thus attaining] a state of vitality" (138f). This is no denial of marital passion, but is rather the harnessing of a powerful animal, putting it to work for the sake of the higher ideals of mutual sympathy and true symbiosis.

In a striking passage, Plutarch likens these spiritual ideals to the bodily process of conceiving a child. Intertwined in sympathy with one another's concerns and goodwill (ἡ εὔνοια), like a rope each strand strengthens the other, that "the co-partnership may be preserved through the joint action of both" (140e). Analogously,

> Nature unites us through the commingling of our bodies, in order that, by taking and blending together a portion derived from each member of a pair, the offspring which she produces may be common to both, so that neither can define or distinguish his own or the other's part therein (τὸ ἴδιον ἢ τὸ ἀλλότριον). Such co-partnership in property (χρημάτων κοινωνία) as well is especially befitting married people." (140e-f)

Later, he portrays this copartnership as "a mutual amalgamation of their bodies, property, friends, and relations" (143a). Clearly Plutarch envisions a marital union where the two priorities of Roman marriage, finding true companionship and raising legitimate children, are complementary; indeed, in this text conceiving and raising children seems to be the ancillary,

[13] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 224.
[14] Williams, "Aspects of Roman Marriage," 17.

physical sign of a greater, spiritual principle. While we do not know if Augustine ever read Plutarch, it seems likely that these sentiments on marriage, or some very like these, would have come down to him in one form or another due to Plutarch's influence on various Roman Stoics, not to mention Eastern Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria and Basil of Caesarea. Regardless, these ideals would have been well-known in Augustine's late fourth and early fifth-century Roman North Africa. And as we shall see, Augustine was able to make much use of the ideal of conjugal *concordia*.

Household Order

The ideal of concord and symbiosis between the spouses seems to have had little bearing on the nature of ordering the Roman household. Turning again to Plutarch, we see that even though he was a good populist in his stress of the mutuality of marriage, this does not mean that he was egalitarian when it came to household order. Even more than the Stoics, he is representative of a general trend in Greek philosophy that was not afraid to combine marital harmony and mutual sympathy with a sense of household hierarchy; though it must be said, his version of male dominance was gentler than many accounts. He extends the headship of the husband to a spiritual ascetic principle when he suggests, looking again to his text *Advice to Bride and Groom*,

> Control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman, not as the owner has control over a piece of property (οὐχ ὡς δεσπότην κτήματος), but, as the soul has over the body (ἀλλ' ὡς ψυχὴν σώματος), by sympathizing with her and being knit to her through goodwill (ἡ εὐνοίᾳ). As, therefore, it is possible to exercise care over the body without being a slave to its pleasures and desires, so it is possible to govern a wife, and at the same time to gladden and gratify her (οὕτω γυναικὸς ἄρχειν εὐφραίνοντα καὶ χαριζόμενον). (*conj. praec.* 142e)

Plutarch is especially adept at making universal principles out of various social conventions, blurring the distinctions between the operation of principles at various levels, as we saw above with the example of the conception of children functioning almost as the incarnation of marital symbiosis. Here he exercises the same technique, taking the mundane aspects of household order, softening them and making them applicable to both sexes, harmonizing what is often seen as an irreconcilable tension. But make no mistake; his conception of order is definite, even if softened. Women who marry weak or lower-class men, over whom they might dominate, are "like persons who prefer to guide the blind on the road rather than to follow persons possessed of knowledge and sight" (139a); while confident men who 'marry up' in life know not to "vault upon their horses, teaching them to kneel and crouch down," bringing their wives down, but instead better themselves and, paying heed to the

"size of their horse", the virtuous man knows how to use the reins in such a way that he respects the power of her social position (139b). Though she may follow gladly, and however lightly he might guide his spouse, there is no mistaking in the end who follows whom, and who holds the reins.

Regarding the wider philosophical tradition Susan Treggiari notes,

> Despite the views of Plato, Xenophon, and the Pythagoreans and Stoics on the moral perfectibility of women, their recipes for harmony or good order rest on the headship of the husband. Partnership and community (*koinonia*) are constantly emphasized, but only Xenophon comes near to recognizing the wife's equal responsibility and privileges.[15]

Indeed, as she points out, "The rhetoric of the praise of *pudicitia* [chastity] and the promise to women of glory and moral equality with men must not blind us to the narrowness of the sphere to which Seneca confined women—virtuous conduct towards husband and children and probably the wise governance of the household."[16] Likewise Cicero, indicative of the general opinion and following Plato, stresses the man's *dominatio* of the household for the sake of due order, as the family is analogous to the state.[17]

This connection between household and state order was strong in ancient Greece and Rome; Cicero believed the love of children and wife extended out in affection for others as well, like the concentric rings produced by a stone thrown in a pond.[18] As Treggiari notes, the general view was that the family unit is prior to, and thus foundational for, the state.[19] Judith Evans Grubbs points us to a tantalizing and illuminating bit of Roman marriage oratory, a rhetorical model for the *epithalamium*, or marriage panegyric, which places marriage at the center of the ordered universe. The handbook of "Menander Rhetor" recommends placing marriage at the very beginning of the cosmos, "immediately after the dispersal of Chaos, and perhaps also how love too was created then… You should go on to say that the ordering of the universe… took place because of Marriage…" Thus marriage created humanity, gave us immortality through regeneration, and is responsible for all the activities of humankind.[20] Though excessive, there lies behind this rhetoric an accurate account of Roman belief in marriage as the bedrock of human society, and perhaps humanity's very existence.

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[15] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 202-3.

[16] *Ibid*., 220.

[17] *rep*. 1.67, paraphrasing Plato *Rep*. 562c-563e. Peter Brown writes eloquently on the relationship between marital concord and Roman harmony, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 16f.

[18] *off*., 1.12.

[19] *Roman Marriage*, 199.

[20] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 377, quoting D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson's translation, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 136-9.

Thus, analogously for the ordering of society, male *dominatio* and *auctoritas* were essential for ordering the family. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, puts the male head of household at the head of three pairs: as master of slaves, husband of his wife, and father to his children.[21] The Roman male head of household (*paterfamilias*) had legal guardianship and authority over all those under him as long as he lived, and those considered his dependents typically included more than it does today, and includes all those mentioned above: spouse (if legally married and committed to his care, *in manus*), legitimate children, and even slaves. "The *pater* himself… was strictly not part of the family but its ruler."[22] Those under power of the *paterfamilias* had no rights to property, but all they acquired belonged to him.[23] Consistent with this (legal if not always domestically realized) power, "obedience in wives is praised as a virtue on their epitaphs from early times to late,"[24] and legitimate children were required to obtain his consent in order to marry.

Attitudes towards sex

In addition to concord, friendship and partnership (*concordia*, *societas* and *consors*, among other terms), a pivotal standard for the ideal marriage was sexual faithfulness (*fides*).[25] The ideal of the one-man woman (*univira*) was powerful in the Roman imagination.[26] The virtue of chastity, however, was generally applied only to women, reflecting the infamous ancient 'double standard' of sexual faithfulness as something expected of wives, not husbands. However, Judith Evans Grubbs has argued convincingly against widespread profligacy in Roman society, suggesting the Romans were not nearly as licentious and prone to divorce as many historians would have us believe;[27] nevertheless, as Aline Rousselle points out, it is not for nothing that a large number of chapters in the legal code and rhetorical exercises were related to the issue of precisely what sort of woman a man might marry without fear of being charged with adultery (*adulterium*) or fornication (*stuprum*).[28] Plainly certain men, probably aristocratic, were anxious about this very question. And there is a fair amount of evidence that aristocratic women, especially those who were unmarried, enjoyed a

[21] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 202; *Politics* 1253b.
[22] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 10.
[23] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 15-16; Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 11f.
[24] Williams, "Aspects of Roman Marriage," 25.
[25] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 249f.
[26] On the honor of the title *univira* see Dixon, *Roman Family*, 89f; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 214f, 233f; Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 69-70; Williams, "Aspects of Roman Marriage," 24.
[27] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 369f; *Law and Family*, 55f.
[28] Rouselle, *Porneia*, 82. For the spectrum of illicit sex and a description of the three crimes of incest, *stuprum* (fornication of any sort not involving rape), and adultery, see 79f. For a list of 'safe' women for an extra-marital sexual relationship, see 85.

degree of sexual freedom as well.[29] Summing up the legal consequences for extramarital affairs: any man who slept with a married, respectable woman was guilty of adultery; any man who fornicated was guilty of illicit sex, *stuprum*. Sleeping with the slaves of his own household was acceptable, but excessive indulgence was frowned upon.[30]

Legally speaking, Roman wives were not expected to abstain from sex before marriage and save their bodies for their husbands during marriage because extra-marital intercourse was somehow inherently sinful, but the reason for a wife's continence was primarily out of concern for the integrity of her husband's household. As we will discuss more fully below, a woman was given to a man so that she might bear him legitimate children. This is the foundation of Roman marriage legislation. Technically speaking, while casual use of the term *adulterium* might refer to fornication (illicit intercourse, *stuprum*) or adultery, its precise application always involves somebody else's wife (*ad alter*), and the concern is not sexual infidelity, but the production of a bastard.[31]

Of course, legal concerns aside, it was expected that the husband or wife of an unfaithful spouse would feel hurt and betrayed by his or her partner's sexual infidelity. For women, an adulterous husband "was recognized as *iniuria* and the wife was expected to feel resentment of a mistress."[32] Similarly, a woman's adultery was generally seen to injure her husband's public honor,[33] and a man ought to have strong emotions upon discovering his wife's adultery. Adultery often led to the prosecution of the offender, for the adulterer had injured and harmed a husband's *domus* and contaminated his marriage.[34] Several philosophers were known to wink at the indiscretions of youthful husbands. For example, for Cato and Cicero, moderate use of brothels was justifiable, [35] and Horace very carefully and precisely delineates what sort of a woman was an appropriate sexual outlet for married men.[36] But as is well-known, many philosophers expected equal faithfulness from both parties and argued

[29] Treggiari notes that erotic poetry highlights the existence of courtesans, women who played on the affections of men for financial gain through various affairs, Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 305f.

[30] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 374-5.

[31] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 263, citing the laws of Papinian. She helpfully points to the early use of *adulterare* to refer to counterfeiting: "so perhaps the risk of counterfeit children was an idea present from early on together with the idea… that the wife was corrupted, adulterated, or made false." Indeed, "Adultery was rarely the formal grounds for divorce and allegations that a certain lady's children were not her husband's are extremely rare… 'the father is identified by the marriage'," 307.

[32] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 312.

[33] Following Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 212 n34 against Treggiari, who seems to undermine her own position a few lines later, *Roman Marriage*, 311-313.

[34] Testimony to this sentiment also lies in the copious legal and rhetorical discussion of whether or not a man had the right to slay his spouse or daughter if caught in the act, striking her in the heat of the moment. See Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 273f.

[35] For a list of references see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 300f.

[36] *Ibid.*, 301-302. The almost de-humanizing Roman attitude towards women outside the definitions or protections of law is strikingly illustrated by Brown, *Body and Society*, 23f.

strongly against the 'double standard' of sexual *fides*; this is especially true of Musonius Rufus[37] and Seneca, who says, "You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men; you know that, as your wife should have no dealings with a lover, neither should you yourself with a mistress; and yet you do not act accordingly."[38] Plutarch celebrated monogamous sexual intercourse between spouses, saying that of all the agricultural festivals celebrated by the Greeks,

> The most sacred of all sowings is the marital sowing and plowing for the procreation of children… Therefore man and wife ought especially to indulge in this with circumspection, keeping themselves pure from all unholy and unlawful intercourse with others, and not sowing seed from which they are unwilling to have any offspring, and from which if any does result, they are ashamed of it, and try to conceal it. (*conj. praec.* 144b)

Surely we are correct in presuming that these philosophers, advocating marital faithfulness, more adequately describe the human sentiments of the average Roman than do more 'elitist' figures such as Cato and Cicero.

In spite of their shared opposition to sexual double-standards and support of marital fidelity, philosophers are not in agreement in their advice on the amount of sexual intercourse appropriate to a healthy marriage. We have already seen that Plutarch views sex as integral to a healthy marriage bond, and elsewhere he references a classic Greek recommendation of at least thrice-monthly love-making.[39] Others are not as indulging. Musonius Rufus takes a much more austere approach, typical of Stoic opinion, when he shows his concern for the negative philosophical effects of pleasure-seeking, advocating relations only for the purpose of begetting children[40] (a position which many Christians would later find attractive). These ascetic, anti-hedonistic tendencies are most straightforward in the Stoic rejection of homosexual passion, as it more plainly exhibits the mental enslavement brought about when "passion for another's body disturbed, obsessed and obstructed reason and the freedom of the mind,"[41] though it must be noted such condemnations applied to both heterosexual and homosexual relations inasmuch as reproduction is not intended and/or possible. However it was recognized that nagging, unsatisfied sexual desire could prove distracting to the mind, and a sober, quick release was sometimes recommended.[42]

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[37] See for example Musonius Rufus, Fragment 12, "On sexual indulgence," Lutz, 84-89.
[38] *ep.* 94.26.
[39] *Amatorius* 769a.
[40] Fragment 12.
[41] Rousselle, *Porneia*, 3.
[42] *Ibid.*, 76, citing Athenaeus and Galen.

Apart from such philosophic concerns, most discussion on the matter of frequency can be found in medical discussions. As Peter Brown remarks, late-antique Roman men were not "haunted by a fear of sex. Far from it: they viewed the act of intercourse as one of the many aspects of their lives that they could bring under their control through good sense and breeding."[43] Medical opinions on the healthy amount of intercourse varied, and usually concerned maintaining the appropriate amount of heat and/or moisture in the body, or maximizing the potency of one's seed for the sake of begetting children.[44] Regardless of the reason—philosophical or medical—excessive intercourse was thought unhealthy for the whole human person, and was only to be engaged in moderation, with the motive of pleasure being suspect for many. As Peter Brown notes, the pre-Christian Roman world was hardly a 'paradise' of unrestrained sexual hedonism, and many if not most married couples were probably quite restrained in sexual forays outside the home, and perhaps even somewhat 'Stoic' in the marriage bed; and it is this very situation that makes the "austerity" of Christian sexual ethics, especially the call of some for total renunciation, so difficult to explain.[45]

These Roman ideals of concord, household order and sexual self-control were culturally entrenched in the Roman psyche and, easing the transition for those who wished to undergo Christian initiation, they were easily taken on-board in Christian theology and practice. Indeed, as we will see, many Christians were almost indistinguishable in their views, with the greatest difference being in their reluctance to allow remarriage after divorce. True to form, Augustine takes things a step further than most, as we shall see, and translates these structures and sentiments into spiritual and transcendent principles.

Roman Practice

Consistent with the ideal of marital concord, the creation of a licit Roman marriage was mutual consent, an agreement which involved not only the bride and broom, but also their larger families, if applicable.[46] The beginning of a marriage was not always obvious, but could be suspected if one noticed a marriage-like mutual affection and an intimately shared life (*vita conjunctio*) in an ambiguously partnered couple. Papinian declared, "It is not documents that make a marriage,"[47] and as Treggiari explains, "To make a marriage between eligible persons only their mutual consent was required, and to prove it their statements would, in normal circumstances, suffice…" The existence of a marriage could be

[43] *Body and Society*, 19.

[44] See Brown, *Body and Society*, 17f, and Rousselle, *Porneia*, ch 1-4 for detailed discussion of medical views on sexual activity for men, women and adolescents.

[45] *Body and Society*, 21-22.

[46] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 22.

[47] As quoted by Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 28-9.

ambiguous, and "the potentially privileged nature of information about the existence of the marital relationship between two individuals" might need to be made more public and formal "once a child was involved."[48] Privacy was then sacrificed for the sake of the newborn child, in order to claim him or her as legitimate.

For many couples their marriage and the process leading up to it was a publicly announced and celebrated affair, not in a manner vastly different from today. After a period of negotiation between families (*petitio*) came betrothal, roughly analogous to our practice of engagement (*desponsatio/sponsalia*),[49] when all the relevant parties would have given their formal consent and maybe signed a marriage contract (*foedus*). Incidentally, for many Christian couples the bishop would have joined the party and given his blessing to the betrothed from as early on as the second century.[50] The final stage, the marriage itself (*nuptiae*), involved a brief ceremony where the couple would have exchanged some words and undertaken the symbolic joining of their right hands (*junctio dexteram*) and the ratification of the dotal contract (*tabulae nuptialis*). After the ceremony the bride, accompanied by her family and friends, typically processed from her family's house to the groom's residence, usually while being teased with lewd songs and jokes by well-meaning spectators, where she was handed over to the care of her new husband.[51] Further explanation of this process is unnecessary for our purposes here, but let it suffice to note the foundation of legal marriage in consensus, and the familiar handing over of the bride from her father's household and being committed to her husband's authority and care.

Roman Marriage Law

The Romans may have had their ideals for the marriage relationship, but as in any society, their laws testify to a more 'human' situation. The first thing worth noting is that the state paid a good deal of attention to marriage, and this testifies to its perceived importance for the ordering of society. While the philosophers were concerned with the quality of the marriage relationship, the state was overwhelmingly concerned with the ability to reproduce for the sake of the stability of the population, the ability to raise an army, and the provision of well-born persons who could competently administrate the empire. All of these required pro-children policies and the maintenance of the upper-class. Augustan legislation made it

[48] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 57.

[49] Reynolds notes that like ours, these 'engagements' were breakable, but the agreement of marriage, once made, made separation much more significant, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 4-5.

[50] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 389, citing Ignatius, *Polycarp* 5.2.

[51] For a detailed portrait of the marriage ceremony, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 161ff.

socially and economically disadvantageous for men 25-60 and women 20-50 to be celibate,[52] and there were numerous imperial incentives to raise a family.[53] As Treggiari points out, "*Matrimonium* is an institution involving a mother, *mater*. The idea implicit in the word is that a man takes a woman in marriage, *in matrimonium ducere*, so that he may have children by her… Only a woman can enter into *matrimonium*… a relationship which makes her a wife and mother. A man cannot."[54]

Beyond mere reproduction of its citizenry, the state was also extremely interested in questions of inheritance and status. From a lawyer's perspective, marriage made it possible to link a father and child, a connection that was vital for the continuation of family legacy and honor, not to mention household and estates.[55] A child born illegitimately, or one whose father refused to take up, relied on his mother's citizenry and was often dependent upon her family for financial support. On a slightly different note, in the interest of maintaining the dignity of the upper classes, particularly the Senate, there were strict guidelines for who senators and their family members may marry.[56] And it was in a senator's best interests to be prolific as a parent, as Senate seniority and privileges were partly determined by marital and parental status; all in the interests of perpetuating the state. Though as already noted, marriage itself was a privileged institution, and citizenship and social parity determined who might get to call his or her partner 'husband' or 'wife' in the fullest, legal sense.[57]

Grubbs estimates that the divorce rate for the "senatorial aristocracy" was about 10%, though this was probably much higher than the rest of Rome.[58] This low number when compared to today reflects the fact that the "Romans would have concurred with Jesus' affirmation that there was no divorce 'in the beginning'."[59] Reynolds suspects that ideals such as a women's desire to claim the honorific title of *univira* or *materfamilias* were a

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[52] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 84.

[53] For a list of incentives see Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 380f.

[54] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 5. Augustine himself makes the same etymological analysis in *c. Faust.* XIX.26.

[55] *Ibid*., 13.

[56] For a list of licit marriage options open to senators and their descendants, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 44-45.

[57] An official, quasi-marriage (*contubernium*) could be contracted between two socially unequal individuals such as freed-persons with slaves when the desire to be joined was present, though this fell short of full marriage in the legal sense, especially regarding the ability to produce legitimate children; any children born would have received their mother's status, Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 53. Though as Grubbs notes, this did not stop slaves and other low-born persons from casual use of the legal terms of marriage to describe their relationship with their partner and the establishment of families in effect, if not in law, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 375.

[58] Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 367.

[59] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 9.

stabilizing factor,[60] not to mention various religious motivations for upholding the ancient traditions.[61] That being said, divorce was fairly easy to effect for the determined; all that was required was a notice of renunciation (*repudium*) on the part of one party.[62] Though it was far less common, women were free to divorce their husbands, especially in the upper classes.[63] Again, the vast majority of legal concerns in marriage were directed to the father's ability to claim children as legitimate. Beyond this, the situation seems to have been somewhat fluid, with issues over the wife's dowry being the main cause of remaining legal dispute. In the end, it was the cessation of mutual marital affection for whatever reason that ultimately ended the relationship as such.

For those few who for whatever reason were seeking neither children nor a full marriage relationship concubinage was a perfectly honorable option for those who nevertheless desired a stable sexual and affective relationship; for over ten years Augustine himself enjoyed just such a relationship, as is well-known.[64] Indeed, free-born and respectable women were "socially and morally eligible to be concubines."[65] Quite often though, as Treggiari explains, "Concubines were chosen precisely because they were socially ineligible for marriage… the woman, presumably, obtained a higher standard of living than would have been possible with a man of her own class. Her position might be relatively secure, and substantial presents are seen as normal."[66] This was apparently the case with Augustine, whose devotion and faithfulness to his concubine is well-known.[67] Indeed, far from being casual about their relationship, a couple needed to go out of their way to explain they were in concubinage as opposed to being married, as marriage would usually be assumed for any woman living under a man's roof.[68] Reynolds helpfully gives four major points of distinction between marriage and concubinage: 1) any children produced are illegitimate, 2) they did not regard themselves as married (self-perception was, again, very

[60] *Ibid.*, 9.

[61] As Grubbs notes, Only by obeying the ancient Roman customs and laws "can the Roman people hope to keep the favor and goodwill of the gods… this is not simply a question of penalizing a custom offensive to Roman sensibilities; the preservation of the Empire itself is at stake," Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 385.

[62] *Ibid.* 366.

[63] Extensive discussion on Roman divorce legislation can be found in Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, ch 13; Grubbs, *Law and Family*, ch 5; Rousselle, *Porneia* ch 6, and Henri Crouzel, *L'Eglise primitive face au divorce* (Paris: Beauchene, 1971).

[64] *conf.* IV.2.2f.

[65] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 56.

[66] *Ibid.*, 52.

[67] *conf.* VI.15.25f. I say this in spite of Reynolds' analysis, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 257f.

[68] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 56.

important), 3) the woman was almost always socially inferior, 4) the relationship could be dissolved without formal divorce.[69]

Conclusions

In contrast with their tacit adoption of Roman sentiment on marriage, the Christian attitude towards the Empire's legal code is mostly characterized by an almost universal rejection. Their rejection of remarriage, the practice of exposing unwanted infants and the general anxiety about perpetuating the Roman State were a marked departure from broader society, and such divergence probably did not help their reputation as a subversive cult, very likely feeding the mistrust of their already-suspicious 'pagan' neighbors and rulers. Their rejection of the civil law in favor of the divine law on these matters points to the eschatological thrust of the early church, and its culture of renunciation and anticipation. Having looked at the raw material for the making and contrasting of a distinctly Christian institution, now let us turn to examine what, exactly, the Christians did with the hand they had been dealt.

THE WESTERN DEBATE OVER THE GOODNESS OF MARRIAGE

Continuing our brief portrait of late-antique marriage, here we extend our background for Augustine to include his Christian predecessors and contemporaries as well, in the hopes that we will see not just how Roman and Christian he was, but also get a glimpse of how he both incorporated and transcended them in his unique vision of Christian marriage and its sacramental function in Christian society.

Recently David Hunter has welcomed the recent transformation in the study of Christianity in late antiquity brought about by the growing awareness (and appreciation?) of "the centrality of asceticism, and specifically sexual renunciation, in shaping the contours of church and society in the late ancient world."[70] While Hunter is absolutely correct, I will now show that marriage still could and did play a powerful role in the Christian imagination through its 'baptism'.[71] Indeed, the tensions present in early Christian discourse over the legitimacy of marriage and its implied sexual relations between spouses suggest the Christian re-interpretation of marriage was not easily settled.

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[69] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 35 f, esp. 38-39; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 52.

[70] Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy,* 1-2. He rightly cites the work of Peter Brown as "the indispensible starting point," especially *Body and Society*. And yet, it is vitally important to keep his broader, late-twentieth-century agenda in mind throughout. I would add Rousselle's *Porneia* as a wonderfully comprehensive and sympathetic account of both the rise and nature of Christian asceticism and sexual renunciation.

[71] Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 121.

Earlier Perspectives

In the first couple centuries of the church it was common to find married clergy, even bishops, and the first extant rules for non-monastic clerical celibacy are found in the pre-Nicene, early fourth-century canons of the council of Elvira, in Spain;[72] it was not long until unmarried, clerical celibacy became the expectation (if not the reality) for clergy in Italy and North Africa, and eventually throughout the Western church. In spite of this general Western preference for celibacy, 'orthodox' Christian teachers all-but-universally defended the institution of marriage against its critics, pagan and Christian, even if they could not agree on the particulars of intercourse.

Philip Reynolds provides some helpful general points in discussing what he fitfully calls the Christian "baptism" of Roman marriage.[73] He suggests that a common Christian move was to make a distinction between temporary human law and the eternal divine law, and under this rubric Christians not only forbade any sexual encounters for men or women beyond the bounds of the marriage bed, but also frowned upon second marriages, if not forbidding them altogether.[74] Consonant with the reference to divine law, Christians generally saw the marriage bond as permanent while both spouses lived (Rom 7.1-3, 1 Cor 7.39-40). While in the Middle Ages social class or status was no formal impediment to marriage, in the spirit of Galatians 3.28 and Colossians 3.11, this was not necessarily the case in the early church; this reality suggests just how Roman and secular an institution marriage remained in many contexts, even after its "baptism."[75]

The specter of 'encratism' overshadowed much of the early church's discussion of the propriety of marriage and sexual relations between spouses. [76] Originating as a medical term for the retention of male seed in order to regulate bodily heat/moisture and perhaps increase fertility,[77] *enkrateia* (ἐγκράτεια, 'continence' or 'self-control') later developed into an ascetic principle; that is, refraining from ejaculation for the sake of the mind's clarity and the subjection of bodily passions for reasons of spiritual, not bodily, health. Paul uses the term in this ascetic sense in 1 Corinthians 7.9, and early Gnostic and radical groups within

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[72] The authenticity of these canons is disputed, however; for a bibliography see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 214 notes 28 and 29.

[73] *Marriage in the Western Church*, 121f.

[74] *Ibid*., 126.

[75] Reynolds cites the examples of Ambrose, *De Abraham* I.3.19, and Pope Leo's *Ep*. 167 *inquisitio* 4, dated 458-459AD, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 156f. On concubinage in the early church, see Rousselle, *Porneia*, 106-116.

[76] Hunter, 104f; see also Ugo Bianchi, "La tradition de l'*enkrateia*: motivations ontologiques et protologiques," in Bianchi ed., *La tradizione dell'enkrateia: Motivazioni ontologiche e protologiche* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), 293–315.

[77] Rousselle, *Porneia*, 19.

Christianity, such as the Valentinians, Marcionites and even the early apologist Tatian[78] took this as impetus to forbid marriage and sexual relations altogether since, as Paul notes, marriage is for those who 'burn'; for these groups, no one who 'burns' with desire can be said to be holy and perfect, that is, properly 'Christian', in any way;[79] hence their radical teaching that "marriage is fornication and… was introduced by the devil."[80] Ascetics of this sort, both within and without the catholic church, could be insufferable, and from the earliest times were often a nuisance to more main-stream bishops.

Opposition to such teaching quickly surfaced. Irenaeus' remarks against it were general and brief, based on the grounds of the goodness of all creation, methods of reproduction and all (*adv. haer.* 1.28.1). Both Clement of Rome (~94 AD) and Ignatius of Antioch (~110 AD) rejected the pretensions of divisive, boasting ascetics and affirmed the goodness of marriage (*1 Clement* 33.4-8, 38.2 and *Polycarp* 5.1-2, respectively), yet extolling humble celibacy all the while. Methodius of Olympus (d 311) wrote a *Symposium* which parodied Plato's *Symposium*, involving ten virgins at a banquet discussing the relative virtues of marriage and virginity; virginity comes out on top, but marriage is definitely appreciated. More systematic opposition to extreme asceticism is found in Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD). Rather than focusing on *enkrateia* in the sexual terms of 1 Corinthians 7.9, Clement of Alexandria preferred a much more general application of 'continence' in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 9.25, where Paul says the true athlete is "continent in all things" (πάντα ἐγκρατεύεται) in order to obtain an "incorruptible" crown (*Strom.* III.16.101). Expanding continence beyond issues of sexual desire and activity is an important spiritualizing move for Clement, who sees the need for 'continence' in all areas of life, not just sex. Early in his text on marriage (*Strom.* III) Clement sets up his definition of

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[78] On Tatian's relation to these two groups, Hunter notes the fact that Irenaeus uncharitably lumped the relatively orthodox Tatian together with these two Gnostic groups (*Adv. Haer.* 1.28.1); although he was "neither a Gnostic nor a follower of Marcion, Tatian certainly did reject all Christian involvement in sex or marriage. The centerpiece of this 'Encratite' theology was the notion that sexuality was not a feature of the original creation by God, but rather a result of the original sin or fall of Adam and Eve. Sexual restraint or continence (ἐγκράτεια) thus had a 'protological' motivation; it was an attempt to return to the pre-lapsarian state of humanity: before sin, before death, and before sex." Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 104; this notion lived on in third- and fourth-century Syriac Christianity through Tatian's direct influence. See also Emily Jane Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 155–66, and Hunter's discussion in '*Acts of Thomas*: Scene One', in R. Valantassis, ed., *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 207–9.

[79] Helpful discussions on the nature and development of 'Encratism' and the opposition it received from 'orthodox' Christians can be found in Brown, *Body and Society*, 92-121; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, Heresy*, 94f; and Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, "Asceticism and Anthropology: *Enkrateia* and 'Double Creation' in Early Christianity," in *Asceticism*, Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 127-146.

[80] The description is that of Clement, *Stromateis* III.6.48. The editors note that he was probably thinking of Tatian.

continence: "Continence (ἐγκράτεια) is an ignoring of the body in accordance with confession of faith in God. For continence is not merely a matter of sexual abstinence, but applies also to the other things for which the soul has an evil desire because it is not satisfied with the necessities of life. There is also a continence of the tongue, of money, of use, and of desire" (III.1.4). A few paragraphs later he blames it on the carnal search for luxury, and suggests that the true practitioner of continence knows "to despise money, softness, property, to hold in small esteem outward appearance, to control one's tongue, to master evil thoughts" (III.7.59). Indeed, the true 'gnostic' knows that "eating and drinking and marrying are not the main objects of life, though they are its necessary conditions" (VII.12.70).[81] If these groups would reject marriage on the pretense of avoiding a bestial life, "let them neither eat nor drink, for the apostle says that in the resurrection the belly and food shall be destroyed (1 Cor 6.13)" (III.6.48). Rather, "marriage is cooperation with the work of creation" (III.9.66), and "through his Son, God is with those who marry and have children soberly (σωφρόνως)" (III.10.68).

Again, the problem is sensuality in general; problems arise in marriage only for those "who have become absorbed by marriage and fulfill their desires in the indulgence which the law permits, and, as the prophet says, 'have become like beasts' (Ps 48.13)" (III.9.67). This godly 'sobriety' is brought about by the complete eradication of desire (ἐπιθυμίᾳ) altogether, and by being guided instead in all things by the will (θελήματος), as is necessary for bodily life (III.7.57-58). With the spiritual life possible for both celibate and married, Clement actually goes so far as to proclaim, in a striking passage always worth quoting in full, that

> true manhood (τῷ ὄντι ἀνὴρ) is shown not in the choice of a celibate life; on the contrary the prize in the contest of men is won by him who has trained himself by the discharge of the duties of husband and father and by the supervision of a household, regardless of pleasure and pain (ἀνηδόνως τε καὶ ἀλυπήτως)—by him, I say, who in the midst of his solicitude for family shows himself inseparable from the love of God and rises superior to every temptation which assails him through children and wife and servants and possessions. On the other hand he who has no family is in most respects untried (ἀπειρία). In any case, as he takes thought only for himself, he is inferior to one who falls short of him as regards his own salvation, but who has the advantage in the conduct of life, in as much as he actually preserves a straightforward image of the true Providence (εἰκόνα ἀτεχνῶς… τῆς τῇ ἀληθείᾳ προνοίας). (*Strom.* VII.12.70)

For Clement, the married man who manages his household soberly and thus spiritually provides a genuine icon (εἰκόνα ἀτεχνῶς) of God's Providence in his well-ordered household and beneficent provision for his dependents. Peter Brown paints a

[81] Likewise, see III.1.4, 6.48, 7.59, and 16.101.

characteristically eloquent portrait of Clement's married Christian 'gnostic': "Far from constituting an insurmountable bar to spiritual perfection, the cares of an active life, even the act of married intercourse itself, had served to tune the strings that would… produce the well-tempered sound of a perfect sage."[82] The difficulty of this incarnation of the spiritual life, not to mention its other-centered focus, places the skilled, spiritual married man above the relatively untried, self-centered ascetic. In this belief, Clement is a notable exception to the rule.

Like nearly all early Christian defenders of marriage, Clement restricted sex to procreation. Clement even goes so far as to suggest that Christians are able to conceive children not out of desire but through "a chaste and controlled will (σεμνῷ καὶ σώφρονι παιδοποιούμενος θελήματι)" (III.7.58), as we saw above. Criticizing Tatian, who says the 'agreement' Paul advocates in 1 Cor 7.5 (where he allows couples a period of agreed continence for prayer) could only mean agreement with God in absolute sexual continence, Clement argues for a more moderate position; while he is in no way advocating incontinence and fornication, the "agreement of a controlled marriage occupies a middle position. If the married couple agree to be continent, it helps them to pray; if they agree with reverence to have sexual relations it leads them to beget children" (III.12.81). His ideal Christian marriage mixes mutual consent with mutual sobriety and prayer in all things.

Clement's prescription for sober, family-minded intercourse within the bounds of marriage was fairly standard in mainstream pre-Constantinian Christian authors; examples include Justin Martyr (*1 apol.* 29), Athenagoras (*leg.* 33), and perhaps most strikingly, Lactantius, the North African Latin orator and sometime tutor to Constantine's son Crispus. His *Divine Institutes* (304-313) is perhaps the earliest Latin attempt at a summa of Christian theology, and its dual purpose as apology for and exposition of the Christian faith gives us a valuable, if brief, section on Christian marriage and the role desire (*libido*) plays within its bounds. Agreeing with Clement that chastity is not natural but deliberate, he explicitly opposes the Roman double-standard of chastity, encouraging Christian men to apply the golden rule to their own sexual habits and by doing so provide an example to their wives (*inst.* VI.23.23-32). But where Clement and most others opposed marital pleasure for its own sake, Lactantius is quite open to the idea of seeking satisfaction in the marriage bed, finding there both gratification and innocence. Indeed, "pleasure is a natural consequence of good

[82] *Body and Society*, 125. I purposefully left out Brown's phrase "in old age" because Clement plainly views intercourse for the production of children as perfectly compatible with a sober life of prayer, even for the young man in the midst of intercourse, as we see below.

deeds" (*inst.* VI.23.13-16). While Lactantius might have been at one end of the orthodox spectrum, his sentiments likely resonated with many of his Christian contemporaries.[83]

Outside of two exceptions, the biblical witness is more or less simple on the issue of divorce and remarriage: marriage is indissoluble while both partners live, and marriage has an unqualified place in God's good creation. The first exception, the so-called Matthean-exception of Matthew 19.9 reads, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity (πορνεία) and marries another commits adultery." The other exception, the 'Pauline privilege' of 1 Corinthians 7.15 allows remarriage for the Christian if an unbelieving spouse divorces him or her. Largely based on these two exceptions, the pastoral practice of many pre-Constantinian Christian bishops can seem surprisingly lax when given today's popular representation of early Christian austerity. For example, Lactantius (*inst.* VI.23.33) and Clement (*Strom.* III.12.82) both allowed for divorce and remarriage within these bounds, though Clement sees this as an unfortunate falling-short of the 'gospel ethic'. The second-century *Shepherd of Hermas* (*herm. mand.* 4.29-32) fundamentally agrees with Clement. Both Justin Martyr (*1 apol.* 29) and Athenagoras (*leg.* 33) disapprove of divorce and remarriage for any reason, and Athenagoras even goes so far as to proclaim remarriage after the death of a spouse to be an adulterous union. All things being equal, and however inconclusive the New Testament tension between marriage and the celibate life remained, a majority of Christian teachers seemed to find arrogant ascetics to be more of a threat than marital indulgence, and defended the institution's goodness without hesitation.

Ever lurking in the shadows, however, a more rigorous strain of Christian piety endured, especially in North Africa. Highlighting the significance for all of these debates for positioning Augustine's early fifth-century defense of marriage, David Hunter notes that some "third century thinkers, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen, while avoiding the extremes of radical encratism, developed approaches to marriage and sexuality that echoed in significant ways the perspectives of Tatian and his followers."[84] Preferring celibacy over marriage, these figures held to a position which has aptly been called "moderate encratism,"[85]

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[83] Grubbs suggests that Lactantius believes celibacy to be more blessed than the marriage bed, based on VI.23.37-40, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 399. But a closer reading suggests he might be still talking about faithfulness within marriage. After all, Lactantius believes God commands not in order to restrict, but to create an appropriate space for virtue (38). Rather than snuffed out, pleasure is shut within the bounds of chastity and modesty (37), that is, the edges of the marriage bed (23). The fact that he acknowledges the challenge this will present to many Romans perhaps reflects the laxity of every-day Roman morals, and could explain the incredulous reaction of the disciples to Christ's teaching on marriage in Matthew 19.10, after what is actually Christ's most lenient position on remarriage.

[84] Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy,* 113. See also Brown, *Body and Society*, 138.

[85] Following David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 115, who borrows the label 'moderate encratism' from Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, "Asceticism and Anthropology," 130–1.

and when significant fourth-century figures such as Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine picked up their writings a couple generations later, they were not without effect.

Within the Carthaginian writings of Tertullian on marriage, contemporaneous with Clement of Alexandria (but a world away from nearby Egypt in more than one sense), we can begin to see in microcosm the hardening of Latin North African piety as his attitude progressed from one of tolerance of remarriage to its outright rejection over the course of about twenty years (200-220 AD). In the earliest of these texts, *To His Wife*, Tertullian hopes to persuade his wife (and other readers) not to pursue remarriage after his death in order to leave a proper legacy of continence (*continentia*) to their children. Though a second marriage is permissible on account of 'burning', however regrettable it may be (I.7), the true ideal is absolute monogamy, a chaste widowhood. Just as Adam had only one spouse, so should we: "one rib, one woman" (I.2). As with Clement and the philosophic tradition generally, Tertullian's overwhelming concern has to do with the effects of pleasure, and the importance of preparation for the imminent judgment day. This eschatological theme seems to motivate all his comments on marriage and sex.[86] In his famous praises of marriage at the end of *To His Wife*, which should be read as a comparison of Christian marriage with pagan rather than a spontaneous outburst of general praise,[87] the marriage bond and common life of the married couple focuses on their unanimity in devotion to Christ and service to the community (II.8). That being said, elsewhere he echoes Clement by saying that the manner of use of sexuality within marriage is the true problem: "It is lust, not natural usage, which has brought shame on the intercourse of the sexes" (*an.* 27). Thus Tertullian can be said to have been a vigorous defender of marriage early on, after the manner of Irenaeus and Clement.

His *Exhortation to Chastity* largely contains the same arguments, even if his attitude towards marriage has cooled. When we get to the later text *On Monogamy*, however, his tone is markedly sharp, and his position on remarriage has hardened, forbidding it completely. He even goes so far as to say that while the Romans were loath to accept divorce while permitting adultery all the while, Christians readily grant divorce and absolutely forbid adultery (10). His tone is especially ascetic in preparation for imminent judgment (15). He oddly explains that the marriage bond continues after death (10), even in the face of Matthew 22.30, and in an anti-clericalist move applies the rule of monogamy to laypeople as well. Perhaps most importantly, he argues in this text that the monogamy of Christ with the

[86] See *ux.* I.5; *adv. Marc.* V.27; *mon.* 3.
[87] Following Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 388.

church is prefigured by the fleshly monogamy of Adam and Eve, 'one rib, one woman'; thus they are the prime model, and thus the primary rationale, for Christian marriage (4-5; see also *an.* 11). If we are unable to imitate the second Adam in his celibacy, then we should imitate the first in his marriage to one woman (17), whose virtue lies in prefiguring Christ's union with the church.

That Tertullian cast a long shadow in North African Christianity, nobody can deny. It was there that the first known treatise dedicated to Christian virgins was written by Cyprian of Carthage (*c.*248–258), entitled *On the Dress of Virgins*.[88] But in contrast with Tertullian's growing antipathy towards Christian nuptials, Cyprian hardly mentions marriage at all in this treatise, eclipsing it instead with his overwhelming concern with the public appearance of dedicated virgins. His comments towards marriage are neutral; he encourages all Christian women to dress modestly, after the manner of his commendations to the virgins (17), and instead of criticizing marriage merely discusses the extra honor virgins will receive in the age to come, placing them just after the martyrs in rank (21). As Hunter notes, this text was popular in the fourth century, receiving the endorsement and use of both Ambrose and Jerome on various occasions.[89] And while Cyprian never denigrates marriage, "the treatise provides an excellent illustration of the manner in which Encratite themes entered the Western theological tradition and, from there, passed into the ascetical literature of the late fourth century."[90]

The Jovinianist Controversy in the West

If Jerome had followed Cyprian's example, things might have gone better for him. Far from largely ignoring marriage after the fashion of Cyprian, whose neglect is benign, Jerome's vitriol against married Christians stirred up significant controversy and condemnation throughout the Western church, and even Augustine felt compelled to respond, as we shall see. The impetus for Jerome's all-but-frontal assault on marriage was the pro-marriage writings of an Italian monk named Jovinian. Often the texts of those later deemed heretics fail to survive, and it is typical for their ideas to live on in the writings of their more 'orthodox' opponents; it is in this ironic manner Jerome's text *Against Jovinian* (393) provides us with practically all our knowledge of Jovinian's teaching. Condemned as a heretic by synods in both Rome and Milan, thanks to Jerome we know that Jovinian taught at least these four controversial points:

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[88] *hab. virg.*
[89] For example Ambrose, *hex.* 6.8.47 and Jerome, *ep.* 22.22.3.
[90] Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 120-1.

1. Virgins, widows, and married women, once they have passed through the laver of Christ [baptism], all other things being equal, are of equal merit.
2. Those who with full assurance of faith have been born again in baptism cannot be overthrown by the devil.
3. There is no difference between abstinence from food and its reception with thanksgiving.
4. There is one reward in the kingdom of heaven for all who have kept their baptismal vow. (*Jov.* I.3)

Had Jovinian not straightforwardly equated marriage with virginity, Jerome's (subconscious?) antipathy towards marriage might never have had occasion to surface with such dramatic rhetorical flair and volume. But the rising tensions brought about by the unavoidable pressure of ascetic culture only needed the slight spark of his treatise to begin the chain reaction that has shaped the Western discourse on marriage and sexuality ever since.

David Hunter paints a compelling portrait of late fourth-century Rome as a thriving marketplace of spiritual authority, with clerics and ascetics vying for influence within the church, not just generally but especially among the growing number of aristocrats coming into the church.[91] This tension between clerics and ascetics was a perpetuation of the third- and early fourth-century rivalries between clerics and martyrs during times of persecution, since ascetics clearly saw themselves as perpetuating the martyr's legacy in times of peace and prosperity, which they saw as equally dangerous for the spiritual health of the church, if not more so, than persecution. The ascetic spirit had been a strong undercurrent in the church, as we saw above in relation to encratism, but the ascetic movement which began in early fourth-century Egypt and Palestine lent unprecedented strength and momentum to Christian renunciation of marriage and all forms of sexual practice, along with wealth, social position and even kinship. The Latin church was certainly no exception to this phenomenon, as seen most famously in the profound influence a chance encounter with Athanasius' *The Life of Antony* had on Augustine's own conversion process and subsequent retirement recounted in *Confessions* VII.6.14f.

Hunter suggests that among the congregations of fourth-century Rome, both commoners and elites, there is strong evidence to suggest a general congregational sympathy for the civic nature of marriage, which we outlined in the previous section, and a great many would have been skeptical of the growing ascetic agenda among clerics such as Ambrose and Jerome.[92] Christian aristocrats would have offered especially stout resistance to anything that

[91] *Marriage, Celibacy*, 51f. I rely heavily on his helpful and comprehensive work in what follows.
[92] *Ibid.*, 61f.

might disrupt the venerable institution of marriage and family life.[93] This reluctance, combined with the apparently obnoxious and insufferable attitudes of some charlatan ascetics,[94] goes a long way towards explaining Jovinian's popularity in the capitol. And perhaps quite importantly, in an age of literary monks competing for aristocratic patronage, Jerome would have seen Jovinian's work as no small threat to his own ascetic literary agenda and career, relying as he did on Roman support.

In the condemnation of Jovinian we can observe a clerical agenda working against the grain of this uncritical acceptance of married life. Up until the late fourth century, canonical regulations for clerical celibacy existed, but the relatively few regulations were scarcely followed, if they were known at all. But as Hunter notes, by the late fourth century "we find extensive discussion of the requirement, and the evidence indicates that the matter was hotly disputed."[95] Increasing numbers of bishops such as Pope Siricius and Ambrose, who presided over his condemnations in Rome and Milan, respectively, were becoming convinced of the spiritual benefits of a celibate clergy, and it appears that Jovinian's fault was much more one of timing than striking heterodoxy. Indeed, as Grubbs concludes, had Lactantius written his comments on marriage just a few decades later, he very likely would have shared Jovinian's fate; the condemnation of Jovinian while Lactantius was still within living memory suggests the sharp turn and growing intensity of the clerical, ascetic agenda at the end of the fourth century.[96] And as Hunter notes, the sharp turn suggested by the censure of Jovinian marks the beginning of asceticism becoming a matter of orthodoxy in the Christian West.[97]

While it seems that Pope Siricius and his synod's condemnation of Jovinian was as much a matter of establishing episcopal authority and order as it was about ascetic principles,[98] especially as suggested by his expulsion of the celibate presbyter Jerome, the reasons for Jovinian's Milanese condemnation seem to be much more straightforwardly pro-ascetic. Though Ambrose could hardly be said to oppose marriage, he was very keen to promote the virtue and honor of celibacy after the manner of Cyprian, as is well known.

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[93] As many note, a beautiful combination of Christian and Roman ideals in marriage can be found in the *Cento* of the fourth-century Christian noblewoman Faltonia Betitia Proba, with Adam and Eve romantically coming together in paradise, complete with allusions to Roman marriage ideals; most notably lines 122-135, Elizabeth Clark and Diana Hatch, *The Golden Bough, the Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981).

[94] Hunter references and discusses the anonymous *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* as testimony to bad behavior by some monks, and which was possibly written to mediate between Jovinian and Jerome, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 58f.

[95] Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy,* 214; Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 399f.

[96] "'Pagan' and 'Christian'," 411-12.

[97] *Marriage, Celibacy,* 2-5.

[98] As Hunter convincingly argues, *ibid.,* 213f.

Indeed he is a good Roman citizen on the matter: "the one who condemns matrimony condemns children as well and also condemns human society from its first generation to its last" (*virg.* I.7.34). Rather, in comparing virginity with marriage, "I am comparing good things with good things, so that what is superior may be that much more apparent" (*virg.* I.7.35). And elsewhere, "Who could be so false, so perverse, as to condemn marriage? But who could be so unreasonable as not to perceive the bondage of marriage?" (*virginit.* VI.31). His concern is that Christians be free from worldly distractions for the sake of godly devotion, and struggles to see marriage as anything but. Not only is the virgin's bridegroom, Christ, more attractive than the husbands of other matrons (*virg.* I.7.36), but as an image of the church and its sacraments she bears him many more children: "numerous are the offspring of a devout mind, which is fruitful in progeny and considers everyone her child, and which knows nothing of orphans but does have descendants" (*virg.* I.6.30). As all Christians are born within the church, the virgin as image of the church "bears us as a virgin who has been impregnated not by a man but by the Spirit… [she is] barren of injury and pregnant with reason" (*virg.* I.7.31). Not all found him persuasive, and it seems he heard several complaints about his incessant preaching on this theme (*virg.* I.10.57). Regardless, upon reading his various treatises on virginity one quickly comes to the conclusion that his ultimate goal was a commendable pastoral concern for the virtue and spiritual well-being of his flock: "It is more tolerable to have a virgin mind than virgin flesh. Both would be good if it were possible. If it is not possible, let us at least be chaste for God and not for man" (*virg.* II.2.42). And ever-mindful of ascetic temptations to pride, "Note that mere physical virginity does not gain merit, but rather, the integrity of the mind" (*virginit.* IV.15). Clearly Jovinian's text ran afoul of this pastoral agenda, and Ambrose saw his condemnation as a necessary move to gain the rhetorical upper-hand in persuading his flock of virginity's benefits, for both clerics and women. As David Hunter notes, in spite of their different reasons for opposing Jovinian, a broad Italian alliance was united in its opposition; "None of the aforementioned groups [including Jerome] could afford to see Jovinian's teaching succeed. All depended on the triumph of the notion that celibacy was superior to marriage."[99]

One consequence of the late fourth-century ascetic turn in the Western church seems to have been the neglect of the pro-marriage views of Christians like Clement of Alexandria and Lactantius, whose memory quickly faded into the background, along with their ideal of the praying, sober marriage. On the other extreme, Tertullian was also in danger of being eclipsed by more moderate writers such as Cyprian. But as Hunter aptly remarks, "Most of

[99] *Marriage, Celibacy,* 242.

all, it was Jerome, the great proponent of sexual asceticism in fourth-century Western Christianity, who provided a vigorous afterlife for Tertullian's ascetical writings. The appearance of Tertullian verbatim, and usually unacknowledged, in the pages of Jerome's writings on celibacy… ensured that later generations of Christians… would be exposed to the moderate encratism of Tertullian."[100]

Having recently been expelled from Rome, Jerome was perhaps motivated in his opposition to Jovinian by opportunism, seeing it as a chance to rebuild his reputation in Italy, and perhaps outshine his rivals Siricius and Ambrose in the process. Also of vital importance for Jerome, his literary lifestyle depended upon the financial support of wealthy Roman Christians, especially widows, interested in supporting his austerely ascetic agenda. If a monk like Jovinian proved to be a real competitor amongst his base, he faced the daunting prospect of a severe disruption of his ambitions. In spite of all this, we should not doubt his sincerity;[101] much of Jerome's treatise *Against Jovinian* reads like a fairly standard defense of the superiority of celibacy over marriage, full of appeals to Paul's teachings from 1 Corinthians 7 on preferring celibacy. But in following Tertullian's example,[102] he gets himself into trouble by excluding the middle position between absolute continence and fornication. Beginning with cursory condemnations of Marcionite, Manichaean and Encratite opposition to marriage and intercourse, he even argues against Tatian and the Encratites and says that not all intercourse in impure (*Jov.* I.3). This perfunctory statement is soon contradicted when he interprets Paul's "It is good not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7.1) as implying, "If it is good not to touch a woman, it is bad to touch one" (*Jov.* I.7, *ep.* 48.14). A few lines later he clearly states his vision of Christian marriage as absolute celibacy, living with one's wife as with a sister (*Jov.* I.7). But above and beyond all this, given that the only advantage of marriage is sensual pleasure and even this is negated by the tribulation marriage brings to all levels of human life, "what else is there to marry for?" (*Jov.* I.13). Indeed, later on he even seems to suggest the married man ought to look forward to the death of his wife, as he would then be free for divine service, giving Ezekiel as his example (*Jov.* I.33).

A major justification for his antipathy to marriage and its implied intercourse is the then-common belief that intercourse and prayer were incompatible, a common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7.5, where Paul says, "Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, let Satan tempt you through lack of self-control" (*Jov.* I.7, 34, 47; *ep.* 48.15). Unlike

[100] *Ibid.,* 120.
[101] Hunter's suggestion, *ibid.*, 231.
[102] *ux.* 3, for example.

Clement's treatment of the same passage, where sober intercourse was no impediment to prayer, this interpretation equated Paul's admittedly ambiguous statement with the strict and unambiguous priestly/Levital requirements from the Old Testament of sexual continence for a period prior to entering holy service.[103] Jerome goes beyond the common consensus, however, in portraying all marital intercourse as backsliding sensuality (*Jov.* I.38), marriage as a "dishonorable vessel" in the house of God (*Jov.* I.40), and a wife as a constant source of either misery or temptation: "The misery of having an ugly wife is less than that of watching a comely one" (*Jov.* I.47).

The point where his rhetoric caused the most offense, however, is probably found in the closing sections of the treatise, for which he reserved his strongest language. Continuing with his exclusion of the middle, Jerome claims there are only two sorts of Christians: either fat and sleek or lean and pale, by which he means married or virgin. Indeed, Jovinian's followers, in supporting him, have revealed themselves as "a following of many pigs, whom you [Jovinian] are feeding to make pork for hell." Any who follow him must love to visit mixed-sex baths, and a virgin's support for Jovinian is tantamount to public revelation of formerly-secret fornication (*Jov.* II.36). Hammering home his criticism of Jovinian's main points, Jovinian's supporters need to eat hearty meals so that they have the necessary energy for sexual athletics: "For lust strength is required," and indeed for his supporters it is impossible to be overcome by Satan, "for he has the consolation of marriage to slake his lust" (*Jov.* II.47).

Jerome's text did not receive a warm reception in Rome when it arrived in 393AD; in fact his distributor Pammachius sought to repress the text (*ep.* 47.3, 49.4), and his friend Domnio wrote to him demanding either explanation or retraction (*ep.* 50.3). Apparently their main criticism was his excessive depreciation of marriage in comparison to virginity, tantamount to its condemnation (*ep.* 48.2). Jerome simply does not see their point, and in his reply obstinately clings to his either/or position: "Either my view of the matter must be embraced, or else that of Jovinian" (*ep.* 48.2). And complaining about the censure of both Jovinian and himself he again reveals his incomprehension: "They bestow their censure impartially upon myself and upon my opponent, and maintain that we are both beaten, although one or the other of us must have succeeded!" (*ep.* 48.18), and explains that he still sees the debate as a black-and-white affair: sensualists vs. ascetics (*ep.* 48.21). Explaining that his rhetorical mode was combat, not teaching, he had hoped that he would have found

[103] Especially 1 Samuel 21.4-5 and Exodus 19.15, cited in *ep.* 48.15; for other examples see also Siricius *ep.* 1.7, and Ambrose *off.* 1.251f.

more sympathy and equity among like-minded supporters, and appealed to the general drift of his letter rather than certain hard sayings (*ep.* 48.3, 12-13). But he fails to realize that the weight of his treatise, its general drift, was universally received in the *opposite* sense, even by his usual fan-base, and delighted only a few of the most austere. His readers *had* interpreted it according to the apparent general sense, that is, anti-marriage; the vigor of his rhetoric makes his cursory statements in opposition to Encratism and support of marriage ring hollow, hence the accusations of inconsistency (*ep.* 48.12). His formal claim may have been that he was no Encratite, and that marriage and even intercourse were good in and of themselves, but the overall tone of his writings belied his formal protests to the contrary, and even a careful reading does indeed suggest that Jerome probably believed marriage had no real place in the life of the church.

The upside of all this controversy is that Western Christianity found relative peace on the marriage question while reacting to the extremes of Jovinian on the one hand, and Jerome on the other. From this middle-ground, so elusive for Jerome, a consensus emerged.[104] Nevertheless, judging the overall tone of this consensus with a wide-angle historical lens it is revealing to note that Jovinian received a formal condemnation while Jerome escaped with only a bruised ego and sullied reputation. The situation suggests at least two outcomes for the Christian debate over marriage and sexual activity: 1) Western piety had become deeply entrenched in an ascetic ethos, and 2) marriage was heavily supported, but lacking influential enthusiasts; and while a few attempts were made at a comfortable balance,[105] no resounding articulation was forthcoming until Augustine took up the cause a decade later with his relatively brief treatise *On the Good of Marriage* (*De bono conjugali*). It is to Augustine and his treatise that we now turn.

AUGUSTINE'S DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE

Augustine famously proclaimed three goods of Christian marriage: childbearing (*proles*), sexual fidelity (*fides*), and the sacrament (*sacramentum*).[106] But as we will see, the way we prioritize and relate these goods one to another makes a dramatic difference in how we

[104] For examples of the search for moderation, see the anonymous texts *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* and *Liber ad Gregoriam*, along with 'Ambrosiaster', *De peccato Adae et Evae*, which is Question 127 in his *Questiones veteris et novi testament*. See also Hunter, "*On the Sin of Adam and Eve*: A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster," *HTR* 82.3 (1989): 283-99.

[105] For detailed discussion on the decade between Jerome's *Against Jovinian* and Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*, see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 245-268.

[106] For a helpful table listing several occurrences of these goods in various orders, see Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 232-233.

read his defense of marriage, and determines what we think Augustine was saying when he discussed marriage. The options are manifold, and there is hardly a universal reading among scholars today, either in interpretation or on emphasis.

Tertullian and Jerome, in their 'moderate encratism', show an almost exclusive concern with individualistic piety in terms of personal ascetic achievement and the example one sets for the accomplishment of others. Though to be fair, this seems to be true of most early Christian teachers. Augustine, on the contrary, is much less individualistic, focusing more on the general economy of the church's witness, the value of its structures, and the applicability of its sacraments to all—regardless of their marital status and vocation. We will see that his thoughts are similar to Clement of Alexandria in many respects, and can even seem sympathetic to Jovinian's arguments from time to time. Like Jovinian, Augustine stressed the importance of faith and the baptismal regeneration of all Christians, and undermined ascetic pretension.[107] In precisely these points, in addition to the other catholic defenses of Christian marriage from the late fourth century, we see that Augustine is representative of a popular and perhaps mainstream current within the catholic tradition.

Augustine's early thoughts on marriage crop up in his anti-Manichean texts, most notably in his formidable text *Against Faustus Manichean* (397/399).[108] Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage* (403/4) is the first systematic and exclusive treatment of Christian marriage, and as many have noted, it contains the promising seeds of a vision of marriage as a holy friendship which would have stood out starkly in the face of the swelling ascetic tide, and which could very well have become dominant in subsequent tradition.[109] Nevertheless, the Pelagian controversy (412-430) and its emphasis on sexual relations and reproduction became the occasion for Augustine to produce texts which, due to their sheer volume and subsequent reception, overshadowed and perhaps even stifled the development and articulation of Augustine's earlier thoughts on the marriage relationship. However, I believe Augustine's thoughts on the matter are more well-developed than most have realized; and additionally, if we focus solely on Augustine's vision of sex and companionship, we do so to the neglect of what was, undoubtedly, the most important aspect of marriage in his eyes: its semantic nature as a sacrament.

This section seeks to draw out both these aspects, namely, the marriage relationship as both bond and sacrament. Thus we shall *not* focus on Augustine's thoughts on whether or

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[107] On this point see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy,* 284.

[108] For Augustine's anti-Manichean arguments for marriage see Schmitt, *Le mariage chétien*, 19-41.

[109] See Elizabeth Clark's "'Adam's Only Companion': Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage." *RecAug* 21 (1986): 139-162.

not there was sex in Paradise before the Fall; this was a question he clearly sought to avoid.[110] We can chastise him for being awkward and ambiguous about it, and perhaps he was; but the fact stands that he was trying to get his readers to focus on what he thought were far superior and spiritual things. Even in the Pelagian controversy it is obvious he would rather not have spent so much time on something that was indeed worth defending, but which demanded an inordinate amount of attention perhaps due to his opponents' relentless attacks. In these interests our discussion revolves around two texts: *On the Good of Marriage* (403/4) and *On Continence* (418/20). As we will argue in the next two chapters, these two texts bookend a significant period of theological development and expression for Augustine (405-418), and allow us to trace out his more straightforward thoughts on the issue of marriage, especially the implications of its sacramentality, and its place in his theological method.

Augustine's Text *On the Good of Marriage*

It is usual practice to suggest tongue-in-cheek that the 'real' title of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage* was *Against Jerome*, and we will see that while he is not in complete agreement with Jovinian's main points, his own discussion of marriage quite often sounds more like Jerome's opponent than it does Jerome himself. Indeed, in addition to countering Jovinian, Augustine also wrote to silence remaining 'Jovinianists' who boasted that "Jovinian could not be answered by praising marriage, but only by censuring it" (*retr.* 2.22),[111] an oblique reference to Jerome's marriage-deprecating *Against Jovinian*.

In reading Augustine's defense of marriage as we have it in *On the Good of Marriage*, it is important to note three vital points: in the first half (1.1-18.22) Augustine is keen 1) to make a sharp distinction between the marriage relationship and sexual relations, and 2) to proclaim marriage to be first and foremost a sacrament, a sacred sign, of Christ and the church; in the second half (19.22f) we note 3) the distinction he makes between continence as a habit, and as work.

Some recent interpreters of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage* have been led astray by misreading at least one of these points essential to his thesis, especially the sacrament of marriage being a sign rather than a mere oath or binding promise. I will first discuss the first two of the three vital points I have just laid out, and then take the time to discuss those

[110] Hunter also notes the importance of *cont.* being written in the midst of the Pelagian controversy, and rightly suggests this text was in large part written as a re-direction of the debate away from the corporeal details of concupiscence and "stresses that the primary function of continence is to heal the desires of the heart," "Dating *De Continentia*," 17.

[111] As quoted by Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy*, 269.

whose conclusions on the nature of the sacrament have led much recent scholarship astray. Finally, I proceed to uncover the nascent portrait of the spiritual marriage Augustine lays out in the second half of *On the Good of Marriage*, with a view to the somewhat fuller expression we have in *On Continence*.

Distinguishing societas *from sex*

Augustine begins *On the Good of Marriage* with a warm tone that he undoubtedly hoped would set the mood for the rest of the treatise by extolling the bond of friendship, especially that of a husband and wife, as the "first natural bond (*vinculum*) of human society" (*b. conjug.* 1.1).[112] After starting out in this very Roman way, he quickly makes the bond explicitly biblical by grounding it in the fact that, rather than being created separate from, and therefore ultimately alien to, one another, "[God] created one from the other, making the side, from which the woman was taken and formed, a sign of the strength of their union (*vim conjunctionis*)." The fact that Eve was formed from Adam's rib, Augustine suggests, refers us to the ideal of a mutually shared life, walking side-by-side, looking down the road together. Augustine carefully explains that this lateral conjunction in and of itself has nothing to do with intercourse,[113] as a few lines later he says that even without intercourse (*conjunctionis…concubitus*) "there could have been between the two sexes a certain relationship of friendship and sibling kinship (*amicalis quaedam et germana conjunctio*) where one rules (*regens*) and the other obeys (*obsequens*)" (*b. conjug.* 1.1). Here we have the chief good of Christian marriage as it relates to the earthly lives of actual men and women: it is found in the mutual friendship and hierarchical order implied by the diversity of gender (*in diverso sexu societatem*; *b. conjug.* 3.3).

Numerous statements throughout this treatise reiterate this decidedly un-Roman priority of fellowship (*societas*) over childbearing (*proles*);[114] and likewise, at many points Augustine also points to the good of marital friendship to counter those Christian ascetics who would denigrate marriage on account of the overwhelming likelihood of sensual indulgence in intercourse: "Whatever married people do between themselves that is impure

[112] See also *civ.* 14.11. For helpful studies on the 'companionate' nature of Christian marriage according to Augustine, see: François-Joseph Thonnard, "La morale conjugale selon saint Augustin," *REAug* 15 (1969): 113-131; Elizabeth Clark, "Adam's Only Companion"; David Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy," *AugStud* 25 (1994): 153-177; and Carol Harrison, "Marriage and Monasticism in St. Augustine: The bond of friendship," *SP* 33 (1996): 94-99.

[113] *Consequens est connexio societatis in filiis…* Kearney's translation of *consequens* as 'result' ("The *result* is the bonding of society in its children…") makes children the outcome of the side-by-side relationship; but throughout this text—even in this very sentence—Augustine is keen to distinguish the bond of marital friendship with the bond of sexual intercourse, and I suggest rather, "*After this* comes the bonding of society in its children…" Philip Reynolds renders it as I do, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 253.

[114] *b. conjug.* 1.1, 3.3, 6.6, 7.7, 9.9, 11.13, 12.14, 15.17, 18.21, etc. See also *c. Jul.* V.16.62.

or shameful or sordid… is a sin of the persons, not the fault of marriage" (*b. conjug.* 6.5). As many recent studies tend to conflate these two unions,[115] it is important to note this rhetorical move; making a sharp distinction between these two unions, social and reproductive, is a major foundation for Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*.[116]

After initially making this distinction in 1.1, Augustine continues in 3.3 with the facts before us: regardless of what one thinks of how mankind would have reproduced had the Fall not occurred,[117] we do know from Scripture that we have been created male and female, and the marriage of male and female is good (Jn 2.2); otherwise there would be no proscription of divorce in the Scriptures (Mt 19.9). From these givens Augustine posits the rather obvious yet effective question driving this treatise on the good of coming together in marriage (*bonum… conjugii*): "Therefore we rightly ask *why* it is good (*cur sit bonum merito quaeritur*)." Its good is plainly not found in the mere production of children, he argues, but on the society implied by humanity's division into male and female (*b. conjug.* 3.3). The stronger, more permanent nature of the society between husband and wife is proven by the fact that we do not consider an older couple no longer married simply because they are barren; this suggests that begetting children (*proles*) is the least important of the goods of marriage.[118] In fact the couple are better off barren than when they were fertile, because their lack of virility makes it all the easier for the "order of charity" (*ordo charitatis*) which ties them together to continue strong and "the better persons they are, the earlier they begin by mutual consent to abstain from carnal union (*commixtione carnis*)". This mutually agreed-upon bodily chastity proves and secures (*probatior, et… securior*) the chaste nature of the union of their souls (*animorum tamen rite conjugatorum*; *b. conjug.* 3.3) which was there all along, but presumably made opaque by the 'evil of lust' (*malo libidinis*). It is by reason of this 'proof and security' of spiritual chastity that Augustine explicitly declares a few paragraphs later that mutual abstinence from all intercourse is the ideal conversion of marriage from something with a sensual origin to something spiritual and therefore superior (6.6f). Indeed, the title of this treatise is commonly translated as *On the Good of Marriage*, but its Latin is not *De bono nuptiis* or *De bono matrimoni*, but is *De bono conjugali*, that is, *On the Good of Joining in Mutual Love/Familiarity/Fellowship*. As Susan Treggiari notes, in a passage worth quoting in full,

> *Coniugium* is a more general word for marital union, less associated with the specifically Roman institution. It can be used of foreigners, mythical

[115] For examples, see our discussion below.

[116] T.J. van Bavel notes this as well, "Augustine's View on Women," *Aug(L)* 39 (1989): 5-53, at 50.

[117] In spite of his uncertainty about sex in the Garden, etc. at this point (2.2), the question is irrelevant for his discussion here.

[118] *pace* Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 22; and Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 252.

> persons, gods, or even animals. Because of its less legalistic tone, it is a word for poetry and high-flown prose. The ancients were uncertain whether it derived from the verb *coniugere*, to join, or from *iugum*, a yoke… while there is no verb related to *matrimonium*, *coniugium* is related to the convenient verb *coniugere*, 'to join together', which is, among other specific usages, used independently or with *matrimonio* to describe joining in marriage.[119]

While not wishing to take such lexical analysis too far, Augustine's chosen title does perhaps suggest his emphasis on the good of the couple coming together spiritually; indeed, "intercourse of the mind is more intimate than that of the body" (*c. Faust.* XXIII.8).[120]

Having demarcated the spiritual and sexual unions Augustine proceeds, in what amounts to a digression from his ultimate purpose, to discuss the containing effects the sexual faith of marriage (*fides*) has on *libido*, from the end of 3.3 through 6.6. The foundation of this sexual faith (*fides*) in the spouses' friendship (*societas*) is proved at the beginning of 6.6, where we see that not only does sexual fidelity keep lust within bounds and produce children, but the couple ought gladly to sustain one another's sexual weakness (*infirmitas*) by providing a mutual service even if one fails to feel quite as amorous as one's spouse. Thus one of the goods of marriage, sexual faithfulness (*fides*), is a good yet carnal derivative of the bond of friendship. And Augustine is clear in 7.7 that, although marriage in the fallen world might have its beginning in the desire for children (*proles*, 5.5), and even though this cause may be prior in time (13.15), it is actually the least important of the goods of marriage in that it cannot be just cause for divorce and the pursuit of another marriage; the original bond of fellowship (*sociale vinculum conjugum*) is strong, and holds secure (7.7). In fact, even if the friendship of the spouses ends and they dissolve the relationship in divorce, Christians proclaim that the bond in fact endures in spite of their intentions; the beautiful thing they created when they came together in carnal desire and friendship now haunts them and proclaims them to be adulterers, enduring unshaken in order to punish (7.7).

The sacrament as sign

It is precisely at this point that Augustine narrows and intensifies his earlier question, "Why is marriage (*conjugium*) good?", by accounting for the tenacity of the marriage bond. Now he asks of the superior, spiritual bond, "What is meant by this great durability of the conjugal bond (*quid sibi velit tanta firmitas vinculi conjugalis*; 7.7)?" Indeed, confronted with such firmness, "Who would not be made eager [to know this] (*quem non faciat intentum*)?" For Augustine, the profound durability of the bond has been given in order to capture our

[119] Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 6.

[120] As quoted by Elizabeth Clark, "Adam's Only Companion," 151. The context of this remark is the ideal of continent marriage as we find it in Joseph and Mary, a point to which we return in Chapter Five.

attention, to get us to search out the source of its strength and constancy. The strength of the conjugal bond is hardly arbitrary for him; rather, "I do not think it could have been so strong at all, except that something from this weak mortal condition of mankind was being employed as a sacrament of some greater thing (*sacramentum adhiberetur… alicujus rei majoris*; 7.7)." For Augustine the *sacramentum* of Christian marriage draws its strength from what it signifies, that is, 'some greater thing'.[121] This relationship becomes explicit later in *On Marriage and Concupiscence* I.10.11 (419/21) where, looking ahead, we see that he writes,

> Beyond any doubt the reality signified by this sacrament is that the man and the woman united in marriage persevere inseparably in that union as long as they live, and it is not permitted that one be separated from the other except on account of fornication. That is, after all, what is preserved between Christ and the church, namely, that, while Christ lives and the church lives, they are not separated by any divorce for all eternity. (*nupt. et conc.* I.10.11)

The everlasting quality of the bond between Christ and church is the source of the sacrament's strength.[122] But at this point in *On the Good of Marriage*, Augustine refuses to tip his hand just yet.

Augustine keeps us waiting for the identity of this 'greater thing' for several paragraphs, finally disclosing it in 18.21.[123] After a protracted discussion on the propriety of the polygamy of the Old Testament Patriarchs, and making yet another important distinction, between continence as work and as habit (to which we shall return), Augustine finally gives his readers what he hopes they have anticipated from 7.7: the reference of the sacrament is revealed to be the bond between Christ and the church. To make his point he compares the polygamy of the Old Testament Patriarchs to the New Testament rule of monogamy (1 Tim 3.2) as follows:

> just as the several wives of the ancient fathers signified (*significaverunt*) our future churches arising from all nations though subject to one husband, Christ (*uni viro subditas Christo*); so too the fact that our bishop (*antistes*) is a man who has had only one wife signifies (*unius uxoris vir significat*) the union of all races made subject to one husband, Christ (*ex omnibus gentibus unitatem uni viro subditam Christo*). This will be perfected when he reveals 'the things hidden in the dark', and makes known the 'secrets of the heart', and 'then everyone will have his praise from God' (1 Cor 4.5). (*b. conjug.* 18.21)

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[121] Below we discuss those who interpret *sacramentum* here in its Romano-social, juridical sense, referencing the relationship between the two, rather than reading *sacramentum* in the semantic sense, that which points to something holy. In support of this point see Marie-François Berrouard, "Saint Augustin et l'indissolubilité du mariage : Évolution de sa pensée," *RecAug* 5 (1968): 139-155, at 143 and 154.

[122] Reynolds reads it as I do; see his conclusions on the matter in *Marriage in the Western Church*, 300-303.

[123] This passage is usually neglected by those who argue for the *sacramentum* as bond, not sign; Scalco omits it altogether, *"Sacramentum connubii" et institution nuptiale : une lecture du "De bono coniugali" et du "De sancta virginitate" de S. Augustin* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993).

This is no abstract vision for Augustine, but it is in fact very 'earthy' and literal in that he uses the rule of the monogamous bishop as an example for all Christians to follow. Indeed, as he says a few lines before, it is not a sin for a man to have taken a second wife as a catechumen or pagan, but the fact that he actually has been married more than once excludes him from the bishop's throne, because "what is at issue is… the sacrament." The same would go for consecrated virgins: there is certainly no sin in having had intercourse or having been raped as a heathen or catechumen, but the fact that her physical integrity is compromised disqualifies her from virginity as a vocation, "because of the sanctity of the sacrament". For Augustine the physical integrity of those ordained and consecrated determines their ability to signify the '*res major*'. This exacting standard might seem insensitive or elitist, but he is far less concerned with the aspirations and ambitions of certain individuals than he is with the pastoral integrity and pedagogical function of the sacraments which permeate and maintain the life of the church. His attention is on due order and semantic integrity, out of concern for the well-being of all. And lest there be any doubt that the bond between Christ and the church is the 'some greater thing' of 7.7 which causes the marriage bond to endure, Augustine closes 18.21 by repeating that earlier section's argument: since the marriage bond endures even in the case of a barren womb, "Thus in monogamy the sanctity of the sacrament is worth more than the fecundity of the womb."

"For this reason in our age the sacrament of marriage (*sacramentum nuptiarum*) has been reduced to being a union between [only] one man and one woman," since

> out of many souls there will arise a city of people with a single soul and single heart (Acts 4.32) turned to God (*animam unam et cor unum in Deum*). This perfection of our unity will come about after this pilgrimage, when no longer will anyone's thoughts be hidden from another, and no longer will anyone be in conflict with anyone about anything. (*b. conjug.* 18.21)

Carol Harrison has compellingly shown the resonances this passage has with Augustine's monastic *Rule* (not to mention *The City of God*) and other comments on the communal nature of the monastic community. For example, in his *Rule* he sums up his vision of communal monasticism and anticipates the passage we have just quoted in that text's introduction: "The main purpose of your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart" (*reg.* 1.2).[124] And as he famously writes of the monk in his *Enarration* of Psalm 132,

> Why then should we not use the term 'monks' when the psalm says, 'See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity'? Μόνος

[124] As quoted by Harrison, "Marriage and Monasticism," 98.

> means 'one', but not any kind of 'one'… where people live together in such unity that they form a single individual, where it is true of them, as scripture says, that they have but 'one mind and one heart' (Acts 4.32)—many bodies but not many minds, many bodies but not many hearts—then they are rightly called μόνος, 'one alone'. (*en. Ps.* 132.6)

The integrity of this powerful vision of Christian community does indeed underlie all of Augustine's thoughts on Christian friendship, regardless of the individuals' vocations and marital status. The rule stands for monks, virgins and married persons alike. Just as he intended for his monks, his ideal for the continent marriage relationship is chaste and religious concord (*castam religiosamque concordiam*; *b. conjug.* 13.15). Their unity grounded in their mutual attention being "turned to God", Augustine has brought about a religious transformation of the ideal Roman marriage. Not even the marriage relationship enjoys exemption from the Double Commandment.

When reading *On the Good of Marriage* it is not enough to note this unity of hearts and minds; we are obliged to read on and observe that for Augustine this singleness is not static, but in motion; the couple unified in heart "walk together, and look ahead together to where they are walking" (*b. conjug.* 1.1), side-by-side, their united souls and minds "turned towards God" (18.21). Their bond is *sacramentum*, and if we would 'read' its significance properly we must follow its eschatological reference and thus participate in the communal sojourn of Christian marriage and its perpetual indication of Christ and the church. When reading this text it is vitally important to note the distinction between terms such as *vinculum*, *conjunctio*, *copula*, *subditus* or *unitas*, which refer to the bond which connects either actual humans with one another or Christ with the church, and the single term *sacramentum*, which Augustine applies *only to the bond between the human couple in its reference to Christ and the church.* I have yet to see Augustine use the term *sacramentum* straightforwardly as a bond or oath in any text. The *vinculum* (*societas*) exists in both humans and Christ, but the *sacramentum* only exists in human men and women; in the terms of *On Christian Teaching*, the sacrament of marriage is a 'signifying thing' (*res significans*).[125] The *vinculum* of Christ and the church is the *res* (*res major*) of the sacrament found in the human relationship;[126] as such it makes no sense to read *sacramentum* as a description of the bond between Christ and the church in the juridical Roman sense. For Augustine all the 'goods' of marriage might be based on friendship

[125] *doc. Chr.* I.2.2, II.1.1-2.3.

[126] Jean Doignon makes the same application with the sign theory of *doc. Chr.*, "La Relation *Fides-Sacramentum* dans le *De Bono conjygali* de Saint Augustin: Un schéma de *gradatio* hérité de Tertullian," *ETL* 59.1 (1983): 91-98, at 92. He too locates the sacrament in the insoluble bond, as does Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: the nature and role of woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C. : University Press of America, 1981), 105-106.

(*societas*), but for Augustine even the goodness of this friendship is found in its function as a sacred sign, its transcendent sacramentality.

Having established the sacramentality of marriage, now let us further articulate our interpretation of the *magnum sacramentum* in dialogue with those who conflate marriage and sex, or who read 'sacrament' as a bond or oath instead of a sign. In doing so, we will also be defending the continuity of Augustine's thoughts on this matter in *On the Good of Marriage* well into the Pelagian controversy of his later years.

Misapplying the term sacramentum *and conflating the unions*

In 1974 Joseph Moingt wrote the following regarding the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation of marriage as *sacramentum*, taking an existential approach:

> It does not suffice to say, as is too often the case, that [marriage] is holy because it is the sign of a sacred thing, as if every union of a man and a woman was by itself a sign of the nuptial union of Christ and the church. It is not because the Old Testament readily expresses the union of God and his people in nuptial language that one finds marriage expressed by revelation as a sign of this marriage; in fact, *la situation humaine* which serves as a reference is all too often love betrayed, an unfaithful spouse, a broken marriage. Neither does Saint Paul expressly say that marriage is the sign of the union of Christ and the church; but he makes it, on the contrary, the symbol upon which [marriage] itself is modeled…[127]

This may be true enough as it stands today, but it is important to note that Moingt is working within the Roman Catholic tradition at large, and this reading does not necessarily bear on Augustine's treatise *per se*.[128] But three years later Anne-Marie La Bonnardière takes his general analysis on-board and utilizes it as impetus to look again at Augustine's use of the term *sacramentum* in *On the Good of Marriage*. And we will see that, when applied to Augustine's works, her use of this statement is probably responsible for the errors we have already mentioned, namely, misapplying the term 'sacrament' by using it to describe the bond between Christ and the church, and conflating the ideal for the marriage relationship with sexual union.

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[127] Moingt, "Le mariage des chrétiens, autonomie et mission," *RSR* 62 (1974): 81-116, at 105-106; quoted in La Bonnardière, "L'interprétation augustinienne du magnum sacramentum de Éphés. 5, 32." *RecAug* 12 (1977): 3-45, at 4. It is worth noting, however, that La Bonnardière does not quote the helpful, clarifying lines Moingt writes on his next page: "Marriage becomes a 'sacrament' through communion in this 'mystery'… As in the other sacraments, *marriage only becomes a sacramental sign by an act of faith and conversion*," emphasis his, translation mine, 6. Moingt is not denying the sacrament as sign, he is discussing our ability to see it as such.

[128] Here it is worth noting that Moingt *does* refer the *sacramentum nuptiarum* of *b. conjug.* 18.21 and 24.32 explicitly to the 'lien indissoluble', *ibid.*, 90, in contrast to La Bonnardière's analysis, "*Magnum Sacramentum*". It is also interesting to note that immediately following this comment on the sacrament, Moingt suggests this point in Augustine deserves much more attention.

In her important article, La Bonnardière questions the sacramentality/signification of the human marriage bond in Augustine, warning that giving only one meaning to the term *sacramentum* can lead one to assume that allusions to marriage exist wherever Augustine quotes Genesis 2.24 or Ephesians 5.31-32.[129] Her driving question is, "Which reality is meant by the term *magnum sacramentum*?"[130] After examining a large number of selections from across Augustine's *œuvre* which discuss the nuptial bond between Christ and the church, she concludes at the end of the first part of her study that the *magnum sacramentum* of Ephesians 5.32 applies to the Christo-ecclesial bond, rather than to the human bond contracted by men and women. She bases this conclusion on a large number of proof-texts which discuss the relationship between Christ and the church in conjunction with the term *sacramentum*, none of which, in my view, convincingly demonstrate that Augustine was applying the term *sacramentum* to the Christ-church bond.[131]

Of great interest to our study here, she proceeds in part two of her article to ask the following question based upon the premise provided by part one: "If, according to the prophecy and Pauline support (*garantie*), Gen 2.24 announces *l'alliance* of Christ and the church, does the same text also literally refer to the bond of man and woman in marriage? And if so, what of the sacrament?"[132] This misguided question results in a far-flung interpretation of Augustine's goods of marriage. She answers her own question in the negative, namely, the *magnum sacramentum* of Ephesians 5.32 does not, in fact, apply to the marriages of human individuals. She discusses four texts as proof, each of which we shall now examine in turn.[133]

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[129] La Bonnardière, "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 8-9.

[130] *Ibid.*, 8.

[131] Admittedly, I found her use of the brief reference contained in *En. Ps.* 150.2 challenging: *ad illud haec sententia referenda est, quod in primis partibus eiusdem libri scriptum est: erunt duo in carne una. quod sacramentum magnum dicit apostolus, in christo et in ecclesia.* The closing phrase, *in christo et in ecclesia*, is taken directly from Ephesians 5.32, and the use of *in* + the ablative could plausibly be taken as locative, placing the *sacramentum magnum* in Christ and the Church. However, the comment is quickly made in passing within the context of *En. Ps.* 150.2, and the construction here simply brings us back to the ambiguity of Ephesians 5.32 itself; what, exactly, is *in* Christ and the Church? Is it the joining of *duo in carne una*, or the sacrament? Or is it that the reference of the sacrament is located *in* Christ and the Church? Given the overwhelming weight of tradition reading Augustine as indicating the reference to the union of Christ in the Church, she will need more and clearer evidence than this to convince most. She also brings in Moingt (105 n58) as support, but even he applies the *sacramentum* to Adam's speech, not the Christ-Church bond, "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 12-15. Philip Reynolds notes the ambiguity of the same construction as Augustine renders it, *in christo et in ecclesia* in *nupt. et conc.* I.23, and suggests that his ambiguous language (unlike Tertullian's much clearer *in* + accusative, *in Christum et Ecclesiam*) ought to be seen as just that, unclear. Reynolds himself seems to prefer to leave the *sacramentum* proper at the human relationship, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 289-293. We discuss *nupt. et conc.* I.23 below. On this passage from a biblical studies perspective, with detailed discussion on syntax, see J. Paul Sampley, *"And the two shall become one flesh": a study of traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

[132] La Bonnardière, "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 30.

[133] The following quotations and analysis occur in La Bonnardière, "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 30-32.

en. Ps. 10.10

Here Augustine explains that if Genesis 2.24, 'They will be two in one flesh,' is read as an encouragement to lust, it will result in divine punishment; but if it is read in reference to Christ and the church, blessing follows. The implication seems to be that this would proscribe identifying the marriage relationship as the location of the sacrament. For this passage to support La Bonnardière's argument, however, she would have to be equating sexual relations and marriage itself;[134] but as we saw above, Augustine's concern throughout *On the Good of Marriage* is to make a sharp distinction between the sexual and spiritual unions of married persons. This is expressed nowhere more clearly than when he says, "Whatever married people do between themselves that is impure or shameful or sordid, therefore, is a sin of the persons, not the fault of marriage" (*b. conjug.* 6.5). This very conflation is what fueled Jerome's tacit condemnation of marriage in *Against Jovinian* as we saw earlier, and is an explicit point of departure for Augustine.[135]

Jo. ev. tr. 9.10

La Bonnardière has set her sights on a tantalizing passage: "'And they shall be two in one flesh; this is a great mystery!' And in case anyone should take the greatness of this sacrament (*magnitudinem istam sacramenti*) to lie in each and every man who has a wife, he continues, 'I am, however, talking about Christ and the church.'" The implication for La Bonnardière is plain—Augustine here refuses to apply the sacrament to individual men and women. This point is easily answered, based upon our earlier reading. Here Augustine's driving rhetorical question from *On the Good of Marriage* helps us out: "What is meant by this great durability of the conjugal bond?" (*b. conjug.* 7.7). The question here in *Tractate* 9 is the same; he is not refusing to locate the sacrament in each and every married couple, but he does refuse to find its *greatness* in them.[136] The distinction is subtle yet significant. Additionally, a few lines later in *Tractate* 9 Augustine points to the Genesis narrative and says, "What is this great sacrament: 'they shall be two in one flesh'?", an allusion which suggests the equally likely application of the sacrament to Adam's prophecy as it applies to Adam and Eve themselves. So far, the sacramentality of human marriage stands.

[134] Hunter seems tempted by this conflation as well, "Reclaiming Biblical Morality: Sex and Salvation History in Augustine's Treatment of the Hebrew Saints." In Dominico eloquio—*In Lordly eloquence*. Blowers, Christman, Hunter and Young, eds. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002): 317-335, at 326-327.

[135] The same applies to her later reference to *c. Jul. imp.* II.59, where she again conflates the unions.

[136] Again, on this point see Berrouard, "L'indissolubilité du mariage," 143 and 154.

s. 341.12

On this passage La Bonnardière is emphatic, "Le Sermon 341, 12 insiste avec précision":

> Sometimes, though, in such a way that you are to understand the head and the body, with the apostle himself expounding as clearly as may be what was said about husband and wife in Genesis: 'They shall be two in one flesh.' Notice his exposition, because I don't want to give the impression of having the nerve to say something I've cobbled up myself. 'For they will be two in one flesh'; and he added, 'This is a great sacrament'. And in case anyone should still think that this is to be found in husband and wife according to the natural joining of the sexes, and their bodily coming together (*in viro esse et uxore secundum naturalem utriusque sexus copulationem corporalemque mixturam*), 'but I mean', he went on, 'in Christ and the church.'

But Augustine himself is clear in the lines immediately previous, it *was* in fact "said about husband and wife in Genesis." This passage is a good example of the point we made earlier, that Augustine's contention is that we do not call *sexual* union the sacrament. It makes more sense to follow the explicit categories and distinctions of *On the Good of Marriage* when interpreting other, more ambiguous passages and, assuming consistency, deny only the sacramentality of the sexual union here, rather than refuse its application to the spiritual bond as well. One final note confirming our reading, in the lines immediately following La Bonnardière's quotation, she neglects to note that Augustine continues, "And just as bridegroom and bride, so also head and body, because 'the head of the woman is the man' (1 Cor 11.3)." It would seem Augustine does in fact have individuals in mind in this instance.

nupt. et conc. I.21.23

In our final text, entering into the Pelagian controversy, Augustine has each of the three goods of marriage, *proles*, *fides* and *sacramentum*, in dialogue with one another, discussing 'what might have been' for each of them had mankind not sinned. Here Augustine is admittedly the least helpful for our thesis, and La Bonnardière rightfully uses this as her trump card. Augustine has the sacrament say,

> Before the sin it was said of me in paradise, 'A man will leave father and mother and will cling to his wife, and they will be two in one flesh', and 'this a great sacrament', the apostle says, 'in Christ and the church'. That which is something great, then, in Christ and the church is quite small in each individual husband and wife, but it is still a sacrament of an inseparable union."[137]

[137] *quod ergo est in christo et in ecclesia magnum, hoc in singulis quibusque uiris atque uxoribus minimum, sed tamen coniunctionis inseparabilis sacramentum*, *nupt. et conc.* I.21.23.

It does indeed seem that Augustine might be applying the term 'sacrament' to the Christ-church bond, but there is a certain amount of ambiguity in his language. But if we would note what Augustine *does* unequivocally apply to the Christo-ecclesial bond we see that it is, again, the *greatness* of the sacrament.[138]

La Bonnardière's analysis brings her to understand *sacramentum* and *conjugium* as equivalent in Augustine when applied to marriage, and she concludes that "The characteristic of the *sacramentum* – as one of the goods of marriage – is the indissolubility of the bond."[139] And in her conclusion, she can now say of the marriage bond between two Christians, "The term *sacramentum* is a lot closer to its original sense in Roman law: it is a pact, a commitment; only, in the church, in the City of our God, on the Holy Mountain, this commitment is irrevocable: the *sacramentum nuptiarum* is indissoluble. It is a bond of iron," and "It cannot enter into Augustine's perspective that the marriage of man and woman can be the sign of the joining of Christ and the church."[140] To my knowledge, La Bonnardière never explains why, to her mind, Augustine believes the marriage bond to be indissoluble. As it stands, without reference to Christ and the church, the durability of the bond in her reading remains arbitrary.

La Bonnardière's analysis is not without precedent,[141] but her influence has been wide, for later Émile Schmitt will build the entire thesis of his popular study on marriage in Augustine to the sacrament of marriage as *vinculum*.[142] And while Philip Reynolds gives significant attention to discussing *sacramentum* as a sign in Augustine, he too discusses the possibility of *sacramentum* in Augustine's discussion of marriage as oath or bond,[143] and suggests the polyvalence of the term complicates our understanding of Augustine on this matter.[144] Even David Hunter refers to "the 'sacrament' in marriage, that is, its character as

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[138] La Bonnardière's translation bolsters her case, but glosses the ambiguities of the Latin. She renders *quod ergo est in christo et in ecclesia magnum* thus: "Ce sacrement, donc, qui est grand dans le Christ et l'Église…". On the ambiguities of this passage, see our note above.

[139] "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 36.

[140] *Ibid*., 45.

[141] See Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens texts Chrétiens," *HTR* 47 (1954): 141-152, at 146-150.

[142] *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 224; see his whole section entitled 'Sacramentum=vinculum', 221-228. He also applies La Bonnardière's interpretation to *nupt. et conc.* I.21.23 But to his credit, he has a section on 'Sacramentum=signum', 229-233, and when it comes to marriage as a sign, he concludes, "Nous sommes ici au cœur même de la théologie matrimoniale de l'évêque d'Hippone," 231. His later articulation of marriage as sacrament/sign is stronger, but even there he still cannot shake the notion that there is still "une synonymie évident entre «sacramentum» et «lien»," "Le 'Sacramentum' dans la Theologie Augustinienne du Mariage," *RDC* 42.2 (1992): 197-213, at 202.

[143] *Marriage in the Western Church*, 281. All of his examples in support of this point on Augustine's use of the term come from sources other than Augustine.

[144] *Ibid*., 280.

an indissoluble bond."[145] Her thesis is taken up with gusto, however, by Eugenio Scalco. He sees the sacrament solely as the "lien sacré indépendant des conjoints,"[146] and while he recognizes the transcendence of its strength, he, like La Bonnardière, locates it simply in the spiritual permanence of the bond without reference to Christ and the church.[147] He explicitly denies the sacrament any semantic function due to its supposed exclusively institutional application.[148] And most telling of all, he denies the *res major* of *On the Good of Marriage* 7.7 any relation to Christ and the church, since "Augustine himself makes no reference to it either in this text, nor in the rest of the work;"[149] his discrete omission of *On the Good of Marriage* 18.21 allows this conclusion. This is a curious oversight in a study on the term *sacramentum* as it appears in *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginity*, especially as 18.21 contains not only the greatest number of occurrences of the term, but the very reference to Christ and the church that he claims does not exist. Rather, he believes the *res major* of *On the Good of Marriage* 7.7 is "the invisible imprint of the creative action of God in each human couple,"[150] whatever that might mean.

We have dedicated a relatively significant amount of attention to confirming the sacrament as *res significans* because of the profound implications this has for determining not only Augustine's understanding of marriage, but also his conception of Christ and all of creation as it exists in him from 'the beginning'.[151] In 1954 Christine Mohrmann noted that the notion of *sacramentum* as bond was an important use of the term in many early Latin authors, such as Quintilian, Apuleius and even Lactantius, but some scholars seem to have been 'led astray' on the primary use of *sacramentum* as a sacred sign in the early Latin Christian tradition—as the usual translation of μυστήριον—by Tertullian's rhetorical use of the term in *mart.* 3, *cor.* 11, *idol.* 19 and *scorp.* 4, where he refers to the *sacramentum* of Christian baptism as an 'oath'; Mohrmann convincingly explains that Tertullian was not stating the plain meaning of *sacramentum* for Christians *per se*, but rather through word-play was trying to appeal to the social sensibilities of those still attached to Roman society, for whom *sacramentum* still evoked images of that bond.[152] This astute observation seems to describe the analysis of those who would deny any semantic function to Augustine's use of the term *sacramentum* in relation to

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[145] "Reclaiming Biblical Morality," 325; though to be fair, Hunter also acknowledges the semantic ability of the sacrament, in this article and elsewhere, most notably in his 1999 introduction in WSA I/9, page 18f.

[146] "*Sacramentum Connubii*," 31.

[147] *Ibid.*, 36 and 42; the image that comes to mind is an incorporeal chain.

[148] *Ibid.*, 45.

[149] *Ibid.*, 37.

[150] *Ibid.*, 47.

[151] This is the topic of Chapter Three of this thesis.

[152] Mohrmann, "Sacramentum," 144.

marriage, a use which, we should note, is not applied to any other instance of his use of the term in any other context.

So we have seen that in reading the first half of *On the Good of Marriage* Augustine makes not only the important distinction between the spiritual and sexual unions of marriage, but also the nature of this bond as a thing which signifies something else. The rest of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage* is a discussion on true continence, and the basis upon which he ranks virginity above marriage.

Sketching out the continent marriage in On the Good of Marriage

The third and final key to a sound reading of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage* is noting Augustine's distinction between continence as habit (*habitus*) and work (*opus*; *b. conjug.* 21.26). In a very 'Clementine' move, Augustine too spiritualizes continence and thus broadens its application when he explains, "Continence is [most properly] a virtue of the mind, not of the body" (21.25). Now detached from an exclusively bodily application, continence can be found either as a habit of the soul, or as a work of the flesh, or both. This is the backbone of his defense of the marriage in the Old Testament patriarchs, above and beyond the sacrament of polygamy. To answer criticisms of the Old Testament fathers, he deflects the question on marriage and suggests continence is a far more worthy subject: "Regarding the marriages of the holy fathers, I seek to establish not what marriage is, but continence"[153] (20.24). In doing so he has turned the tables on his critics by questioning the very nature of their own 'continence', which he no doubt suspects is the foundation of their pride and audacity. He picks Abraham and John the Baptist to illustrate via comparison, stating that while Abraham was married and John was continent by vocation, both retained the continence of their mind. "The one's continence and the other's marriage were both practiced in the service of Christ in response to the different demands of the times. John, however, also practiced continence, whereas Abraham had it only as a disposition of mind" (*b. conjug.* 21.26). Significantly, what mattered was 1) continence of mind, regardless of time, and 2) obedience to Christ, according to the demands of the age.

Here he brings in another distinction from *On Christian Teaching* to help understand the application of the 'work' of continence, namely, the distinction between use and enjoyment (*uti*/*frui*; *doc. Chr.* I.2.2f). The question at hand, then, is to work out the reason *why* the Old Testament patriarchs used marriage; that is, in what 'spirit', before we can use their example as justification for seeking out marriage today (*b. conjug.* 9.9, 20.24f). Besides

[153] *Nuptiis tamen sanctorum patrum, non quas nuptias, sed quam continentiam comparem quaero.*

the obvious issue of libidinous sexual relations, Augustine latches onto the traditional Roman motivation of wanting sons as the central problem. "In their case [i.e. those of the present] even the desire for children is carnal in nature, whereas with those others [i.e. the patriarchs] it was spiritual, because it accorded with the institution as it was at that time" (19.20). The patriarchs "did not marry for this world but for Christ, and for Christ became fathers" (26.35). In their age Providence called for the work of marriage and reproduction, 1) marrying for the sake of the sacrament (many nations under one husband, 18.21), and 2) reproducing out of the sheer need for more human beings in order to produce and maintain a distinct race for Christ (19.22). And through all this work, to which they had been called by God, they accomplished it "not conquered by lust, but led by piety (*non victi libidine, sed ducti pietate*)" (13.15). But unlike them, in the current age we have not been called by God to the task of reproduction: "it is not the time to have children after the flesh (*nec prolem autem carnalem jam hoc tempore quaerere*)" (24.32).[154]

The work of this age is continence in both mind *and* body, and thus men in our age would do well not to compare either their bodily continence with the mental continence of the patriarchs, nor married men to compare their carnal work in having children with the spiritual obedience of the fathers' reproduction (19.22, 26.34). Either way, regardless of the work to which they were called, the superior spiritual continence of the patriarchs—equal to John the Baptist—would have allowed them to perform the work of either marriage or continence better than any living today (22.27). As is often noted, this is not a demotion of bodily continence, putting it on par with marriage in a Jovinianist fashion, but is a clever move against the pride of ascetics who would favorably compare themselves with the ancient fathers. Indeed, of them he asks, "Are you better than Abraham?!? Are you better than Sara?" (22.27). Celibacy might be a theoretically superior vocation for Augustine, but he refuses to let go of the tension that vocations are lived out by particular individuals, whose true motives are always hidden from view. This is how Augustine is able to uphold the general principle of celibacy's superiority over marriage, while insisting on the particular quality of the individual's heart. Better married and obedient than celibate and proud, in Augustine's estimation. "The good of obedience is better than that of [bodily] continence" (23.29). An obedient heart and submissive will, i.e. the *spiritual* habit of continence, can reside in anyone, married or celibate, and this is his first and foremost concern. As Kari

[154] See also *s.* 51.23.

Børresen poignantly observes, for Augustine "bodily virginity is preferable, but it is not indispensable."[155]

This valuation of spiritual continence over the particulars of bodily circumstance is ultimately what allows Augustine to make the distinction between the *societas* of the married couple and the sexual union. His real concern is that the married life can be a distraction for the spiritual, and married individuals who focus on the Lord after the manner of 1 Peter 3.1-7 are in fact very rare; not impossible to find, just few and far-between.[156] Even though such holy couples began their marriage in lust and the desire for children, "almost always people like this did not marry intending to be like this, but they became like this after they were already married" (12.14). This is a more positive expression of the indissolubility of marriage, which we see negatively expressed in his refusal to grant a divorce to those whose spouses are barren (7.7, 15.17). The ideal is exemplified by the older couple from 3.3 as discussed above—the fire of lust dying, their ability to reproduce gone—whose mutually agreed-upon bodily chastity proves and secures (*probatior, et… securior*) the chaste nature of the union of their souls (*animorum tamen rite conjugatorum*; *b. conjug.* 3.3) no longer made opaque by the 'evil of lust' (*malo libidinis*). Here we have the beginnings of the continent married couple, more purely expressing the beauty and good of marriage by combining continence of both the heart and mind, yet preserving the marriage bond until the end.

In this ideal Augustine would seem to be negating one of the goods of marriage, that is, *proles*. But within his proscription of human reproduction in this age there lies a clue to a deeper interpretation of the goods of marriage, and a suggestion that he has not entirely repented of the figurative interpretations of his *On Genesis against the Manichees*: he still recommends not having children *after the flesh* (24.32). Elsewhere he alludes to the good of *proles* being fulfilled spiritually, "no one who is perfect seeks to have children except in a spiritual way" (17.19). The good of *proles* lives on in Augustine's chaste union; after all, Jerusalem still needs children. "Children have had to be provided for our mother Jerusalem, now spiritually and at that time physically (*nunc spiritualiter, tunc carnaliter*); but always from the same source, love" (16.18). In this articulation of the transcendent benefits of the spiritual marriage, the spiritual fruitfulness of the chaste marriage, we find echoes of his earlier *On Genesis against the Manichees* (388-9)[157], but its presence here—along with the striking absence of the 'be fruitful and multiply' of Genesis 1.28—suggests that Augustine had not yet

[155] *Subordination and Equivalence,* 126.
[156] Elsewhere he says the opposite, *s.* 51.21; we discuss this in Chapter Five.
[157] *Gn. adv. Man.* II.11.15.

"clipped the wings of his soaring allegories on Genesis,"[158] though it is admittedly a much more reserved presentation. As we will see, Augustine in fact never gives up his allegorical interpretation of marriage. The goods of marriage are drastically transformed and applied in *On Continence* about fifteen years later, where he puts the sacrament of marriage into effect with vigor, resulting in a surprisingly broad application, as we shall see.

We have laid out the three essential points of *On the Good of Marriage*—1) the spiritual nature of the union between man and wife, 2) the fact that this union acts as a sign, pointing us to Christ and the church, and 3) the spiritual nature of true continence—but their relationship to one another is not as clear in this text as it could be. Obviously the marriage bond signifies, but what it actually tells us about Christ and the church in this treatise does not go much beyond a vague notion of unity and submission; and the connection of these points with spiritual continence remains a mystery altogether. But as we will see in *On Continence*, over the next fifteen years Augustine will unite these three into a manifold but singular reality, teaching us much about not only his vision of marital union but, more importantly for him, his ascetical vision and even the mystery of Christ.

Continence and the Open Wound of Romans 7

Clark, Harrison and Hunter have expressed regret that Augustine seems to have been too distracted by the Pelagian controversy and its focus on sexual relations to be able to develop his potentially powerful vision of 'companionate marriage'. Harrison tantalizingly suggests, "As a relationship of friendship, fellowship and unity, with sexual relations subordinated to procreation, marriage therefore seems to be a viable alternative to monasticism which perhaps deserved greater prominence even in Augustine, than it received;"[159] and Clark wistfully wonders, "Who knows whether the volitional factors [of companionate marriage] would not have emerged as central if Augustine had not formulated his theories in the midst of controversy?"[160]

Augustine's supposed drift from the ideal of spiritual marriage that we have in *On the Good of Marriage* to the more 'earthy' and sexualized version he seems to put forth a few years later in his *Literal Interpretation on Genesis*, and the usual modern reaction to it, is well-captured by Philip Reynolds' lament:

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[158] Elizabeth Clark, "Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1-3 in the Later Latin Fathers," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith*, Clark, ed. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986): 353-373, at 373.

[159] "Marriage and Monasticism," 99.

[160] "'Adam's Only Companion'," 162; also on this point see 140. For Hunter's remarks to the same effect, "Reclaiming Biblical Morality," 328.

> Whereas Augustine had thought that Adam and Eve were spiritual creatures whose progeny was to be joy, peace and virtue, he now thinks that they were carnal beings whom God commanded in the beginning to beget children. His acceptance of sex and sexual procreation as part of the original, God-given order of things seems to have been at the expense of his estimation of the place of what might be called the spiritual relationship in marriage. The two perspectives suggest different conceptions of marriage…"[161]

And on Augustine's perceived neglect of the spiritual relationship, which "he sketched out but did not know how to colour in,"[162] in the Pelagian debates Augustine left married couples nothing but 'cold comfort':

> For while they may be grateful for the remedy marriage offers, they cannot be expected even to imagine, let alone aspire to, the wholly good manner of using and experiencing sexual intercourse that God created in the beginning. Augustine does not expect them even to try to attain this. They will find to their infinite regret and shame that what Augustine considers to be the defective and vile aspect of sexuality is what attracts and holds them to each other, what motivates them to have sex, and even what makes coitus mechanically possible.[163]

Thankfully, David Hunter has recently drawn attention to the arguments of several older articles for a later date for Augustine's *On Continence* (418-420) by La Bonnardière (1959) and others;[164] to my knowledge the implications of this dating for our understanding of his ideal of the continent marriage have yet to be drawn out. I argue here that there might be new hope for tracing out not only Augustine's retention of the spiritual ideal for companionate marriage, but also for observing its development and growth.[165]

Previously dated 395/396 because of its anti-Manichaean content, *On Continence* was once assumed to have been written before *On the Good of Marriage* (404) and was therefore irrelevant to the question of the development of Augustine's thoughts on the nature of Christian nuptials. However, as Hunter and others have shown, the text actually has much more in common with his anti-Pelagian works, especially as seen in his use of biblical

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[161] *Marriage in the Western Church*, 252.

[162] *Ibid*., 258.

[163] *Ibid*, 279. While some have questioned the harshness Reynolds sees in Augustine, his account is echoed enough in popular accounts of Augustine's thought to warrant mention; for gentle criticisms of Reynolds on this very point, see the reviews of his book by David Hunter, *TS* 56.4 (1995): 777-779; and Jean Truax, *Speculum* 71 (1996): 200-202.

[164] "The Date and Purpose of Augustine's *De continentia*," *AugStud* 26.3 (1995): 7-24. He credits this discovery to La Bonnardière, "La date du *De continentia* de saint Augustin," *REAug* 5 (1959) : 121-127; D. O'Brian Faul, "The Date of the *De Continentia* of St. Augustine," *SP* 6 (1962): 374-82; Henri Marrou, *Saint Augustin et l'augustinisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956), 178. See also M. Rackett, "Anti-Pelagian Polemic in Augustine's *De continentia*," *AugStud* 26.2 (1995): 25-50.

[165] Interestingly, Hunter himself fails to recognize these possibilities in subsequent work; Clark (1986) neglects the implications of this later dating in "'Adam's Only Companion';" and Émile Schmitt still uses the earlier dating as late as 1983, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 40 n134 and 178-81.

citations and combinations that occur only after 412 in an anti-Pelagian context.[166] Furthermore the anti-Manichaean content which generated the previous older dating is convincingly accounted for by observing that the Pelagians had accused Augustine of having a Manichean view of sexual intercourse; thus the anti-Manichean rhetoric is evidence of Augustine seeking a sort of Catholic middle ground between the extremes of Manichean hatred of the body on the one hand, and the Pelagian refusal to grant Augustine's point on the transmission of original sin through the necessarily lustful nature of fallen human procreation on the other.[167]

Our purpose here is not to enter into the details of the Pelagian controversy, but to notice how *On Continence* now bookends a fifteen-year period between the publication of *On the Good of Marriage* in 404 and the completion of *On Continence* in 418-20. This time span included the publication of many texts, including significant portions of *The Trinity* and the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (410), and brings us well into the earlier years of the Pelagian controversy and its unrelenting focus on sexual procreation, roughly at the same time as the writing of *On Marriage and Concupiscence* (419/421). So what we have in the second half of *On the Good of Marriage* (19.22-23.31) are Augustine's initial thoughts on (his 'sketching out') the ideal for the continent, spiritual marriage, and a much fuller and developed vision of the continent ideal in *On Continence*. In significant ways *On Continence* also demonstrates, I will argue, the profound implications of the sacrament of marriage for his notion of the work of Christ in salvation.

Augustine's discussion in *On Continence* revolves around his interpretation of Romans 7.22-23, "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members;" Galatians 5.17, "For the flesh lusts (*concupisco*) against the spirit, and the spirit lusts against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would;" and Ephesians 5.28-29, in close proximity to the Apostle's proclamation of the great sacrament, "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church." Reading these passages even in this plain arrangement is suggestive; in the hands of Augustine, they come to express both the fallen human condition and the manner of its healing; the entire economy of fall and salvation.

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[166] This observation is the foundation of La Bonnardière's conclusion, "La Date du *De continentia*."
[167] For greater detail on this controversy see Hunter, "Date and Purpose," 14-18.

Where *On the Good of Marriage* begins with the origins of mankind in the ideal of unity and friendship, *On Continence* has its starting point the divisions and enmity brought about by the curse. Commenting on Galatians 5.17 Augustine describes the condition in which we find ourselves: "The fact that the flesh lusts against the spirit, and good does not dwell in our flesh, and the law in our bodies rebels against the law of our mind, does not mean that there is an amalgamation of two natures, created from opposing elements (*ex contrariis principiis facta conmixtio*), but that the one nature is opposed to itself (*unius adversus se ipsam*) as a consequence of sin" (*cont.* 8.21). The war of Romans 7, being fought between spirit and flesh, head and body, is not a violent chemical reaction between two foreign and incompatible substances, but is rather a symptom of the Fall, wherein human nature was divided against itself. The very source of their conflict is their divided will, which puts stress on the unbreakable bond between spirit and flesh. He continues,

> We were not like that in Adam, before nature disdained and offended its maker by listening to and following its seducer. That is not what life was like for humanity when it was first created, but it was a punishment for sin incurred later… evil is not itself a substance but, like an injury to the body, it comes into existence when the substance injures itself and is infected by the disease, and it ceases to exist when health is restored to it" (*cont.* 8.21).

This inner division is God's punishment for our sin. But, Augustine is clear, this conflict is not experienced by every individual:

> People do not experience this struggle within themselves unless they are fighting for virtue and battling against vice… There are those, however, who are entirely unaware of God's law, and do not even count evil desires as an enemy, but in abject blindness are slaves to them, and even think they become happy by giving to them rather than controlling them. (*cont.* 3.7)

Augustine seems to be suggesting that these, entirely given over to the carnal lusts that dwell within, have actually achieved a certain amount of inner peace, or rather a perverse *concordia*, through capitulation and a diseased, disoriented union.[168] But there is another sort: those who know better, and yet submit anyway.

> On the other hand, there are those who know them [i.e. carnal lusts] through the law ('Knowledge of sin is through the law [Rom 3.20], and 'I would not have been aware of the desire,' he says, 'if the law did not say, "Do not desire" [Rom 7.7]'), but who are still overcome by their assault, and 'so the law has come into them and has caused sin to become more abundant in them' (Rom 5.20). (*cont.* 3.7)

Echoing his famous anti-Pelagian line from the *Confessions*, "Grant what you command, and then command what you will" (*conf.* X.31.45), here the dire situation of life under the law is

[168] Elsewhere he describes this as turning a blind eye to the war within, *s.* 9.13.

one where the good is commanded, but *not* also granted (*cont.* 3.7). These sensualists live under law, but not grace because of their proud refusal to admit their weakness. And the creation of this dire situation is the precise purpose of the law: rubbing salt in their mortal wound, ripping the divide a touch further, increasing their pain and waking them from the stupor caused by the "harmful sweetness" of their capitulation to sin. Thus the law is a schoolmaster, or better yet a surgeon, "making their injuries worse so that they will want the physician" (3.7). Again, Augustine is not concerned with people's feelings but with their health and integrity, factors which he knows affect their ultimate happiness.

Regarding the location of these evil desires, Augustine has no time for the 'philosophic' distinction between the nobility of the mind and the distractions of the flesh: both are hopelessly in need of grace (4.11-5.12). Furthermore, "the flesh lusts after nothing except by means of the soul" (8.19). Instead of blaming one element or the other, Augustine transposes the distinction between 'flesh' and 'spirit' (*caro/anima*) to 'soul' and 'spirit' (*anima/spiritus*). While Paul says that it is the 'flesh' which lusts against the 'spirit' (Gal 5.17), what he meant by this expression is that the soul, with its carnal desires, struggles against the spirit (*anima carnali concupiscentia spiritui reluctatur*; 8.19).[169] This transposition allows Augustine to discuss the quality of this division in relation to 1 Corinthians 15.44 which, as we shall see in the later chapters of this thesis, is a significant passage for Augustine's understanding of human growth and progress in relation to the resurrection of the body and its eschatological quality. Again, we will discuss this in much greater detail; for now, let us focus on locating the evil desires. This deflection from blaming the 'flesh' for our problems allows Augustine to locate the source of evil desire to certain impulses, or motions (*motus*) which occur unbidden in the soul (*in sua quadam interpellatione*); these do not properly/naturally belong to the human being, and thus they require neither the consent of our minds (*mentis consensione*) nor the action of our bodies (*membrorum corporalium operatione*;13.29), and ought to be ignored.[170] Whenever such evil motions arise Christians are to remember the words of Paul in Romans 7.17, "It is not I who do this!" (13.29).

This pair, the *consent* of our minds and the *action* of our bodies, is the foundation upon which Augustine has built this treatise on *continentia*. Quoting Philippians 2.13, "For God is at work in you both *to will* and *to do* for his good pleasure" (*cont.* 13.28), Augustine describes continence as not *yielding* its bodily members to the unruly interpolations of the soul, i.e. the

[169] For these distinctions, see Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), Chapter 2, especially 7ff. We discuss these distinctions in much greater detail in subsequent chapters.

[170] For an example of this principle in Augustine's sermons, see *en. Ps.* 140.18.

turning away from evil, and righteousness (*justitia*) as rightly *wielding* the body, in the actual doing of good (7.17). In other words, continence has a defensive function, righteousness an offensive one. There is an order of causation in this pair, continence preceding righteousness, as humans "do nothing with bodily actions without first pronouncing it in the heart" (2.3), for "'from the heart come evil thoughts… murder, adultery' (Mt 15.19)… None of these deeds can be done if there has been no prior evil thought, by which the deed performed externally is initiated internally" (2.5).[171] Due to this causal order, which points to their natural unity, Augustine's theme-verse for continence is Psalm 141.3 [140.3 LXX], "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, and a door of continence (*ostium continentiae*) around my lips," by which Augustine means the mouth of the heart (1.2). Maintaining spiritual continence is undoubtedly the foundation for right Christian living for Augustine.

Awoken to the inner division by the law, and by grace made secure through continence, that is, refusing to consent to the inappropriate desires of the soul, Augustine's Christians are equipped for battle, and called to the fight for (active) righteousness by the Apostle crying out: "Do not let sin rule in your mortal body for you to obey its desires, and do not offer your bodies to sin as weapons for deeds of wickedness, but offer yourselves to God, alive now after being dead, and offer your bodies to God as weapons of justice; for sin will no longer have power over you, as you are not subject to the law but to grace (Rom 6.12-14)" (*cont.* 3.8). This battle-cry, "Do not let sin rule in your mortal body!" 'is now the business at hand'.[172] The fight for the flesh happens most truly in the mind, in the will. That is why it is the job of spiritual continence to resist the whole-person slavery of sin. "There exists in us the lust of sin, and this must not be allowed to rule; its wishes must not be obeyed, so that it will not rule over those who obey it. Thus sinful desire must not take over our bodies, but continence must claim them for itself, so that they will be God's weapons for justice, and not the weapons of sin for deeds of wickedness" (3.8). The war for the body rages in the mind, and the will's refusal to yield to the disruptively spontaneous and disordered motions of the soul is the beginning of victory.

It is only a beginning, though, as Augustine of course believes that only God can achieve total healing of humanity, and this only after the death and resurrection of the body. Coming back to 1 Corinthians 15.44, which we mentioned above, Augustine assures us that only after our beloved body is laid aside for a time and taken up again will God effect the final healing of our mortal wound, the opposition of soul and spirit. Thus death as the

[171] Much more on inner/outer words in subsequent chapters.
[172] Using the fitting language of the *NPNF*.

separation of spirit and flesh points in a negative fashion to the durable, natural union which unites them, and the conflicting wills which divide them, not in being, but in purpose. Death separates the two for a time, for the purpose of healing their discord; and thus their healing and reunion to proper order and subordination results in a markedly new quality of life.

> 'A 'soulish' body (*corpus animale*)[173] is sown, and a spiritual body (*corpus spiritale*) rises up' (1 Cor 15.44). Then the flesh will no longer have any desires opposed to the spirit. It will itself be called spiritual, as it will be subject to the spirit without any resistance... Accordingly, because we are made up of both these two things that at present oppose one another within us, let us pray and work so that they may agree (*ut concordent oremus et agamus*). (*cont.* 8.19)

Here we see that this agreement, the return of *concordia* to humanity's divided parts, is akin to the reunion of old friends, and not at all unlike the mutual sympathy and unanimity we have seen as foundations of married life and friendship more generally. As we have already noted, this peaceful existence between spirit and body, will and righteous action, is never realized this side of the resurrection. "We deceive ourselves, however, if we think this is to be hoped for in this mortal life" (8.20). In this current life "the flesh is said to lust against the spirit, when the soul struggles against the spirit because of carnal desires" (8.19), and far from finding peace in this life "there is at present a war being waged, because health has not yet been achieved (*nunc bellum est, quoniam salus nondum est*)" (7.18); and "the good is not fully accomplished, as long as the flesh is subject to the law of sin and sensuality is aroused and entices, however much it is held in check" (8.20). Regardless of our level of continence, we shall never be free from this conflict during this life. But after the resurrection,

> We will have perfect peace when our being holds fast to its creator and there is nothing in us that fights against us. This is, as I see it, what the Savior himself meant when he said, 'Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning' (Lk 12.35). What does it mean to have one's loins girt? To restrain lust, and that has to do with continence. To have lamps burning, however, is to shine with good works, and that has to do with justice. He too did not omit to mention our purpose in doing these things, adding the words, 'Be like persons waiting for their master to return from a wedding' (Lk 12.36). When he comes, he will reward us for holding back from what sensuality demanded and for doing what charity directed, and so we shall reign in his perfect, everlasting peace, without any struggle against evil and with perfect enjoyment of good. (*cont.* 7.17)

[173] This admittedly odd and overly-literal translation of *corpus animale* comes from Edmund Hill's translation of the same passage in *Gn. litt.*, where Augustine contrasts the spiritual body of the resurrection with the 'soulish' body of Adam in Paradise, *Gn. litt.* VI.19.30f, see 318 n23; much more on this in our next chapter. We use the same translation here in the interests of providing continuity and as a mnemonic device.

Indeed, "in that world and that kingdom there will be consummate good and no evil, and love of wisdom will be perfect, and continence will have no work" (8.20). Like faith and hope, continence too will be made redundant. In all of this discussion there have been hints and allusions to marital relations. As we will see, Augustine's use of conjugal imagery to describe the reconciliation of the old friends 'soul' and 'spirit' in *On Continence* is hardly coincidental, nor is it ancillary to his vision of the therapy of grace.

In defending the goodness of the body Augustine reminds us of the mind's affection for its flesh; even though 'the corruptible body weighs down the soul' (Wis 9.15), and 'the body is dead because of sin' (Rom 8.10), Augustine alludes to the 'great sacrament' when he quotes Paul: 'No one ever hates his own flesh… but nourishes and nurtures it, just as Christ does the church (Eph 5.29)' (*cont.* 8.21). Augustine's anti-Manichean defense of the goodness of the flesh continues, bringing in not only Christ and the church but also the marriage relationship of husband and wife. In opposition to Manichean madness, "The true teacher exhorts husbands to love their wives on the model of their love for their own flesh, and exhorts them also to do it on the model of Christ's love for the church" (9.22). Augustine is beginning to blur the lines between these three unions, and it is difficult to see here which is patterned on which, so closely do they mirror one another. Augustine then quotes Ephesians 5.25-29 in full, so in order to follow his argument we shall too. The following is his presentation of it:

> 'Husbands,' he says, 'love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it, in order to make it holy, cleansing it by washing with water and word, so that he would obtain for himself a glorious church, with no spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and unstained.' So, he says, 'husbands too should love their wives like their own bodies. Whoever loves his wife loves himself.' He then adds what we have already quoted: 'No one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and nurtures it, just as Christ does the church. (*cont.* 9.22)

When we read Romans 7 on the war between the spirit and the flesh, Augustine also says we must keep this passage from Ephesians in mind as well: Christ's affection for the church and husbands for their wives teaches us about the proper attitude of the spirit to the body. In this anti-Manichean context the emphasis is on the attitude of the spirit to the body, but really the relationship of these three can be drawn out in numerous ways from several angles, depending on the polemical requirements of various situations.

In a highly significant passage Augustine sets forth his manifold vision of reconciliation by openly correlating these three relationships, largely based upon the Scriptural passages we have just been examining: "The apostle has given us to understand

that there are three unions (*tres… copulas*): Christ and the church, husband and wife, spirit and flesh" (*cont.* 9.23).[174] Rather than existing in a perfectly parallel, egalitarian harmony, there is a hierarchy within each of these pairs, in that they "maintain among themselves the beauty and orderliness of one being superior and in charge and the other honorably subordinate… The first member of each pair cares for the second, the second is subordinated to the first" (9.23). In discussing the relationship of these three harmonized, structured 'households' one to another, Augustine offers a little more clarity on their mutual ordering in 9.23-11.25. He begins with husband and wife, each of whom receive their conjugal archetype and example from Christ and the church, respectively; "As the church is subject to Christ, so too wives are to their husbands in all things" (Eph 5.24), and "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church" (Eph 5.25). But the pattern fails to work perfectly when we seek to apply Ephesians 5.28. Men are exhorted by a 'higher thing' (*a superiore*), namely Christ, and a 'lower thing' (*a re inferiore*), their own body,[175] when looking for examples on how to care for their wives "like their own bodies". Here the order is clear, husband and wife hold the middle position in this arrangement of these three pairs. Further evidence is found in Augustine's reluctance to apply the example of the body to wives:

> the wife is not given [by Paul in Eph 5] the body or the flesh as her model, for her to be subject to her husband as the flesh is to the spirit. Perhaps the Apostle… did not want to set that as the model of obedience for a woman. He chose to do so for husbands, because even though the spirit has desires opposed to the flesh, even in this respect it looks after the interests of the flesh, whereas the flesh with desires opposed to the spirit and rebellious does not look after either the interest of the spirit or its own interests. (*cont.* 9.23)[176]

Apparently Augustine is worried that the rebellious 'flesh' might give women an excuse for interrupting household order. But we should also notice that the omission of the flesh as example for woman, which breaks up the neatness of the system, actually affirms the dignity of the woman as also bearing the image of God, in that she is first a human individual, and then a woman. Affirming her own interior harmony and hierarchy is far more important than maintaining the neatness of any system.

The hierarchy of 'households' might seem to be complete, but the relationship he gives between the spirit and flesh and Christ and church, on the other hand, belies any effort at oversimplifying the relationship between Augustine's three unions. What the scriptures

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[174] *tres quasdam copulas nobis insinuauit apostolus: christum et ecclesiam, virum et uxorem, spiritum et carnem.*

[175] *id est a corpore suo*; I do not know why he does not say 'from his spirit', as this comparison would seem more consistent. Perhaps he means the care his spirit has for his body.

[176] See also *c. Faust.* XXII.31; *b. conjug.* 6 and 17; *adult. conj.* II.8; *s.* 332.4, 392.4, 332.4; *nupt. et conc.* I.9; *s.* 51.13; *conf.* XIII.32.47; *quaest. Hept.* I; *Gn. litt.* XI.37.50.

tell us about the relationship of spirit and flesh in this life also teaches us something about Christ and the church, in that we do in fact say that there is a certain likeness between the rebellious flesh and the Church. The Manicheans object at this point, asking, "How can there be any analogy between the body and the church? Does the church have desires opposed to Christ? After all, that same Apostle said, 'The church is subject to Christ' (Eph 5.24)" (*cont.* 11.25). In the face of their skepticism Augustine straightaway affirms that yes, indeed, the flesh lusts against the spirit, because "the church has not yet achieved the perfect peace it has been promised. So the church is subject to Christ because of the salvation it has been pledged, and the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit because of the illness that infects it." The church is in fact not divided in that *all* its members lack perfection; 'If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us (1 Jn 1.8)' (*cont.* 11.25). Hence Paul's words to the Corinthians,

> 'Because there is envy and rivalry among you, are you not carnal persons (1 Cor 3.3)?' Did not those to whom this was said have desires opposed to Christ? Who, other than Christ, is opposed by the desires of envy and rivalry? Christ heals these desires of the flesh in those who belong to him, but he does not like these in anyone. (*cont.* 11.25)

Augustine perhaps most beautifully sums up his vision of eschatological concord when he discusses the eschatological perfection of the church in terms of the resurrection of the human body,

> When the one who 'heals all our infirmities (Ps 103.3) has brought the church to the promised healing of its infirmities, there will then be no spot or wrinkle, however slight, in any of its members. Then in no way will the flesh lust against the spirit, and so there will also be no reason for the spirit to lust against the flesh. This whole battle will then come to an end; there will then be the greatest concord (*summa concordia*), then no one will be carnal, so much so that even the flesh itself will be spiritual (*caro sit spiritalis*).
> (*cont.* 11.25)

Again he blurs the lines. The complex relationship of these three realities and their mutual hope of union *in summa concordia* is made manifest when he continues,

> All those who live according to Christ now act toward their body in this way: on the one hand, they have desires opposed to its evil inclinations, because they do not yet possess it in its healed condition, and while it still needs healing they restrain it; on the other hand, they nourish and nurture its natural goodness, because 'no one ever hates his own flesh' (Eph 5.29). To the extent that one may compare greater and lesser things, this is also how Christ acts with his church. He restrains it with corrections, lest it become puffed up and destroyed by being spared punishment, and he comforts it and supports it, lest it succumb under the weight of its infirmities… So then when Christ's church has unshakable security without any fear, we can hope

> for our flesh to be [one day] perfectly sound without any rebelliousness. (*cont*. 11.25)

Clearly the bond between Christ and the church is the archetype and model for the other two, but as these few examples suggest, the ways in which these Scriptural models can bolster our understanding of Christ and the church are striking. Regardless of their ordering and arrangement, these three unions come together simultaneously and in parallel, the goal in all three being "one made superior, and the other made subject in a becoming manner (*quaedam decenter subjecta custodiunt*)," and thus the disorder all these discordant 'households' suffer begins to be healed by "observing the beauty of order (*in eis ordinis pulchritudine*)" (9.23).

CONCLUSION

In *On Continence* the sacrament of man and woman united 'in one flesh' takes on a three-fold application. Where in *On the Good of Marriage* it signified only Christ and the church, it now applies—as shadows and derivative realities of Christ and the church— to the notions of rightly-ordered marital and individual interior union as well. The rest of this thesis retraces Augustine's journey from 404 to 418, from the writing of *On the Good of Marriage* to the completion of *On Continence*, in an effort to figure out just how he unpacks the implications of the sacramentality of marriage, and how he maintains its semantic integrity in the three couplings of Christ and the church, husband and wife, and spirit and flesh.

2

HEAD AND BODY, CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

"The sacrament of marriage to one, of our time, is a symbol that in the future we shall all be united and subject to God in the one heavenly city."

–b. conjug. 18.21

INTRODUCTION

As we trace out the connection between Augustine's vision of the sacrament of marriage and his ascetical program, in this chapter we locate, for the first time, the sacrament of marriage within his Christology and its derivative sacramental theory. Doing so requires a considerable amount of reflection on Augustine's Christology, his sacramental theory, and his epistemology. Only then are we prepared to see how the sacrament of marriage functions within the life of the church, revealing the paramount mystery of *totus Christus*, that is, Christ eternally united with and governing his body, the church. Our discussion will rely on two central Augustinian texts, *The Trinity* and *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* buttressed by others as needed, such as *On Christian Teaching* and *Confessions*, among others. All of these considerations will begin to help us understand how the union of Christ and the church is able to be the both archetype and referent of the other two unions from *On Continence*, that is, the unions of husband and wife, and spirit and flesh.

A preliminary word about the Christian use of the term *sacramentum* in Latin North Africa is helpful before we begin.[1] Christine Mohrmann suggests that the early Latin use of

[1] For use of the term *sacramentum* in Augustine and early Latin Christianity generally, see Mohrmann, "Sacramentum"; H.-M. Féret, "*Sacramentum. Res.* dans la langue théologique de S. Augustin," *RSPT* (1940): 218-243; M.-F. Berrouard, "Le *Tractatus* 80, 3 *in Iohannis Euangelium* de saint Augustin: La parole, le sacrement et la foi," *REAug* 33 (1987): 235-254; R. Prenter, "Metaphysics and Eschatology in the Sacramental Teaching of St. Augustine," *ST* 1 (1948): 5-26; Charles Couturier, "*Sacramentum* et *mysterium* dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin," in *Études augustiniennes* .H. Rondet, ed. (Théologie 28) (Paris, 1953): 161-274; Frederick Van Der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 277-315; Basil Studer, "'*Sacramentum*' et '*Exemplum*' chez saint Augustin," *RecAug* 10 (1975): 87-141; Gerald Bonner, "The Church and the Eucharist in the Theology of Saint Augustine," *Sobornost* 6 (1978): 448-461; Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought*

the term *sacramentum* was used in order to avoid the exotic cultic term μυστήριον/*mysteria*—not to mention the equivalent Latin terms *sacra*, *arcana*, *initia*—due to their pagan connotations.[2] This goes a long way to explain why *sacramentum* was used in especially the African versions of the Old Latin scripture translations for μυστήριον to indicate something holy,[3] and it was most likely Tertullian who initiated serious theological use of *sacramentum* in the West, followed by Cyprian and then Augustine. Three Pauline texts—1 Corinthians 4.1 ('stewards of the mysteries of God), 1 Corinthians 13.2 ('if I… understand all mysteries'), and our text, Ephesians 5.32 ('this is a great mystery')—prompted Augustine to expand the semantic range of *sacramentum*. Though his primary sense of the term was as a sign of the sacred, his use of the term *sacramentum* varies widely, and for him it can stand in for the more traditional terms for mystery, symbol and ritual as well.[4]

Augustine never sets out what we might think of as a systematic exposition of 'sacrament'. Perhaps the best Augustinian definitions occur in *Epistles* 55 and 138, where he famously describes a *sacramentum* as that which "signifies something that must be received in a holy manner" (*ep.* 55.1.2), and explains that signs "are called sacraments when they pertain to the things of God" (*ep.* 138.7); and in celebrations such as Pascha Christians take great care to remember "the signification of the sacraments (*sacramentorum significationem*)" (*ep.* 55.1.2). In the same letter he uses *sacramentum* to refer to baptism and Eucharist, feasts, the movements of the moon and stars; and we see in Scripture that lambs, calves, lions and stones are sacraments of Christ, and mountains sacraments of the church. Drawing "a likeness for figuring the divine mysteries" hardly counts as idolatry, "for such a likeness is drawn from every creature… as from many earthly creatures, sacramental figures (*sacramentorum figurae*) are taken for mystical teachings" (*ep.* 55.6.11). Thus we see that sacraments for Augustine are found everywhere: in Scripture, in creation, and especially in church. All of this is done by God and his servants (human and angelic) to move us from visible things to invisible (*ex rebus uisibilibus ad inuisibilia*; *ep.* 55.5.8), "*per corporalia… ad incorporalia*" (*retr.* I.6). And perhaps it is the culmination of this movement, the inner death

of Augustine (Cambridge: CUP, 2004); Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); E. Cutrone, "Sacraments," *Augustine through the Ages*, Fitzgerald et al., eds (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999): 741-747, with bibliography.

[2] "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes," 141-144.

[3] *Ibid.*, 149.

[4] Couturier, "*Sacramentum* et *mysterium*," 269ff.; Mohrmann, "Sacramentum," 151-2; Cutrone, "Sacraments," 742; Van Der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 298f. Space and relevance preclude discussion of sacraments in his anti-Donatist texts. Most notably see *bapt.* I.

and resurrection of the soul, which permits Augustine to call Christ's flesh *sacramentum* (*Trin.* IV.6).[5] It is to Christ as Word and sacrament that we now turn.

CHRIST AND SACRAMENTS

The relationship between Augustine's vision of Christ as archetypal Word and his relationship to language has received ample attention.[6] But his specific focus on Christ as Word and sacrament as the foundation for the church's ministry has strangely been neglected, apart from a few worthy beginnings and suggestions.[7] But if Mark Jordan is right when he suggests that for Augustine the incarnation of the Word is the foundation and sustainer of all human signification, and in the church "The human *verba* are introduced to teach men something about the divine *Verbum*; yet, in fact, it is the divine *Verbum* which grounds and regulates the intelligibility of the human *verba*,"[8] then surely the notion of *sacramentum* as a corporeal sign, a 'visible word' of a sacred thing has its foundation in the incarnate Word as well, not to mention the fact that Augustine frequently describes Christ's flesh as sacrament. Due to the lack of treatment on this theme, our consideration of it in this section needs to be thorough not only for the sake of fullness but more importantly, to provide a foundation for the following chapters and the role of marriage as a sacrament in the life of the church.

Christ as Word and Sacrament

Augustine's *The Trinity*[9] begins with an important exegetical question regarding the Nicene proclamation of the godhead, which may be summarized as follows: if the Trinity

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[5] This is, for me, the most challenging aspect of Augustine's use of *sacramentum*. I have yet to see a study which deals with it, but it seems to point to the nobility of the crucified and resurrected Christian mind.

[6] For example Donald Daniels provides a fairly good reading of *Trin.*, but his exclusive emphasis on Christ as Word, and neglect of Christ as a sacrament, limits his discussion, "The Argument of The Trinity and Augustine's Theory of Signs," *AugStud* 8 (1977): 33-54.

[7] The best treatment on Christ's relationship to words in the church is Mark Jordan, "Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*," *AugStud* 11 (1980): 177-196; see also R.A. Markus, "Augustine on Signs", in *Signs and Meanings* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996): 71-104. On Christ's relation to the sacraments see Goulven Madec's Chapter Four, "Le mystère du Christ," in *La Patrie et la Voie* (Paris: Desclée, 1989); and on Christ as sacrament more generally, see Studer, "Sacramentum et exemplum."

[8] Jordan, "Words and Word," 186-7.

[9] In the following I very generally follow the insightful discussions of *Trin.* by: Lewis Ayers, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially chapters 5-12; *idem*., "The Christological Context of Augustine's *The Trinity* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII-XV," *AugStud* 19.1 (1998): 111-139; Michel Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *ModTheol* 19.3 (2003): 329-355; John Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *The Trinity*," *AugStud* 23 (1992): 103-123; and Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* The Trinity (Oxford, 2008). Notable discussions of Augustine's Christology generally include Gerald Bonner, "Christ, God and Man in the Thought of St Augustine," *Angelicum* 61 (1984): 268-294; Goulven Madec, "Christus, scientia et

works inseparably, how can the Scriptures ascribe some works to one of the persons apart from the others? (*Trin.* I.8) Along these lines the way in which we are to understand the various, seemingly contradictory statements the Scriptures make about Christ is a particularly pressing question. Beginning with the Nicene confession of the consubstantiality of Father and Son, Augustine notes that several passages of Scripture which proclaim the Father as greater than the Son (for example, 'the Father is greater than I', Jn 14.28) in apparent contradiction to the catholic understanding were particularly vexing for some. To help explain how the Scriptures and the creed are in agreement he takes the common Patristic route of partitive exegesis,[10] applying some passages to Christ's flesh, and others to him as Divine. Augustine bases his particular expression of this technique on the *forma* language of Philippians 2.6, where Paul says of Christ: 'who, being in the form of God thought it no robbery to be equal to God, yet emptied himself taking the form of a servant, without any confusion.' "So the Son of God is God the Father's equal by nature, by condition his inferior… In the form of God, the Word 'through whom all things were made' (Jn 1.3); in the form of a servant, one 'made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law' (Gal 4.4)" (*Trin.* I.14).[11] This rule for interpreting the Scriptures—some applying to the 'form of a servant' and others to 'the form of God'—is particularly helpful with passages like Mark 13.32, 'Of that hour and day no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, except the Father.' Augustine explains that we must not think this is said of Christ in his divinity, for he is the same one who also said, 'I have many things to tell you, but you cannot take them now (Jn 16.12)', "included among them the day and the hour" (*Trin.* I.23). Philip was right in asking to see the Father (Jn 14.8), but Augustine explains that he erred in two important ways: 1) in failing to appreciate the divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father, and 2) in failing to realize that the Christian life in this age is defined by faith, believing in what one cannot see. Augustine sums up this exchange with Philip and our presentation of the need for the flesh of Christ by quoting one of his favorite passages, 'As long as we are in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight' (2 Cor 5.6; *Trin.* I.17, IV.26).

This particular example of the Christ who both does not know certain things and yet knows all things allows Augustine to tie this general exegetical strategy of Christ's two

sapientia nostra: Le principe de coherence de la doctrine augustinienne," *RecAug* 10 (1975): 77-85; *idem*., *La Patrie et La Voie*; *idem*., "Christus", *AugLex*.

[10] I borrow the phrase 'partitive exegesis' from John Behr. See his *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004) for further examples of this Patristic practice. For another example, and from whom Behr borrows the term, see Lars Koen, "Partitive Exegesis in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel according to St John," *SP* 25 (1993): 115-121.

[11] See also *civ.* X.20.

natures to what recently has been called his 'Christological epistemology',[12] that is, our learning about the invisible Word through his visible flesh. Illustrating the close relationship between Christology and scriptural interpretation, Augustine lays out the rationale of the Incarnation when he explains that by saying 'I have many things to tell you, but you cannot take them now', Christ was exercising a method later used by Paul, who says 'I could not speak to you as spiritual but only as fleshly people' (1 Cor 3.1). The need for Christ's flesh to enlighten carnal minds is fully expressed (suiting Augustine's purposes perfectly) when Paul writes, 'I did not reckon myself to know anything among you but Christ Jesus, and him crucified' (1 Cor 2.2). He said this, Augustine explains, "For he had been speaking to people who were unable to grasp the deeper things of Christ's divinity" (*Trin.* I.23). In these passages we see that Augustine believes the Christian life necessarily has its foundation in faith, and that Christ's flesh is the starting-point for coming to grasp the "deeper things" of his divinity, as we see in Augustine's use of 1 Corinthians 2.2.

Christ the twofold Word

For Augustine the Christian life is a sort of a journey along the road of the single person of Christ, which in *The Trinity* is expressed as a movement from the knowledge (*scientia*) of Christ's body towards the wisdom (*sapientia*) of his divinity. As Augustine says straightforwardly in a famous passage regarding the tandem roles of Christ's flesh and divinity,

> Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him (*per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum*), through knowledge toward wisdom (*tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam*), without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col 2.3). (*Trin.* XIII.24)

Augustine laments those who will not make this faith journey with him but insist on resting in their own fantasies about the divine. He writes, "But I am struggling to return from this far country by the road he has made in the humanity of the divinity of his only Son; and changeable though I am, I breathe in his truth the more deeply, the more clearly I perceive there is nothing changeable about it" (*Trin.* IV.1).[13]

Augustine explains the effect of Christ's flesh on the Christian life in his oft-noted section from *The Trinity* Book IV on Christ's 'single' matching our 'double'; that is, Christ's single, bodily death being doubly applicable to humanity's two deaths, namely, that of the

[12] The phrase is Lewis Ayres', *Augustine and the Trinity*, Ch 6.
[13] See also *Trin.* VIII.11 and *ench.* 53.

soul and the body. His model for this dynamic is musical, derived from the unified yet distinct notes of an octave, which has a vibration ratio of 1:2.[14] Because "our enlightenment (*inluminatio*) is to participate (*participatio*) in the Word" (*Trin.* IV.4) and yet because of our impurity we are utterly incapable of this participation, the "necessity of condemnation" was undone by Christ's single voluntary death, which "enters into a harmony of salvation" with each of our two deaths (*Trin.* IV.5). Both our souls and bodies stand in need of healing and resurrection; the soul because of ungodliness and the body because of the punishment for sin, which also results in death, the final separation of soul and body. Our final hope lay in the end, after the resurrection from the dead, "when our justification will be inexpressibly perfected" (*Trin.* IV.5) in the reunification of the two when we shall "be made one in the one just one" (*Trin.* IV.11), "for then 'we will be like him because we will see him as he is' (1 Jn 3.2)" (*Trin.* IV.5). Likening the resurrection of each of these things of ours to the single resurrection of Christ preceding the future resurrection of the church and the final unity of the "One Christ", we do not despair of our own future resurrection and reunification, but find hope in our faith (*Trin.* IV.11-12). Here we note a consonance with what we saw in *On Continence*, the parallel unions of Christ with the church and spirit with flesh; though hardly explicit here, the same model is clearly in operation.

Through its death and resurrection Christ's flesh dually addresses both our inner and outer life, as a sacrament (*sacramentum*) of the soul and an example (*exemplum*) for our own bodies, and thereby presents us with an encouraging corporeal image of both our inner, spiritual reality and an example of our yet unseen bodily future (*Trin.* IV.6).[15] Tellingly, Christ as *sacramentum* operates in the inner dimension, with the crucifixion of the soul consisting of the "sorrows of repentance" and the "torment of self-discipline", and its resurrection being effected when we refuse to have materialistic thoughts about Christ (*Trin.* IV.6). Christ's death and resurrection, operating as *exemplum* in the outer dimension, is a more straightforward affair, meant to encourage Christians in their bodily sufferings and to build confidence in the future resurrection, as we have already seen.

Augustine also Christianizes the categories of Stoic communication theory[16] to describe the 'inner' and 'outer' dimensions of the one Christ in reflecting on Christ as

[14] I thank my colleague, Dr. James Jirtle, for sharing this with me in an enlightening conversation on the physics of music.

[15] A helpful and thorough discussion on Christ as *sacramentum* and *exemplum* in Augustine is found in Studer, "'Sacramentum et Exemplum'"; Madec, "Scientia et Sapientia"; and Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 147-159.

[16] Augustine's use of Stoic language theory to reflect on Christ as the Word of God is, of course, well-documented. Most discussions of Augustine's sign theory focus not on *Trin.* but on *dial.*, *mag.*, and *doc. Chr.* For Augustine's use of Stoic language theory, especially as it relates to Christ, see the following: G. Bavaud,

Verbum, the Word of God. He takes John 1.10, 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,' as license to explain Christ in terms of human language. Just as an idea does not cease to be intellectual when our mouths speak audible words in an effort to convey the thought to the mind of other human beings *via* their fleshly ears, "In the same way the Word of God was made flesh without change that he might dwell among us" (*doc. Chr.* I.13.12). And neither does our word leave our mind when we share it with another.

> Although it's no match at all, very different, in no way comparable, still it can suggest to you a certain similarity. Here you are then, here's the word which I now am speaking to you; I had it first in my mind. It went out to you, and didn't go away from me. It began to be in you, because it wasn't in you before. It stayed with me, when it went out to you. So just as my word was presented to your perception, and didn't depart from my mind, so that Word was presented to our perception, and didn't depart from his Father. My word was with me, and went out into the sound of my voice; the Word of God was with the Father, and went out into the flesh. But I can hardly do with my voice, can I, what he did with his flesh? I mean, I cannot hold onto my voice as it flies away from me. He not only held onto his flesh, to be born, to live, to act in it; but he also raised it up when it was dead, and lifted up to the Father this sort of vehicle in which he had come out to us. (*s.* 119.7)[17]

The similarity between Christ as the incarnate Word with human language lies in the capacity of the *forma servi* to convey to human ears and minds the ineffable Word which resides eternally with the Father. And as Augustine reminds us in *The Trinity* Book XIII, we dwell not on the spoken words, but on their meaning (*Trin.* XIII.26), not on Christ's flesh, but merely as it communicates his divinity.

Christ as sacrament

In addition to functioning as a sacrament of our inner death and resurrection, and analogous to his flesh being an outer, or spoken, word, Augustine also presents Christ's body, as *forma servi*, as a sacrament in the more familiar sense—a corporeal, signifying 'thing'—which refers us beyond itself (*doc. Chr.* I.34.38) and yet to himself, the *forma Dei*. As

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"Un thème augustinien : Le mystère de l'Incarnation, à la lumière de la distinction entre le verbe intérieur et le verbe proféré," *REAug* 9 (1963): 95-101; John Rist, *Augustine* (Cambridge University Press,1994), 23-40; Christopher Kirwan, "Augustine's Philosophy of Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Stump, Knetzmann, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Markus, "Augustine on Signs," 87 and 94; Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (NY: Routledge, 1989), especially Chapter 3; Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, vol 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), especially 169-211; Gerard Watson, "St. Augustine's Theory of Language," *Maynooth* 6.2 (1982): 4-20; *idem.*, "St Augustine and the inner word: the philosophical background," *ITQ* (1988): 81-92; Mark D. Jordan is particularly good, "Words and Word"; B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*," R.A. Markus, ed, *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1972): 92-147; and Alfred Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tubingen, 1965), 104-118 is especially helpful on background, Christian and classical.

[17] Helpful occurrences are *s.* 119.7, 237.4, 288.3-4; *doc. Chr.* I.13.12; *Trin.* IX.12-13, XV.20; *Jo. ev. tr.* 37.4.

Louis Mackey notes, "The incarnate Word is the only *signum* that is its own *signatum*."[18] In a well-known and dramatic passage Augustine refers to Christ as "This sacrament, this sacrifice, this high priest, this God (*hoc sacramentum, hoc sacrificium, hic sacerdos, hic Deus*)" (*Trin.* IV.11). Near the end of *The Trinity* Book IV Augustine explains that Wisdom herself was sent in "the fullness of time" (Gal 4.4), not to be with humanity in the sense that she had been previously with the patriarchs and prophets, but

> in order that the Word might become flesh, that is, become man. In this sacrament that was prophesied for the future lay the salvation of those wise and holy men also who were born of women before he was born of the virgin; and in this sacrament now proclaimed as achieved lies the salvation of all who believe, hope, and love. For this is 'the great sacrament of piety, which was manifested in flesh, justified in spirit, was seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory' (1 Tim 3.16). (*Trin.* IV.27)

Herein we see the content of Christian faith, hope and love actually embodied in Christ. The Gospel itself, for Augustine, is nothing less and nothing more than the apostolic testimony to the supreme sacrament of Christ's deeds in the flesh, what David Tracy fittingly calls "the supreme sign of the supreme *res*,"[19] using his flesh to point us and our affections towards his divinity.

The Work of Christ: Conformation through Subordination

Beyond finding this rationale for expressing Christ as the Word of the Father from the traditional application of *Verbum*, Augustine finds further warrant in explaining why it was the Word, as Word, who became incarnate rather than the Father or the Spirit. Beginning with John 1.3, 'All things were made through him,' and Sirach 37.16, 'the beginning of every work is a word', Augustine's Christology finds its height in the honesty, the continuity, between the outer and inner 'words' of Christ, which correspond to him as *forma servi/Dei*, and *exemplum/sacramentum*. The outer 'word' of Christ, the deeds of his flesh, correspond perfectly to the desires of his inner 'word', that is, his divinity. In other words, there is no duplicity in Christ; his bodily deeds express what is in his eternal heart, and his heart is fully disclosed in his flesh. In scripture Christ demands that we do not make dramatic promises but merely say what we mean and mean what we say with a simple 'yes' or 'no' (Mt 5.7), and James exhorts us to 'let your yes be yes and your no be no' (Jas 5.12). Augustine takes this double mention as applying to the consonance between the inner and

[18] L.H. Mackey, "The Mediator Mediated," *FrStud* 42 (1982): 135-155, at 153.

[19] Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for a True Rhetoric," in *The Rhetoric of Saint Augustine*. Enos, Thompson et al, eds. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 267-288, at 281.

outer words of Christ; thus in his honesty Christ only says 'yes, yes; no, no' (Jas 5.12, Mt 5.37, 2 Cor 1.17), and the reason that it was Christ who became incarnate rather than either of the other two was so that—Christ being the Word of God revealing the Father, and our inner and outer lives being characterized by our own 'word'—we might match our 'words' up to him as *the* Word, "that we might live rightly by our word following and imitating his example; that is, by our having no falsehood either in the [inner] contemplation or in the [outer] operation of our word" (*Trin.* XV.20). Getting us away from the 'fine words' of fig leaves that we weave in order to cover up our nakedness of the fruit of good works, and thus continuing to live as liars, Christ became incarnate to make us upright and therefore honest again. The appropriate ordering of Christ's inner and outer, his divinity and flesh, brings about a similar order in our own inner and outer, after the resurrection, giving us no reason to hide. "To achieve it we are instructed by the good master in Christian faith and godly doctrine, in order that… 'we might be transformed into the same image from glory to glory… (2 Cor 3.13)… however, this is a perfection of the image that lies some time in the future" (*Trin.* XV.20). When this Christ-like integrity does come about, "we will be like God because we shall see him, not through a mirror but as he is." But for now, the dissimilarity between our 'word' and Christ the Word is ineffably great (*trin* XV.21), and we are left with striving for the agreement of our minds and bodies which will be achieved in the eschaton.

Perception, attachment, and conformation

The phrase quoted immediately above, 'we will be like God because we shall see him', is telling. Understanding how 'seeing' results in 'being like' for Augustine requires a brief look at his theory of human perception and cognition.[20] In *The Trinity* Book XI's detailed discussion of sense perception Augustine points to three distinguishable elements in any sensory experience (in this case sight): 1) the object we see, 2) our actual sensory experience of it, and 3) our conscious attention on it, namely, that which "holds the sense of the eyes on the thing being seen as long as it is being seen" (*Trin.* XI.2).[21] What we 'see', though, is not in fact the object itself, but rather the impression it makes on our soul, analogous to the impress of a seal onto wax (XI.3). Thus he can say that the object "begets a likeness of itself" within the part of the soul dedicated to sensory perception (XI.3). This is

[20] Studies on Augustine's theory of cognition abound. The now classic study is Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), which has a substantial chapter on Augustine; O'Daly's *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* contains useful philosophical background, especially in physiology and medicine. Most recently, see Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), where she gives an able account of Augustine's theory of cognition and his influence on subsequent figures.

[21] For helpful background and further discussion of *intentio*, see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, especially 43-45, 84-87, 108-111,

plain, he suggests, when we play games with our eyes, closing them and observing the fading remnants of the particularities of whatever light source we happened to have been observing (XI.4). These two things then, the object and its impress on the soul, are held together in the tightest unity by the conscious attention, or will, which "exerts such force in coupling the two together that it applies the sense to be formed to the thing that is being looked at and holds it there once it is formed" (XI.5). Returning to the wax analogy, the will is the force that presses the wax onto the seal, so that the sensory image is identical to its prototype.

Believing our minds see an object's imprint in the soul rather than the object itself, Augustine feels free to replace the object with a memory of it and still retain the same sensory scheme (XI.6), and "Just as it is the will which fastens sense to body, so it is the will which fastens memory to sense and the thinking attention to memory" (XI.15).[22] Regardless of the source of the image, the will can apply its attention to it in varying degrees, and when strongly applied in what we would call love or covetousness or lust, it can have an effect on the quality of even the body itself (III.15, XI.5), and gives the soul its characteristic shape (XI.6-7), even if the object perceived is not incorporeal but of a completely different nature altogether (XI.2).[23] So Augustine can say that when the will is giving undue attention to lower things, "the rational soul lives a misshapen (*deformiter*) kind of life" (XI.6). And likewise, when the praiseworthy will is gazing upon appropriate things, it takes on its appropriate form. Thus we need a sort of rule of attention that is mindful of both the intellectual and bodily life of mankind and the soul's tendency to be conformed to the object of the will's affection. Here we see that Romans 12.2, "Do not be conformed to this world," has become an important passage for Augustine:

> it is clear that when we live according to God our mind should be intent on his invisible things and thus progressively be formed from his eternity, truth and charity, and yet that some of our rational attention, that is to say some of the same mind, has to be directed to the utilization of changeable and bodily things without which this life cannot be lived; this however not in order to be 'conformed to this world' (Rom 12.2) by setting up such goods as the final goal and twisting our appetite for happiness onto them, but in order to do whatever we do do in the reasonable use of temporal things with an eye to the acquisition of eternal things, passing by the former on the way, setting our hearts on the latter to the end." (*Trin.* XII.21)

Beyond the conforming effects of our will and its attention, here we see the rule of use/enjoyment from *On Christian Teaching* being employed once again, and Augustine, like

[22] On soul-images, *phantasia* as inner words (*dicibile/lekton*) and the role the will plays in actualizing them, see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 141.

[23] On the formability of the soul, see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 34f. For discussion of the role of the will in thinking, which O'Daley calls the 'motor of cognition,' see 211.

most other late-antique Christian teachers, places great emphasis on the power and prominence of human desire in determining not just the quality but also the direction and destination of human life. Whatever the object of desire, whether worthy or no, "the same appetite with which one longs open-mouthed to know a thing becomes love of the thing known when it holds and embraces the acceptable offspring, that is, knowledge, and joins it to its begetter" (*Trin.* IX.18).

This 'holding and embracing' by the will describes our soul's union with the object of its desire. "These two, begetter [object of attention] and begotten [the sensory image produced], are coupled together by love as the third, and this is nothing but the will seeking or holding something to be enjoyed" (*Trin.* XIV.8). Thus the will acts as a fastener, giving the human being not only its characteristic shape but also determining its direction through its incessant search for pleasing things to embrace, dragging the entire person along with it for better or for worse. When the attention turns to an object "it is formed by it again and becomes one with what is forming it" (*Trin.* XI.6). "And what is love but a kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things?" (*Trin.* VIII.14). In several places Augustine literally calls love a "glue" (*curae glutino*, X.7; *glutino amoris*, X.11) which sticks us fast to the objects of our love and attention. And famously, he also explains this force as a sort of gravity: "The will which joins and arranges these pairs and couples them in a kind of unity, and only applies the appetite for seeing or thinking to the achievement of rest in the things from which sight are formed, the will is like a weight" (XI.18).[24]

If we would understand the second half of *The Trinity*, which is designed to direct human love beyond knowledge and attach the affections to the invisible divinity,[25] we must not stop at noticing the active and determining quality of the will, but note also its potential continuity throughout all the trinities Augustine gives us; if ordered rightly through fixation upon the invisible God as the object of its affection, one and the same will is active throughout the extreme outer and most intimate inner levels of the individual, guiding its attention in all things. The various instances of attention or willing that occur throughout the hierarchy of the individual human being are in fact meant to line up and connect with one another, suggesting the marital *concordia* we noted in our previous chapter. With faint echoes of the Stoic doctrine of tension, yet departing sharply from them in his focus on

[24] See also *en. Ps.* 29[2].10.

[25] On love's ability to go where knowledge cannot, see especially *conf.* XIII.7.8, and *s.* 223A.4, "How can I reach something that is above my soul, unless I pour out my soul above myself?"

volition,[26] in a unique and important passage Augustine explains the centrality and continuity of the will in all human thinking and action:

> Now all wills or wishes [within an individual] are straight, and all the ones linked with them too, if the one to which they are all referred is good; but if that is bent then they are all bent. *And thus a sequence of straight wishes or wills is a ladder for those who would climb to happiness*, to be negotiated by definite steps; *but a skein of bent and twisted wishes or wills is a rope to bind anyone who acts so,* and have him 'cast into outer darkness' (Mt 8.12). Happy then are they who in their deeds and behavior sing the 'song of steps', and 'woe to those who trail sins like a long rope' (Is 5:18). (*Trin.* XI.10)[27]

The taut line of connected and aligned wills throughout the being of the single human individual is effectively a rope ladder by which one climbs to the divine;[28] but if slackened by being tied to a goal lower than God, the now limp, twisted and tangled rope becomes a net or even a hangman's noose.

Providence as volitional order

The character-determining attachment and tensing of the human will functions as a microcosm of the effects of God's will as Providence. In *The Trinity* Book XII Augustine divides the intellect into two levels, each of which involves a willing faculty operative in the different arenas of embodied human existence: the "part which is diverted to the management of temporal things," and "the part which adheres to the eternal ideas to contemplate or consult them" (XII.12)—in other words, active and contemplative. Giving us a preview of how the sacrament of marriage figures in all this,[29] he labels these 'female' and 'male', respectively. Using 1 Corinthians 11.7 ('the man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of man'), Augustine uses this challenging passage to illustrate the appropriate order of the human mind which loves God, the 'female' subordinate to the 'male'; that is, the earthly aspects of human life subordinated to eternal values contemplated in the mind of God.

> If it [the human mind] is all contemplating truth it is the image of God; and when something is drawn off from it and assigned or directed in a certain way to the management of temporal affairs, it is still all the same the image of God as regards the part with which it consults the truth it has gazed on; but as regards the part which is directed to managing these lower affairs, it is not the image of God. Now the more it reaches out toward what is eternal, the more it is formed thereby to the image of God, and so it is not to be curbed

[26] See O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 6.

[27] Se also *ep.* 166.4; O'Daley is helpful here on comparing Augustine's volitional *intentio* with Stoic *tonos*, *Philosophy of Mind*, 43-45; see also Dihle, *Theory of Will*, 62f.

[28] See also *en. Ps.* 44.22, Christ 'stretching out' the members of his body the church, to present it to himself 'free from spot or wrinkle' (Eph 5.27).

[29] We discuss the 'gender' of the mind in full in Chapter Four.

> or required to moderate or restrain its exertions in this direction, and therefore 'the man ought not to cover his head' (1 Cor 11.7). But as regards that rational activity which is occupied with bodily and temporal things, too many advances into this lower territory are dangerous, and so it 'ought to have authority over its head' (1 Cor 11.10); this is indicated by the covering, which symbolizes its need to be curbed. (*Trin.* XII.10)

Here we have the proper human ordering, albeit in negative terms, illustrated as the naturally appropriate subordination of lower things to higher, with the higher refusing to take its attention from God. More directly, the upper portion of the mind is ruled by God, and the body is ruled by the mind when things are operating as they should (*Trin.* X.7). Augustine is confident that, if he has indeed identified these aspects correctly, "It is not hard to decide which should be preferred and which subordinated to the other" (XII.25). This is the same ordering we saw earlier in *On Continence* 9.23. And here we see that rather than being awkward and artificial, the appropriate subordination of the various aspects of the human mind, body and soul is actually a restoration to seminal order, and this relative subordination ushers the whole being into contemplation, as we shall see.

We see in *The Trinity* Book I that Augustine uses an even stronger term, 'subjection' (*subjectio*), to describe this process writ large in the universal work of Christ, which culminates in the Son's presentation of the church to the Father in face-to-face contemplation (*Trin.* I.16). In addition to the Trinitarian issues we discussed earlier, such as the problem of the Father being called greater than the Son (Jn 14.28), another troubling passage was 1 Corinthians 15.28, 'but when all things are made subject to him [Christ], then shall the Son himself also be made subject to the one who subjected all things to him,' and 1 Corinthians 15.24, where Christ 'hands over the kingdom to God and the Father.' This problem too is easily answered with the *forma* rule of Philippians 2: "Inasmuch as he is God he will jointly with the Father have us as subjects; inasmuch as he is [human] priest he will jointly with us be subject to him" (*Trin.* I.20). What interests us here is that, again, this human subjection is the very foundation for the beatific vision. The Son's work in this life, inseparable from the Father's, is characterized by "the working of that power of his by which he is able also to subject all things to himself (Phil 3.20; *Trin.* I.15).

Perhaps the most obvious example of this subjection took place in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the suffering human Christ prayed, "yet not what I will, but what you will be done, Father' (Mt 26.39). This is a classic example of Christ's identification with us, which is our healing: "in displaying the will proper to a human being he displayed your nature, straightened you out" (*en. Ps.* 32[2].2). This allows Augustine to exhort us in the voice of Christ, "Correct yourself, subject yourself to his will, and say 'not what I will, but

what you will be done, Father. How can you be then separated from God, when you now will what God wills? You will be straight and upright, and praise will be your fitting occupation, for 'praise befits the upright' (Ps 32(33).1). The straightening of the human will brings us to the Christian vocation of referring all things to God in praise, reconciling not only ourselves to God, but fusing together all Christ's members "into one spirit in the furnace of charity" through "one and the same wholly harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same happiness" (*Trin.* IV.12).

This reconciling work of Christ, subjecting and thus uniting the will of all things with the Father's will, comprises the totality of Providence, and is the ordering principle of all creation. Though he famously rejected the Stoic (and Tertullian-esque) doctrine of God's material omnipresence,[30] he nonetheless retained a modified version of the Stoic notion of *tonos*, or tension. But rather than being held together by the material divine soul (*pneuma/anima*), Augustine instead believes all things are held together in volitional tension and in the proper order by the power of God's own will (*voluntas*). The following significant passage from *The Trinity* Book III deserves to be quoted in full. Augustine suggests that beyond the heavens,

> There the will of God (*dei voluntas*) presides, as in his house or his temple, over the spirits who are joined together in the highest concord and friendship, fused indeed into one will (*in spiritibus summa pace atque amicitia copulatis et in unam voluntatem*) by a kind of spiritual fire of charity; as it is written, 'He makes spirits his angel-messengers, and a burning fire his ministers' (Ps 104.4). From that lofty throne, set apart in holiness, the divine will spreads itself through all things in marvelous patters of created movement, first spiritual then corporeal; and it uses all things to carry out the unchanging judgment of the divine decree, whether they be corporeal or incorporeal things, whether they be non-rational or rational spirits, whether they be good by his grace, or bad by their own will.
>
> But just as the grosser, inferior bodies are governed in due order (*ordine reguntur*) by the more subtle and potent ones, so too all bodies are governed by the spirit of life; and the non-rational spirit of life is governed by the rational spirit of life; and the rational spirit of life that has run away and sinned is governed by the rational spirit of life that has remained faithful and just; and that is governed by God himself. And so the whole of creation is governed by its creator, 'from whom and by whom and in whom' (Rom 11.36) it was founded and established. And thus God's will is the first and highest cause of all physical species and motions. For nothing happens visibly and in a manner perceptible to the senses which does not issue either as a command or as a permission from the inmost invisible and intelligible court of the supreme emperor, according to his unfathomable justice of rewards and punishments, favors and retributions, in what we may call this vast and all-embracing republic of the whole creation. (*Trin.* III.9)

[30] O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 9.

Here we see that Augustine's notion of Providence goes far beyond simple foreknowledge, but includes the regulation and ordering of all things through the power of the divine will, lower things being ruled by higher, and all by God. So Augustine can also discuss the righteous life in a Stoic way, with virtue as living according to nature. Reflecting on the famous maxim of the Delphic oracle, 'Know thyself', Augustine asks,

> Why then is the mind commanded to know itself? I believe it means that it should think about itself and live according to its nature, that is it should want to be placed according to its nature, under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of; under him by whom it should be ruled, over all that it ought it rule. (*Trin.* X.7)

Here we see that Augustine has replaced the classical model of virtue as *knowledge* of Providence to virtue as *sympathy* with Providence, consistent with his characterization of Providence as the will rather than the reason of God.[31]

A final example of the continuity of authority can be found in his *Explanation* of Psalm 46 where he reflects on Wisdom 7.27-8 ('the soul of a righteous person is the throne of Wisdom),

> So then, if the soul of a righteous person is Wisdom's throne, make sure your soul is righteous, and it will be a regal chair for Wisdom… surely God is enthroned in all those who lead good lives, perform good works, and treat others with reverent charity, and surely God rules them? The soul obeys God who is seated within it, and the soul in turn commands its bodily members. Your soul sends orders to the appropriate member of your body, telling the foot to move, or the hand, eye, or ear to perform its function. The soul treats these members as its servants, but the soul itself is the servant of its Lord who is enthroned within it. It cannot rule its subordinates well, unless in consents to obey its own superior. (*en. Ps.* 46.10)

The Fall and conformation to the world

But without exception, in this fallen life the 'masculine', contemplative part of every individual neglects this singular, harmonious and universal will and makes "disordered forays" (*immoderato progressu*) into temporal affairs. Now that the 'female', active part has her man's attention and consent, the "masculine portion in the control tower of counsel may fail to curb her"(XII.13). It becomes clear that Augustine is expressing the fall of Adam and Eve in the present tense, which suggests he sees the Fall not merely as an isolated event with great repercussions but as a continuing and even participative process in the mind of

[31] Dihle, *Theory of Will*, 37f. Here we anticipate our discussion of providence in *Gn. litt.* in the next chapter, and Augustine's understanding of primary and secondary causation as rational and volitional, respectively.

humanity generally. The result of the mind's 'Adam' consenting to the wayward direction of its companion 'Eve' results in,

> the sight of eternal things being withdrawn from the head himself as he eats the forbidden fruit with his consort, so that the light of his eyes is no longer with him. Thus they are both stripped naked of the enlightenment of truth, and the eyes of the conscience are opened to see what a shameful and indecent state they have left themselves in. (*Trin.* XII.13)

Thereafter these two join their now-darkened powers in the task of sewing leaves together, which represent fine words void of the fruit of good works, in order "to cover up their baseness by speaking well." And so it is that the mind "turns away from [God] and slithers and slides down into less and less which is imagined to be more and more" (X.7). Thus the slackened rope-ladder of love has become entangling and compromising.

In less figurative language, Augustine also describes this process as a withdrawal from participation in universal voluntary harmony to a radical privatization: "The soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all, into the part which is its own private property" (XII.14). By inappropriately dropping its attention from the divine and thus losing its enlightenment and formation, the mind forfeits not only its vision but its ability to participate in the ordering of the cosmos, the common property of the whole universe, and is limited to the very confining quarters of the individual self. Thus the fallen individual, now living according to temporal rather than eternal things, is characterized by grasping greed (XI.6). He describes this privatization in greater detail a few paragraphs later:

> By following God's directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws; and because there is nothing more than the whole it is thrust back into anxiety over a part, and so by being greedy for more it gets less. That is why greed is called the root of all evils. Thus all that it tries to do on its own against the laws that govern the universe it does by its own body, which is the only part it has a part-ownership in. And so it finds delight in bodily shapes and movements, and because it has not got them with it inside, it *wraps itself in their images* which it has fixed in the memory. (*Trin.* XII.14)

In following Satan's example and reaching for more than one's due (which actually results in less), humanity's vision is constricted to the confining quarters of the individual self, but it is still haunted by desire for the whole universe and the divine. Unable to enjoy that for which it was intended, the human mind is now forced to resort to what it *can* perceive, reduced to wallowing "in bodily shapes and movements," by which it is also (mis-)shaped and (de-)formed.

The conforming effect of the now-fallen attention is so powerful, and the resulting likeness so convincing, that the mind itself can even be deceived about its own nature, now that it is wrapped up in carnal images.

> Yet such is the force of love that when the mind has been thinking about things with love for a long time and has got stuck to them with the glue of care, it drags them along with itself even when it returns after a fashion to thinking about itself… it wraps up their images and clutches them to itself, images made in itself out of itself. For it gives something of its own substance to their formation. (*Trin.* X.7)

The soul-ish images produced in the senses and stored in the memory, the 'stomach' of the mind (*conf.* X.21, *Trin.* XII.23), are nearer to the intellectual substance of reason than the actual objects perceived, and this similarity mediates and ensures the mind's error. As Barnes describes it, "The mind's 'servile adaptation' to sense knowledge does not lie only in its need to know through sense, but also (and more importantly) in the mind's adoption of the dynamic structure and limitations of sense knowledge as its own."[32] When seeking out the mind itself (not yet ready for God), Augustine suggests that a straightforward search for pure intellect might not be as helpful at first as searching

> also in the things that it thinks about with love, and it has got used to loving sensible, that is bodily things; so it is unable to be in itself without their images. Hence arises its shameful mistake, that it cannot make itself out among the images of the things it has perceived with the senses, and see itself alone; they are all stuck astonishingly fast together with the glue of love. And this is its impurity, that while it attempts to think of itself alone, it supposes itself to be that without which it is unable to think of itself. (*Trin.* X.11)

Thus the mind mistakenly believes itself to be a body, due to its constant attention to and love for bodily things (X.8), and this helps explain the purgative strategy of *The Trinity*, which Augustine explicitly says was an effort to "train the reader" (*exercere lectorem*; *Trin.* XV.1).[33]

Restoration through conformation to Christ

Augustine gets his method of searching for the human mind "in the things it thinks about with love" from the incarnation of Christ, who became a body—something we love—in his search for human minds and hearts. The incarnate Christ in the 'form of a servant' "peeps through the trellis of our flesh, and coaxes us, and enkindles our love until we run after him, allured by his fragrance" (*conf.* XIII.15.18). And so Christ became flesh "to capture

[32] "Visible Christ," 345.

[33] As Ayres explains, following Pierre Hadot and others, Augustine does not mean a purely mental exercise when he explains his task as an *exercitatio*, but one that involves the whole person in relation to society and the universe, "Christological Context," 115-116. My agreement with this analysis will become clear as this thesis progresses.

our faith and draw it to himself, and by means of it to lead us on to his truth" (*Trin.* IV.24). Augustine helpfully summarizes *The Trinity* Books I-IV and the curative *via Christi* thus:

> To sum up then: we were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things, and which had become almost a natural growth on our mortal stock; so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means like those we were already bound to in a servile adaptation. Health is at the opposite pole from sickness, but the cure should be halfway between the two, and unless it has some affinity with the sickness, it will not lead to health. Useless temporal things just delude the sick and disappoint them; useful ones help them to get well and lead them, once they have got well, to eternal things. Now just as the rational mind is meant, once purified, to contemplate eternal things, so it is meant while still needing purification to give faith to temporal things. (*Trin.* IV.24)

In addition to characterizing the fallen human condition as diseased and in need of medical attention, Augustine often characterizes human carnality as weakness, and he is fond of using Paul's metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3.1-2 of carnal Christians as babes in Christ not ready for the 'solid' food of incorporeal things but requiring the 'milk' of bodily images.[34] Mindful of our weakness, the apostle "presents him not in the divine strength in which he is equal to the Father, but in human weakness through which he was crucified" (*Trin.* I.3). Our weak carnal minds need strengthening and "it is necessary for our minds to be purified before that inexpressible reality can be inexpressibly seen by them; and so in order to make us fit and capable of grasping it, we are led along more endurable routes, nurtured on faith as long as we have not yet been endowed with that necessary purification" (*Trin.* I.3). Hence the need for corporeally, rather than spiritually, expressed truth.

A livelier example is found in his *Enarration* of Psalm 119(120), where we see Augustine speaking extensively of the role of the Christ's flesh in nourishing the weak. Reciting again the prologue of John's Gospel which his congregation had just heard read out, "In the beginning was the Word…" Augustine challenges his congregation,

> Take that in, if you can. Seize it, for it is solid nourishment. But you will say to me, "Yes he is solid food, to be sure, but I am an infant. What I need is milk, so that I can grow up and become capable of eating solids." Christ knew this. He is solid food, but you can only take milk; and so he who was solid food was processed through flesh to reach your palate. A mother does this: she eats solid food and processes it through her flesh to pass it on to her baby in the form of milk; similarly the Word, the Lord, the food of angels, was made flesh, and so the apostle could say, "I gave you milk to drink, rather than solid food. You were not capable of it then, nor are you even

[34] See notable examples in: *Jo. ev. tr.* 97, 98, 102; *en. Ps.* 5.7, 8.5-10, 22.5, 36.1, 38.3, 49.27, 103[1].16, 119.2, 130.9-11.

> now" (1 Cor 3.2). He [Paul] descended to little ones to give them milk, and because he descended, he gave them the one who descended [Christ not only as divine, but crucified]. But him [Christ as divine] the little ones cannot grasp—not when he is spoken of like that. How can they take him in, these little ones who can take only milk? "Jesus Christ, crucified," says the apostle. Suck what he became for you, and you will grow toward what he is. (*en. Ps.* 119.2)

And another example from the *Enarrations*:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ made the bread that was himself into milk for us by becoming incarnate and appearing as a mortal man, so that in him death might be abolished and we, by believing in the flesh which the Word took to himself, might not wander away from the Word. Let us use this means to grow; let us get our nourishment from this milk. During this time when we are not yet strong enough to feed on the Word, let us not abandon our milky diet of faith. (*en. Ps.* 130. 11)

This is exactly the point where heretics go wrong, by "arguing about matters beyond their comprehension." In their pride they had left the church and her proclamation of Christ crucified too quickly, yet again grasping for more than their due and ended up with an errant conception of the invisible God: "Their mother is God's church, from which they separated. They ought to have stayed with her, being fed upon milk that would have helped them to grow until they were ready to feed on the Word who is God with God, in the form of God and equal to the Father" (*en. Ps.* 130.11). Likewise, the opposite danger is almost as bad, and we ought not think we are ready for solid food when not yet weaned of Christ's milk. There is a real danger of dying from hunger, as none of us will ever see God 'face to face' (1 Cor 13.12) in this life, however relatively mature we might become, and Augustine advises cautious humility, submission to God's will, which will preserve us throughout our earthly sojourn (*en. Ps.* 130.12-14).

So it is that the flesh of Christ strengthens those weak ones who nonetheless possess faith, and in him as man and God "we are led along more endurable routes in order to make us fit and capable of grasping it, nurtured on faith as long as we have not yet been endowed with that necessary purification. Thus the apostle rightly says that 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ' (Col 2.3)" (*Trin.* I.3). The unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ gives this incarnational 'route' its durability, and makes the flesh of Christ the suitable starting-point for making progress towards the eschatological vision of the divine.

Looking ahead

At the end of *The Trinity* Book VIII Augustine celebrates the achievement of having identified the finest part of the human mind as lover, beloved, and love itself directed to God, and indicates that this trinity (lover, beloved and love) provides him with "the frame of a kind of warp on which we can weave what remains to be said" (*Trin.* VIII.13). In looking at Christ and his enticing, subordinating and conforming work we too have found our own loom, so to speak, upon which to weave the rest of our discussion on the sacraments of the church and the place of marriage therein. We now turn to see how, in exactly the same way as the flesh of Christ upon which they are based, the words and sacraments of the church draw us in, situate us in relation to God and our fellows, and conform us to the likeness of God. This is especially true of the sacrament of marriage, as we will see.

Imagining Christ through Word and Sacrament

In the very opening sentence of *On Christian Teaching* Book III, Augustine plainly states the end of all his teaching on interpreting the Scriptures: "The man who fears God seeks diligently in Holy Scripture for a knowledge of his will (*voluntas*)" (*doc. Chr.* III.1.1). As we see in Book II, intentional signs (*signa data*), including the words of written texts like the Bible, are generally given to convey the speaker's "motion of the spirit" (*motus animi*),[35] the "action of the mind" (*id quod animo gerit*; II.2.3), to indicate "whatever the mind conceives" (*quaecumque animo concipiuntur*; II.3.4).[36] Thus when we express a 'word' (a concept which includes actions such as gestures and writing as well as speech), "by giving this sign we seek to make another a participant in our will" (*per hoc signum voluntatis nostrae participem facere*; II.3.4).[37] This statement illustrates how closely Augustine identified 'thinking' with 'willing': for him, human thoughts were always inextricably bound up with human desire and intention, as we have already noted.[38] So for Augustine the whole point of communication is the sharing of one's mind or intention, that is, one's *voluntas*, will. Just as Christ used bread and wine and thereby "signified what he willed" (*significavit quod voluit*; II.3.4), when we read Scripture rightly we approach it "to find (*invenire*) in it nothing more than the thoughts and will (*cogitationes voluntatemque*) of those who wrote it, and through these the will of God (*et per illas voluntatem Dei*), according to which we believe those writers spoke" (II.5.6). The ministry of the church's signs and sacraments in Augustine primarily involves the revelation and

[35] See also *Jo. ev. tr.* 46.8.
[36] See also *f. et symb.* 3.4.
[37] See also *cat. rud.* 12.17.
[38] In his *Christ and the Just Society* Dodaro commendably refuses to separate knowledge and love in Augustine, and always discusses them in tandem.

apprehension of, and participation in, the Apostolic *voluntas Dei*, the mind/will of God as mediated by the faithful minds of the Apostles.

With this simultaneously conveying and uniting effect in mind we can appreciate more fully why in *The Trinity* he describes the apostolic ministry (in this case Paul's) as using "meaningful signs to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ, in one way by using his tongue, in another by writing letters, in another by celebrating the Lord's body and blood" (*Trin.* III.10). The singular meaning of the manifold signs employed by the church is the very will of God itself. We find the same unity of purpose communicated through the same manifold signs in *Sermon* 88:

> Therefore brothers and sisters, what calls for all our efforts in this life is the healing of the eyes of our hearts, with which God is to be seen. It is for this that the holy mysteries are celebrated, for this that the word of God is preached, to this that the church's moral exhortations are directed, those, that is, that are concerned with the correction of our carnal desires, the improvement of our habits, the renunciation of this world, not only in words but in a change of life. Whatever points are made by God's holy scriptures, this is their ultimate point, to help us purge that inner faculty of ours from that thing that prevents us beholding God. (*s.* 88.4)

Here Augustine connects the church's single message of the will of God expressed in manifold signs, with the same cathartic effect that the flesh of Christ is meant to have on the will, preparing the believer for the beatific vision.

Augustine was not innocent of the fact that the greatest challenge to a Christological epistemology, founded on the visible, tangible flesh of Christ, lies in the absence of that flesh. Christ is not among us today in the body; we cannot hear his voice, see his face, or observe his wounds; and we certainly will never again see him hanging upon the Cross. Augustine sees this not as a problem, but a benefit which fits perfectly into the economy of faith and love we outlined above. He sees its benefit thus: "Christ is never going to be seen on the Cross again; but unless we believe that he was once so to be seen, in a manner in which there would be no expectation of seeing him again, we shall not come to see Christ as he is to be seen forever" (*Trin.* XV.49). Christ's ascension directly challenges our dependence on fleshly things, even our love of his flesh.

This unsettling effect is, of course, intentional. Recalling our discussion above on Christ's flesh as the milk of faith, Augustine discusses the effect of Christ's ascension on the Apostles and the sending of the Holy Spirit in John 16;[39] after noting their sorrow at losing Christ's bodily presence, he continues by quoting Christ,

[39] More on the role of the Holy Spirit below. On the absence of Christ see also his sermons on Ascension, *s.* 261-265F.

> 'But I say to you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go. For, if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I shall send him to you' (Jn 16.7), as though he were saying: "It is expedient to you that the form of a servant be taken away from you. I do indeed dwell among you, the Word made flesh, but I do not want you to love me still according to the flesh and, satisfied with this milk, to desire to be infants always… If I do not remove the soft nutriments with which I have nourished you, you will not hunger for solid food; if you stick fast to flesh according to flesh, you will not have the full capacity for receiving the Spirit." (*Jo. ev. tr.* 94.4)

In spite of the benefits provided by the Holy Spirit, the darkened human mind still requires bodily images to know and love, for "the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by bodies. The senses receive the look of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the thinking attention from the memory" (*Trin.* XI.14). Our as-yet unpurified minds require bodily images for thinking to take place and, though through Christ's departure we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit 'pouring forth the love of God' in our hearts, we are still left with the problem of the absence of Christ's flesh; the foundation for Christian faith has been removed. This foundational role is fulfilled by the traditional proclamation of Christ, using words and sacraments to image Christ in the human soul, to give still-carnal believers the corporeal base they need to progress to his divinity.

Christ proclaimed through mouth and page

The secret to our 'seeing' the absent flesh of Christ lies in the fabrication of composite mental images composed out of the contents of our memory. In *The Trinity* Book IX Augustine explains how we absorb bodily images through the senses, and "from them we fabricate images with which to think about things we have not seen" (*Trin.* IX.10), and "we do not think of any bodily things except what we remember or unless they are composed out of what we remember" (XI.17).[40] For example, even though Augustine has never been to Alexandria, he *has* been to Carthage, and is able to create a composite image of what the walls of Alexandria might look like based upon the walls of Carthage, which he has seen often (IX.10).[41] Likewise, when we hear that Christ was a man born of a virgin, we can produce for our thinking attention an approximate image of the man Jesus from the thesaurus of our memory easily enough, for from our own experience we know what virgins are, and we know what it means for a human to be born, etc. (VIII.7).[42] As we saw above,

[40] See also *ep.* 7.6, 9.5, 162.5; *vera rel.* 18; *Trin.* XI.8; *conf.* X.12.

[41] Alexandria is a favorite example, see also *Trin.* VIII.9; *Gn. litt.* XII.6.15, XII.23.49; *c. Faust.* 20.7.

[42] This practice of imagining cities is usually understood as analogous to fabricating images of the Trinity; this might be true to a certain extent, but Augustine's comments in *Trin.* Book VIII, combined with the

for Augustine's cognitive scheme to work it does not matter all that much whether our attention is fastened to an actual object or the memory of it, or, in this case, a composite image made from other memories. Even though we remain ignorant of Jesus' face, exact height and build and other features, what matters is that we have an accurate enough image, of a man of a certain reputed quality, upon which to fix our faith (VIII.6-8).

Here we see the priority of preaching and the reading of Scripture in Augustine's understanding of revelation: "The truth of God invites them to faith by human speech" (*Trin.* IX.17, see also *conf.* I.1), and "Divine teaching from human words is necessary just as rain from the clouds…" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.5.6). After all, we have to hear from a human mouth or learn from words on a page that Christ was a man born of a virgin. Romans 10.14 ('how can they believe without a preacher?') is more than mere window-dressing for Augustine. Rather,

> Let me seek you, then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher" (*conf.* I.1).

The proclamation of Christ is accomplished by both preachers and lections in church. Noting how Christ's flesh is gone, Augustine reflects on the liturgical proclamation of Christ in *Sermon* 88,

> the miracles too which he performed have passed and gone; they are read out and believed. The very fact, after all, of their being written down so that they can be read out shows that they were transitory actions when they were performed… all those things he did in time have passed away; and they were written down to be read out, and they are proclaimed and preached in order to be believed. (*s.* 88.9)

As this passage indicates, we need to know more than that Christ once walked on the earth; we also have to hear of his reputation among his contemporaries. "Who can love what he does not know?" (*Trin.* XIII.7). This apparently skeptical rhetorical question drives Augustine's discussion on the role preaching plays in imaging Christ in the human mind. Just as one can believe a city exists based only on human testimony (*Trin.* XIII.6), in addition to acquiring a form of reliable yet fabricated knowledge, love can be enflamed for and attached to an object even before it is fully known based on a community's testimony to its excellence (X.2) and our own inner sense of the truth (VIII.9).

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impossibility of constructing adequate images of the Trinity, suggests it might be more appropriate to see this as analogous to fabricating images of the human Christ. See for example Barnes, "Visible Christ," 344-5.

In a thinly-veiled discussion of the role the traditional proclamation of Christ plays in our knowledge of his flesh and the quality of his earthly life, Augustine engages the effect of an excellent individual's reputation (in this case a martyr) on the heart when he asks,

> From where, after all, is the fire of brotherly love kindled in me when I hear about some man who has endured severe tortures in the fine constancy of his faith? And if this man is pointed out to me, I am dead set at once on getting in touch with him, on getting to know him, on binding him to myself in friendship. So when I get the chance I approach him, speak to him, engage him in conversation, express my regard for him with whatever words I can… And so I love a faithful and brave man with a chaste and brotherly love. (*Trin.* IX.11)

All of this enthusiasm arises out of simple conversation about a person not present. Augustine the orator knows how moving simple words and testimony can be, and tends to see the effect of preaching in this light.[43] Just as his heart was enflamed for the ascent to God merely by reading about wisdom in Cicero's (now lost) *Hortensius* (*conf.* III.4.7-8), the power of human language, even through written words (a relatively inferior mode of communication) is such that through them the heart can be set aflame by means of a corporeally-delivered message from another human. Thus

> love commonly results from hearing; thus the spirit is roused by talk of someone's beauty to go and see and enjoy it, since it has a general knowledge of physical beauty, having seen many examples of it, and has something inside by which to judge and approve of what it hungers for outside. When this happens love is not being aroused for something totally unknown, since the kind of thing it is is known in this way. And when we love a good man whose face we have not seen, we love him out of a knowledge of the virtues which we know in truth itself. (*Trin.* X.1)

It should be no surprise that the common theme here is finding a worthy object upon which to attach oneself in love. In the case of the flesh of Christ, its absence seems to strengthen our love as well, once the appetite is whet by the testimony of others: "The more therefore the thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains" (*Trin.* X.2).

Interestingly, in Augustine human words are not only used to fabricate images of Christ in the human mind, but they incarnate Christ as well. Thus Scripture can fulfill the same anagogic function as Christ's flesh, an external, 'audible' sounding forth of the ineffable, interior Word of God:

> There is but one single utterance of God amplified throughout all the scriptures, dearly beloved. Through the mouths of many holy persons a

[43] I say this in spite of his explicit and un-Ciceronian priority of *docere* over *movere* in *doc. Chr.* IV.4.6, 13.29. In reality, Augustine admits they cannot be separated (IV.6.10).

> single Word makes itself heard, that Word who, being God-with-God in the beginning, has no syllables, because he is not confined by time. Yet we should not find it surprising that to meet our weakness he descended to the discrete sounds we use, for he also descended to take to himself the weakness of our human body. (*en. Ps.* 103[4].1)

This passage points to the fact that, as Mark Jordan has observed, Augustine sees "fundamental analogies between signification and Incarnation,"[44] and Jordan rightly sees similarities between the text of Scripture and the flesh of Christ, as "The passage from signified to sign, from interior word to exterior word, was also at the basis of the fundamental analogy [of] words and the Word."[45] Just as we can move from Christ's flesh to his divinity, scripture as incarnation allows us to move from text to the Word, through its presentation of images of Christ to the soul. As an instance of incarnation Augustine is able to personify the Scriptures, which use the things from creation in the same manner as Christ used his flesh: condescending to our spiritual blindness and pointing us to the transcendent meaning of all things.

> It was therefore to purify the human spirit of such falsehoods that holy scripture, adapting itself to babes, did not shun any words, proper to any kind of thing whatever, that might nourish our understanding and enable it to rise up to the sublimities of divine things. Thus it would use words taken from corporeal things to speak about God with… and from the sphere of created spirit it has transposed many words to signify what was not in fact like that… But from things that simply do not exist it never has drawn any names to form into figures of speech or weave into riddles. Hence those who are shut off from the truth by the third kind of error [i.e. possessing a false perception of God] fade away into the meaningless even more disastrously than the others, since they imagine things about God that have no place either in him or in anything he has made…" (*Trin.* I.2)

Augustine has no time for narrative myth that has no basis in created reality: his belief in the absolute integrity of the Scriptures,[46] the harmony and continuity between bodily and spiritual things, echoes the integrity of Christ's inner and outer word, his 'yes' being 'yes' and his 'no', 'no'. This passage speaks to connections much wider than the integrity of Scripture's language through its relation to invisible truth; it also is sacramental in that the currency of real-world objects and past events which comprise its narratives, prayers, teachings and prophecies present the human mind with familiar images, "making something like children's toys out of the things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze

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[44] Jordan, "Words and Word," 178. See also, David Dawson, "Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading, and the Motions of the Soul in *De doctrina christiana*," in De doctrina christiana: *Classic of Western Culture,* Arnold and Bright, eds., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 123-141, at 134-5.

[45] *Ibid.*, 191.

[46] Here I allude to his famous debate with Jerome over the truthfulness of Scripture, re: Gal 2.11-14.

and get us step by step to seek as best we can the things that are above and forsake the things that are below" (*Trin.* I.2).

Augustine's understanding of the ministry of the church, in a manner identical to the Incarnate Word, is characterized by the authority of its teaching and its ability to build up the love of its members. As Augustine advises Januarius at the end of *Epistle* 55, "Let knowledge, then, be used as a certain scaffolding by which the building of love may arise to remain for eternity, even when knowledge is destroyed" (*ep.* 55.39). Describing his own journey to the catholic church and his prior inability to understand either the "essential nature" of God or the way to him, Augustine prays straightforwardly in *Confessions*,

> It was because 'we were weak' (Rom 5.6) and unable to find the truth by pure reason that we needed the authority of the sacred scriptures; and so I began to see that you would not have endowed them with such authority among all nations unless you had willed human beings to believe in you and seek you through them. (*conf.* VI.5.8)

In an important section of *On Order* we see this movement from authority (*auctoritas*) to reason (*ratio*) lies at the heart of the church's teaching ministry, expressed as a movement from an infancy of proud independence to the maturity of submission. Having entered the door to knowledge by way of the "cradle" of authoritative teaching, and having become "docile" under its guidance, subordinate to the will of God, only *then* is the learner enabled to come to rise to the higher level of *ratio*, that is, to knowledge of wisdom, reason itself, the intellect and ultimately, the source of all things (*ord.* II.9.26). He retains this scheme of progressing from *auctoritas* to *ratio* in *The Trinity*. At the risk of oversimplification, let me suggest the following as Augustine's theological program generally, in a passage which sheds light on the meaning of *The Trinity* as well: 1) establish the authoritative propositions about God and the Incarnation,[47] 2) defeat his readers' pride, and 3) get them to put the book down and go to church where, presumably, they will come under the auspices of the truly 'wholesome regimen' (*Trin.* I.4) of the church's teaching ministry and sacramental life. All of this is accomplished, we should remember, through producing images of Christ in the human mind, that man's reputed character drawing us past the image to its meaning, his invisible nature.

Visible words

In spite of the nobility of words and human language, authoritative testimony to the beauty and riches of the Trinity and life in Christ often fails to fan the flames of Christian

[47] Michel Barnes helpfully highlights the distinction between imaging God and imaging the correct propositions about God, "Visible Christ," 332f.

love. Even inspiring mental images of Christ are not enough. Weary, sojourning, and still-carnal Christians need the encouragement of tangible objects which faithfully mediate truth. Augustine explains that the 'wholesome regimen' of the church takes this into account in its allegorical use of everyday objects and concepts. He explains,

> All these things, however, that are presented to us in figures (*pertinent quae nobis figurate*) pertain somehow to nourishing and fanning the fire of love by which we are carried upward or inward to rest as if by a weight. For they arouse and kindle love more than if they were set forth bare without any likenesses of the sacraments. The reason for this fact is difficult to state. But it is, nonetheless, a fact that something presented in an allegorical meaning (*per allegoricam significationem*) arouses more, delights more, and is appreciated more than if it were said in full openness with the proper terms. I believe that, as long as it is still involved with the things of earth, the feeling of the soul (*animae motus*) is set afire rather slowly, but if it is confronted with bodily likenesses (*ad similitudines corporales*) and brought from there to spiritual realities that are symbolized by those likenesses, it is strengthened by this passage, and is set aflame like the fire in a coal when stirred up, and is carried with a more ardent love toward that rest. (*ep.* 55.11.21)[48]

Without knowing the context one might safely assume this passage refers to Christ's flesh, but he is in fact discussing the third of the Ten Commandments, on keeping the Sabbath, and how the seventh day is a sacrament which uses the image of an earthly day to symbolize the everlasting rest of the eschaton.

Augustine believes the use of everyday things as sacraments has a long history in the education of the human race, beginning in Eden with the Tree of Life and Adam married to Eve as sacraments of Christ (*Gn. litt.* VIII.4.8-5.10). In *City of God* Book X Augustine discusses fallen humanity, exemplified by Israel, as advancing in its education "as epoch followed epoch, like the years of life, men progressed from an understanding of the temporal and the tangible to that of visible and invisible" (*civ.* X.14).[49] The first step in the redemption of mankind was initiated through the appearance of God himself "through certain epochs or, as it were, ages, so that it might rise upwards from temporal to eternal things, and from the visible to the invisible", words and the Law, "visible sacraments (*visibilibus sacramentis*)" which "most plainly enjoin the worship of the one God" and teach that "they have need of him by whom they were created, both for their existence and their wellbeing" (*civ.* X.15). Moving from instructive yet terrifying wonders, through their worship Israel began to be exposed to rites of sacrifice which, while having value for a time, were not permanent. Rather, God began to undermine these rites "by foretelling that they were to be transformed into a better

[48] See also his famous allegorical description of baptism to illustrate this point, *doc. Chr.* II.6.7-8.

[49] Translation of *civ.* used in this chapter is by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

kind by a better Priest… that he has no appetite for these [physical] sacrifices, but that he has made use of them to indicate other and greater ones" (*civ.* X.17). Accomplished for our benefit, the dispensations of Israel's life were done and written "to terrify and give wholesome instruction to mortals," teaching us to cling to God for our provision in all things.

This mention of "other and greater sacrifices" gives Augustine the way forward to talk about Christ and the sacraments of the Church, "a few replacing many" (*doc. Chr.* III.9.13; *ep.* 54.1.1). It might be tempting to think that he is referring simply to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, who "himself became a sacrifice to God, by whose intelligible flame he was quickened and kindles, and into whose ineffable and incorporeal embrace his holy yearning bore him" (*civ.* X.18). And yet as we progress in Book X we see that, for Augustine, the sacrifice of Christ is a *corporeal* sacrifice, the supreme sacrament, pointing to other things, as we saw above in our discussion of Christ as sacrament and exemplar. Even the bodily sacrifice of Christ teaches to look above (or within). The sacrament of Christ's flesh is carried on, of course, in the church through the Eucharist, which is "a daily sign of this [i.e. the correction of idolatry] in the sacrament of the church's sacrifice. For the church, being the body of which he is the head, is taught to offer herself through him" (*civ.* X.20). In Augustine's mind, the paramount sacrifice is the sacrifice of the Christian's self on the altar of the heart. *This* is the goal of all Christian instruction, the church's 'wholesome regimen' in imaging Christ.

> The sacrifices of the holy men of old were the many and various signs of this true sacrifice, which was in this way prefigured in many things, just as one thing may be expressed in many different words, in order to commend it frequently but without tedium. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have yielded. (*civ.* X.20)[50]

We still offer visible sacrifices in the church, however, because "visible sacrifices are symbols of invisible ones (*visibilia sacrificia…esse signa…invisibilia*) in the way that the words we speak are signs of things (*sicut verba sonantia signa sunt rerum*)… just as in prayer and praise we direct significant words to God and thereby offer to him the things in our heart" (*civ.* X.19). Indeed, "in sacrifice we offer visible sacrifice only to Him, to whom in our heart we ought to present ourselves an invisible sacrifice."[51] Here we see that the 'Israelite' tradition of offering

[50] Admittedly, the subject of this final sentence is vague. Does *huic summo uero que sacrificio* refer to the visible sacrifice of Christ's flesh or the invisible sacrifice of the human heart in submission to God? The former option may be safer, but the latter seems to follow Augustine's own logic.

[51] See also *en. Ps.* 49.21; *s.* 272, 229A.3. Excellent discussions on incorporation and participation in the body of Christ through the sacraments can be found in Madec, *La patrie et la voie*, Ch 4, and in William

corporeal sacrifices is carried forward, but the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the institution of a Christian Eucharistic rite of sacrifice, prefaced by the initiation found in catechesis and baptism, changes the corporeal *signa* considerably, and gives the old practice new reference; or perhaps we might better say, it gives more obvious reference to what had been the true *terminus* of the sacrament of sacrifice all along (*c. Faust.* XIX.16).

Consonant with the presentation of the Eucharist as a 'visible sacrifice', the seemingly redundant adjective 'visible' directing us to its invisible referent, Augustine discusses the sacraments of the church as 'visible words'. Recalling our comment above on the effectiveness of metaphor, cultic actions become powerful metaphors as well, communicating and affecting in a way that mere spoken language cannot. Hence we have the church's perennial tools, the 'visible words' of verbally consecrated action.[52] *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 80 and *Against Faustus Manichean* give us two of our best examples of this combination of word and action.

Reflecting on baptism in John 15.3, where Christ says, "You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you," Augustine asks,

> Why does he not say, 'You are clean by reason of the baptism by which you were washed,' but says, 'by reason of the word that I have spoken to you,' except that in the water also the word cleansed? Take away the word, and what is the water except water? The word is added to the element [i.e. water] and it becomes a sacrament, also itself, as it were, a visible word… Whence is this power of water of such magnitude that it touches the body and yet washes clean the heart, except from the word's effecting it, not because it is said, but because it is believed? For also in the word itself the passing sound is one thing, the abiding power another… [Thus Christ sanctifies the church,] 'by cleansing it by the bath of water in the power of the word" (Eph 5.26). The cleansing, therefore, would in no way at all be attributed to the flowing and streaming substance unless it were added, 'in the power of the word'. (*Jo. ev. tr.* 80.3)

Thus without words there is no baptism, only a bath in water. And yet, combined with directing words, the now-sacramental action of a bodily cleansing washes clean the heart as well if received in faith, and has abiding power. Likewise, the temporal sacrament made up of human language, action and corporeal substance conveys spiritual and eternal grace:

> What else are certain bodily sacraments but certain visible words—sacred, of course, but still changeable and temporal. For God is eternal, and yet the water and all bodily action which is carried out when we baptize, and which takes place and passes, is not eternal. There again, unless those quickly sounded and passing syllables are spoken when we say "God", there is no

Harmless' excellent portrait of Augustine as catechist, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995).

[52] The best treatment of this subject is Berrouard, "Le *Tractatus 80, 3*."

> consecration. All these take place and pass away; they sound and pass away. Yet the power that works through them remains constant, and the spiritual gift that is signified by them is eternal. (*c. Faust.* XIX.16)

The same is also true of the Eucharist, of course.

> What you can see here, dearly beloved, on the table of the Lord, is bread and wine; but this bread and wine, when the word is applied to it, become the body and blood of the Word… Take away the word, I mean, it's just bread and wine; add the word, and it's now something else. And what is that something else? The body of Christ, and the blood of Christ. So take away the word, it's bread and wine; add the word and it will become the sacrament. To this you say 'Amen'. To say 'Amen' is to add your signature. 'Amen' means 'true' in [English]." (*s.* 229.1-3)

The agreement of faith, the 'amen' of the congregation, completes the consecration through corporate agreement. Language and object have conventionally joined to become a single sacrament—one giving reference, the other embodying—to become a 'visible word' within the Christian community *via* the agreement of its 'Amen', a holistic grammar of the Gospel for proud, carnal, yet believing human beings.[53]

This 'Amen' also points to the unifying nature of the sacraments and words of the church. In *Sermon* 272 Augustine famously likens the sacramental gathering of many people into the church to many grains being gathered and made into one loaf of bread, and many grapes being made into one cup of wine. Exorcism crushes the grain and fruit, baptism puts them into one lump or vessel, and when receiving the Holy Spirit through the chrism, "it's as though you were baked." Then in serving his *infantes* he declares: "Be what you see, and receive what you are."

Just as the sacraments unify the body of Christ, so too does language. Augustine admits that God could have 'downloaded' Christian knowledge directly into human heads *via* the angels but purposefully elected to use human instruction and corporeal sacraments. Instead, the human culture created through the traditioning of truth actually ennobles and unifies humans, however difficult it may be for us to express thoughts and understand accurately. "For charity itself, which holds men together in a knot of unity, would not have a means of pouring souls into souls and almost mixing them together if men could teach nothing to men" (*doc. Chr.* Pr.6).[54]

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[53] Indeed, though the sacraments are such and may still belong to God when practiced by schismatics and heretics (*bapt.* III.18.27), for Augustine they do not 'work' outside the Catholic Church's unifying bond of love (*bapt.* III.16.21). That is, those who do not practice and receive them in catholic love and unity fail to benefit from them.

[54] See also *Trin.* X.2.

So we see that the church, and its 'wholesome regimen' of words, sacraments and loving teachers[55] are the eloquent embodiment of wisdom itself, a hospital or clinic that spurs sinners on,[56] corporeally encouraging and strengthening their faith, hope and love.[57] This clinic is manned by fellow travelers along the way, some of whom are 'doctors' who, while admittedly unable to resuscitate the dead, nevertheless "heal the living" and "help mightily towards our salvation by their faithful ministry" (*en. Ps.* 87.10) through the "wholesome regimen [that] is provided for the faithful in holy church, whereby the due observance of piety makes the ailing mind well for the perception of unchanging truth, and saves it from being plunged into opinions of a noisome falsehood by the random whims of temerity" (*Trin.* I.4).

Having observed how the work of Christ consists of the subordination and elevation of all things through the ministry of his body the church, we turn now to consider the effects of the reformation of the human mind brought about through grace. The mind guided by the rule of faith, and the heart attached to God alone, understands and interacts with the world in a distinct fashion, seeing references to Christ everywhere due to all creation having its primordial cause and structure in the Word. This next section too will be thorough, in order for us to see how Augustine believes the sacrament of marriage functions in bringing *totus Christus* to mind.

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[55] Space and relevance precludes discussion of the fascinating role teachers and exemplars play in Augustine's notion of the church's pedagogy. Of course the influence of Ambrose and Marius Victorinus are famous, *conf.* V.13.23f and VIII.2.3f. The best discussions are found in *doc. Chr.* IV and *cat. rud.* 4.7f, *conf.* XIII.21.31f, and *en. Ps.* 119.2; on this topic see Lewis Ayres, "Poem of the Universe," 266-267; Lynn Poland, "Augustine, Allegory and Conversion." *Literature and Theology* 2.1 (March 1988): 37-48, esp. 41-43; Charles Baldwin, "St. Augustine on Preaching," reprinted in *The Rhetoric of St Augustine of Hippo*, Enos et al, eds. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008): 187-203; James Murphy, "St. Augustine and the Debate about Christian Rhetoric," *Rhetoric of Saint Augustine*, 205-218; Ernest Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric," *Rhetoric of Saint Augustine*, 219-233; Carol Harrison, "The Rhetoric of Scripture and Preaching." *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*. Dodaro and Lawless, eds. (London: Routledge, 2000): 214-231; on Augustine's relation to Stoic rhetoric and *ethos* see Colish, *Stoic Tradition* vol 1, 86f; for a helpful summary of the relationship between *ethos* and oratory see Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 44f.

[56] The therapeutic role of oratory in curing the soul's corruption was a common metaphor in Antiquity. See the helpful discussion on the medicinal qualities of preaching, the preacher as physician removing the infection of heresy, in several 4th Century Greek Fathers in Robert L. Wilken's *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (London: University of California Press: 1983), 117-118. See also, of course, Paul Kolbet's *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

[57] For the church as surgeon, see *bapt.* I.8.11.

CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION: JUDGING ALL THINGS

On Christian Teaching I-III: A Guide to Christian *inventio*

Beyond the capturing and fixation of love on the divine, of all his treatises Augustine's *On Christian Teaching* perhaps best captures the worldly effects of the 'wholesome regimen' of the church. Increasing volitional harmony with Providence, combined with the knowledge supplied by the creeds and doctrine of the church, provides the Christian with an intuitive sense and firm rule about the very organization, intention and meaning of all creation. This intuition guided by the rule of faith is nothing less than a form of literacy, in that the mind is able to make accurate judgments about what it perceives, and how to interact with what it sees. Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*[58] is, as he himself indicates, an effort at 'teaching reading' (*tradenti litteras*, *doc. Chr.* Pr.9, see also *Trin.* XV.1-3) – first reading all of creation in the broadest sense (I.1.1–I.35.39, II.1.1–II.4.5), then narrowing to understanding the Christian Scriptures (I.36.40–I.40.44, II.5.6–III.37.56). For him that involves enabling the interpreter to discern for himself the spiritual meaning of ambiguous figurative signs (*signa translata*) by means of more clear and straightforward signs (*signa propria*) through the rule of faith, without dependence upon the readings of others. He embarks on his task using a very classical method, that of focusing on the *modus inveniendi* in Books I-III, the means of discovering meaning, and finishes it off with a fourth book on the *modus proferendi*, or 'mode of delivery' (*doc. Chr.* I 1.1 and IV.1.1), that is, communication: *inventio* and *elocutio*, *res* and *verba*. What we have in *On Christian Teaching* is a Christian rhetorical handbook[59] – but it is rhetorical in the best sense of the term, in that its overwhelming concern is that its readers would conform their lives to the truth in a genuine, holistic

[58] For the dating and provenance of *On Christian Teaching*: Charles Kannengiesser, "Local Setting and Motivation of *On Christian Teaching*" in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*. Lienhard, Muller, and Teske, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993): 331-9, and *idem*., "The Interrupted *De doctrina christiana*," in De doctrina christiana: *A Classic of Western Culture,* Arnold and Bright, eds. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 3-13. The latter volume also contains an extensive bibliography on *doc. Chr.*, compiled by Lewis Ayres. Karla Pollmann has collected another helpful bibliography, complementary to Ayres', which can be found in her study, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonder Berücksichtigung von Augustinus: De doctrina Christiana*, *Paradosis* 41 (Freiburg Schweiz, 1996). Though I am aware of the thirty years that elapsed between the composition of Books I, II and most of III from the writing of the rest of the text, I remain unconvinced by arguments suggesting this has any significant effect on the book's unity or coherence.

[59] For various discussions on the nature of *doc. Chr.*, a much-debated subject: Edmund Hill, "*De doctrina Christiana*: A Suggestion," *SP* 6 (1962) 443-6; Eugene Kevane, "Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*: A Treatise on Christian Education," *RecAug* 4 (1966) 97-133, *idem*., "Paideia and Anti-Paideia: The *Prooemium* of St. Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*," *AugStud* 1 (1970): 153-80; G.A. Press, "The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*," *AugStud* 11 (1980): 99-124; *idem*., "*Doctrina* in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 17.2 (1984): 98-120; Christoph Schäublin, "*De doctrina christiana*: A Classic of Western Culture?" in De doctrina christiana: *A Classic of Western Culture,* Arnold and Bright, eds. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 47-67.

eloquence focused on eschatological hope and love of God alone,[60] focused on discerning and proclaiming his will.

After explaining the text's primary division into *modus inveniendi* (Books I-III) and *modus proferendi* (Book IV) at the very beginning of Book I as noted above, Augustine begins explicating his *modus inveniendi* by drawing two important distinctions, between 'things' (*res*) and 'signs' (*signa*) on the one hand, and 'use' (*uti*) and 'enjoyment' (*frui*) on the other. Very simply, we can distinguish what things are, in and of themselves, apart from whether or not they also function as signs referencing something else (I.2.2).[61] Augustine outlines the complementary distinction of use and enjoyment as follows: "Some enjoy things, others use things, and there are those who enjoy and use things… To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake. To use something, however, is to use it in obtaining that which you love" (I.3.3-4.4). Augustine quickly unites both the 'rule of truth' (*regula veritatis,* I.8.8) and the 'rule of delight' (*regula dilectionis*, I.22.21)[62] in positing, roughly speaking of course,[63] that the only 'thing' worth our enjoyment, *for its own sake*, is "The Trinity, one God, of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things (Rom 11.36)" (I.5.5, 22.20-21). Any *use* of any *thing* towards *any other end* is not 'use' at all, properly speaking, but *ab*use, that is, 'use' contrary to nature (I.4.4). Surely what we have in Book I is a rule for far more than reading texts, but also more generally for the interpretation and application of human

[60] By saying 'God alone' rather than 'above all else' I hint at my reading of Augustine's oft-discussed notion of self- and neighbor-love. I say this in spite of Oliver O'Donovan's analysis; see his "*Usus* and *Fruitio* in Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana I*," *JTS* 33 (1982): 361-397, 389-90. We discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Five.

[61] I am aware that this interpretation runs contrary to many readings of *doc. Chr.*, where many interpreters see Augustine making a semantic and ontological distinction. William Babcock suggests Augustine is making the distinction between "two standings that things may have rather than two kinds or classes of things," "*Caritas* and Signification in *De doctrina christiana* 1-3." in De Doctrina Christiana: *A Classic of Western Culture*, Arnold and Bright, eds. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 145-163, at 146. Babcock's understanding of this is typical of contemporary scholarship on *doc. Chr.*, that this as an ontological statement. There are many instances, linguistically, when a thing is just a 'thing', in that it "does not itself signify any further thing." See also, John Norris, "Augustine and Sign in *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium*," *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*. Collectanea Augustiniana, vol 5. van Fleteren and Schnaubelt, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 2001): 215-231, at 217f. But I would suggest that Augustine is making the distinction not to draw out a thing's semantic/ontological independence, but in order to discern whether it is to be used and/or enjoyed, and how so. For Augustine's discerning Christian, there is no such thing as a 'thing' which does not, at the very least, refer to its Creator. As Markus says, "A thing is a sign, for Augustine, precisely in so far as it stands *for* something *to* somebody," *Signs and Meanings*, 87, emphasis his. Elsewhere he calls this hermeneutic diligence "keeping our horizons perpetually open," "Signs, Communication and Communities," in De doctrina Christiana*: Classic of Western Culture*. Duane Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 97-108, at 101. See also Rist, *Augustine*, 34-35. As we will see, Augustine would have us keep our eyes peeled, and appreciate that *everything* stands for *something* spiritual to the observant, Creator-loving Christian.

[62] For helpful bibliography and analysis of Augustine's use of the term *regula*, see Lewis Ayres' article, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith: Rhetoric, Christology, and the Foundation of Christian Thinking." *AugStud* 36.1 (2005): 34-50.

[63] Augustine sees this as a straining of the word *res*, as the divine nature of course transcends creation: "If, indeed, it is a thing and not rather the cause of all things, or both a thing and a cause. It is not easy to find a name proper to such excellence, unless it is better to say that this Trinity is one God" (I.5.5).

life itself, a universal ethic for all human activity.[64] As Ayres explains it, "Thus the creed is glossed as a plan not only of cosmos and history but also of human restoration."[65] For Augustine the concept of 'use' involves, first and foremost, interpretation, due to the necessity of identifying not only *what* the things around us are, but also determining *how* we are to interact with, that is, 'use' them.

The need for a rule of interpretation arises, of course, from the Fall. Our blindness creates ambiguity about the purpose and meaning of the universe, which we cannot readily discern. Given this ambiguity, how do we discern the singular, not to mention foreign, mind of God? For Augustine, this is hardly a straightforward affair. He puts forward several causes of ambiguity, including relative human ignorance, easily remedied by the liberal arts,[66] and our profound intellectual blindness, where due to the Fall we are forced to rely on our judgment rather than clear, intellectual sight.[67] But neither of these fully explains why humans struggle to make appropriate sense of Scripture and the world around them.

The final and by far the most problematic source of ambiguity lies in the perversion of the human will, which dulls and confuses the mind's adjudicative powers. The 'terrible diseases of the human will' (*doc. Chr.* II.5.6), explains Augustine, necessitated the *signa* of Scripture, in which the healing will of God is corporeally manifest. *Inventio* of the divine will is, again, the foundation of Christian teaching, making Christian *elocutio* the only truly 'wholesome teaching' (*doctrina sana*). When they set aside their own diseased wills and appropriate instead the Divine will,[68] as mediated through the Apostles, Augustine's ideal interpreters begin to enter into a truly Divine tradition, the only true tradition, and embark on the road to true and certain happiness, the *beata vita*. Indeed, as we see in *On Christian Teaching* Book II, for those who rely upon their own, perverse *voluntas*,

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[64] See also, *Trin.* X.17. *Pace* Karla Pollmann, "Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline!?" *Augustine and the Disciplines*. Pollmann and Vessey, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 206-231, but in agreement with several others, as perhaps most memorably expressed by R.A. Markus: "The theory of signs and meanings he elaborated in his *On Christian Teaching* and the principles of scriptural hermeneutics elaborated there with its aid spills over into something like a general theory of understanding: a hermeneutics of human experience… What I am suggesting is that habits of reading the biblical text had profound repercussions on the way Augustine read his world," *Signs and Meanings*, 28-29. See also Rowan Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's *De Doctrina*." *LitTheo* 3.2 (July 1989): 138-150, at 141; B. Darrell Jackson, "Theory of Signs," 112-115; and Oliver O'Donovan, who sums it up well with a line from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess": "Augustine's 'things' are not just 'the things that you're li'ble to read in the Bible'—they are the realities of the universe," "*Usus* and *Fruitio*," 384 n 1.

[65] "Rhetoric, Christology," 37.

[66] *doc. Chr.* II.13.19-16.26, 28.42-38.57, III.2.2-4.8.

[67] More on the role of judgment in the next section.

[68] Here my use of the verb 'appropriate' refers to its positive sense, and I mean it to entail literally making the will of God one's own. Christ's passion in Gethsemane is, of course, the classic Christian model for this process.

> it is brought about as if by a certain secret judgment of God that men who desire evil things are subjected to illusion and deception as a reward for their desires (*pro meritis voluntatum suarum*), being mocked and deceived by those lying angels to whom, according to the most beautiful ordering of things, the lowest part of this world is subject by the law of Divine Providence. (*doc. Chr.* II.23.35)

Augustine goes on to call this indulgence in our perverse *voluntas*, due to our being 'subjected to the flesh in pursuit of the letter' (III.5.9), a 'fornication of the soul', a fornication that leads into idolatry and subsequent false interpretations of the world and various events. He gives divination as an example of how a perverse society indulges in its own misinterpretations. Though the members of a 'society of demons' can apply a pre-established meaning to a natural yet unusual event, such as the birth of a mule or a lightning strike, their interpretation arises not out of any innate validity, but merely out of their own community's agreement as to its meaning. Augustine is suggesting that humans may indeed come together in societies and lend their collective authority to a sensual and errant interpretation of an event or text, but their authority comes from themselves and not from God.

The process of individual understanding involves a *modus inveniendi* that, abiding by the rule of truth/delight and by conforming one's *voluntas* to the Apostolic community and thereby to the mind of God, allows one to make measured, accurate and spiritual—and thus edifying—interpretations of Scripture and, ultimately, of all creation. Indeed, one can say that for Augustine Christian *doctrina*, the 'wholesome regimen', is entirely a matter of reforming the perverse human will, an ascent to Wisdom[69] which has as its foundation in coming "to the knowledge of his will (*ad cognoscendam ejus voluntatem*)" (II.7.9); not any mere human 'mind', but the very *voluntas* of God himself.[70]

Prophetic Ecstasy and Angelic Judgment

'It is not you who are seeing this'

Augustine firmly believes that coming to the right interpretation, being able to make judgments on creation according to the very will of God, is entirely a matter of grace. As Lewis Ayres notes, Augustine believes "we grow in knowledge because of and through the

[69] Space and relevance precludes discussion on the famous seven-step ascent of *doc. Chr.* II.7.9-11. For an excellent summary see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 80f. Other similar ascents can be found in *quant. an.* 70f; *vera rel.* 49; *ser. dom. m.* 1.10-12; *en. Ps.* 11.7; *s.* 347.3; *ep.* 171A.

[70] . For more on the role of charity in the hermeneutics of *doc. Chr.* see my forthcoming article "Charity as Equity in the Hermeneutics of Augustine's De doctrina Christiana," *SP* 52 (2011).

informing and inflaming work of Son and Spirit."[71] The teaching ministry of the church, through which we first hear about Christ, first heard its message from the Word himself.

> This eternal Reason (*aeterna ratio*) is your Word, who is the Beginning in that he also speaks to us. The gospel records that he claimed this by word of mouth, making his claim audible to people's outward ears that they might believe him and seek him within themselves and find him in the eternal Truth where he, our sole teacher (Mt 23.8), instructs apt disciples. There it is that I hear your voice, O Lord, the voice of one who speaks to me, because anyone who truly speaks to us directly, whereas one who is no true teacher does not speak to us, though speak he may. After all, can anyone teach us, other than stable Truth? When some changeable creature advises us, we are but led to that stable Truth, where we truly learn as we stand still and listen to him, and are filled with joy on hearing the Bridegroom's voice, and surrender ourselves once more to him from whom we came. (*conf.* XI.8.10)

All truth is from the eternal Word and reaches us as he intended from the beginning, whether we receive it through humans or whether he as Interior Teacher speaks directly to the human mind, confirming what he taught previously through the prophets and apostles.[72] He inwardly confirms in the present what he inspired to be taught outwardly in the past.

Likewise, our love for God is a gift as well. Augustine affirms in *The Trinity* Book VIII that the love with which we love God is the Holy Spirit itself:[73] "Embrace love which is God (1 Jn 4.16), and embrace God with [that same] love. This is the Love which unites all the good angels and all the servants of God in a bond of holiness, conjoins us and them together, and subjoins us to itself… and if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?" (*Trin.* VIII.12). Augustine reaffirms this opinion in *The Trinity* Book XV where he says of the Holy Spirit,

> He then is the one meant when we read, 'Love is God'. So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God. That is why he says a little later, 'Let us love because he first loved us' (1 Jn 4.19). The apostle Paul also says, 'The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us' (Rom 5.5)… So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God,

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[71] Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 283.

[72] In spite of the uneasiness of some of today's interpreters of Augustine, the idea of Christ as *magister interior* endured throughout his career. See Augustine's comments on *mag.* 11.38 in *retr.* I.12. Notable occurrences include *conf.* XI.8.10-9.11; *Trin.* XIV.21; *en. Ps.* 46.10, 50.13; *gr. et pecc. or.* 12-14; *Jo. ev. tr.* 96.4, 97.1 and significantly 26.6-9, which portrays the Trinity as teacher. For further comments see Markus, "Augustine on Signs," 84f.

[73] Augustine's use of Romans 5.5 is famous, and references abound. Providing a complete list would be impossible, but notable occurrences can be found in *s.* 270.2, 128.4; *spir. et litt.* 3.5; *Trin.* XV.31-32; *cat. rud.* 14.22; *doc. Chr.* II.6.7; *Gn. litt.* IV.9.16-18; *Jo. ev. tr.* 94.2, 96.4; *conf.* XIII.7.8; *en. Ps.* 86.1, etc.

> should also be called gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God. (*Trin.* XV.31-32)

In a significant passage Augustine explains how it is that the Holy Spirit enables us to make interpretive judgments, seeing creation rightly through the healed will in tune with the will of God. In quizzing God about why it is that the eternal one needed to gaze "seven or eight times" upon creation, calling it 'good' and 'very good' as it unfolded temporally, Augustine hears this response trumpeting in his mind:

> Listen, human creature: what my scripture says, I myself say, but whereas scripture says it in terms of time, my Word is untouched by time, because he subsists with me eternally, equal to myself. What you see through my Spirit, I see, just as what you say through my Spirit, I say. You see these things in terms of time, but I do not see in time, nor when you say these things in temporal fashion do I speak in a way conditioned by time. (*conf.* XIII.29.44)

What Augustine means by saying God 'sees' and 'speaks' through us become clear a few paragraphs later. Speaking of people void of gracious insight into the *rationes* of creation, who do not understand that creation sprang *ex nihilo* from the eternal mind of God, he says they

> are mad, because they do not contemplate your works through your Spirit, nor recognize you in them. It is different for people who see creation through your Spirit, for you are seeing it through their eyes. Thus when such people see that these things are good, you are seeing that they are good; whatever created things please them for your sake, it is you who are arousing their delight in these things; and anything that gives us joy through your Spirit gives you joy in us. Yet scripture asks, 'Who knows the reality of anyone, except that person's own inward spirit? So too no one knows the reality of God except God's own Spirit. But we,' says the scripture, 'we have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know what gifts have been bestowed on us by God' (1 Cor 2.11-12).
>
> Plainly I am bound to say that no one knows the reality of God except the Spirit of God. How, then, can we too know the gifts that God has given us? This is the answer that comes to me: if we know something through his Spirit, it is still true to say that 'no one knows' it 'except God's own Spirit'; for just as it could rightly be said to people who spoke in the Spirit of God, 'It is not you who are speaking (Mt 10.20)', so too it is rightly said to those who know anything in the Spirit of God, "It is not you who are seeing this." If, then, seeing something in God's Spirit, they perceive it to be good, it is evidently not they, but God, who sees that it is good. (*conf.* XIII.30.45-31.46).

Reserving knowledge of God to God does not exclude humans from this knowledge; here we see that in a very real sense the grace of God in the Holy Spirit operates within the hearts

and minds of the elect (*en. Ps.* 87.13), sharing the knowledge and love of God, and all creation through him.

Recognizing God in creation and thereby seeing it as 'good' entails seeing it in the Spirit, and as deriving from God.

> This means that God is loved in what he has made. But he could not be loved were it not through the Spirit he has given us, 'because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit bestowed upon us' (Rom 5.5). Through him we see that everything is good which in any degree has being, because it derives from him who has being in no degree at all, but is simply 'He Is' (Ex 3.14)" (*conf.* XIII.31.46).

The Holy Spirit, the will and love of God, truly does permeate and draw all things to himself. Creation is only seen rightly in this light, or rather, in this gift of love.

So it is that through the Trinity's inner working "we gain the capacity to understand," and "in this way man is renewed in the knowledge of God in accordance with the image of his creator. He becomes a Spirit-filled person, fit to judge (1 Cor 2.15) any matters that call for judgment" (*conf.* XIII.22.32). And given the inspiring work of the Holy Spirit, it is appropriate when Augustine confesses to God that the declaration of man being made in the image of God (Gn 1.26) means "you meant us to discern your will for ourselves. Such was your steward's aim in urging, 'allow yourselves to be reformed by the renewal of your minds, that you may be able to discern what is God's will, what is good and pleasing to him and perfect' (Rom 12.2)" (*conf.* XIII.22.32). Of course this gracious discernment of the will of God is, as we noted above, insight into the providential order and operation of all creation brought about by the Holy Spirit's work in the church.

Inspired to right affection by the Holy Spirit, and aided by the Interior Teacher confirming the inspired apostolic teaching, "we ourselves approve your will as appropriate" (*conf.* XIII.22.32). This gracious conformation to the providential will of God, and through it harmony with and understanding of all things, allows for a certain level of independence from other humans when it comes to discerning the truth about God and creation. Augustine confesses that such a one

> does not need some other human being to explain it to him so that he may imitate his own kind; you explain it to him, so that he can approve for himself what is your will, what is good and pleasing to you and perfect. And since he now has the capacity [to understand] (*iam capacem*), you teach him to contemplate the Trinity in Unity, the Unity that is Trinity… In this way man is renewed in the knowledge of God in accordance with the image of his creator. He becomes a Spirit-filled person, fit to judge (*spiritalis effectus judicat*) any matters that call for judgment, though he himself is not subject to the judgment of his fellows (1 Cor 2.15). (*conf.* XIII.22.32)

This familiarity with and conformation to the *voluntas* of God breeds a Christian autonomy in the world in relation to other human beings, and the capacity to proximate a certain amount of intellectual sight, 'judging all things' in the words of Paul from 1 Corinthians 2.15.[74] Again, when considering the 'things' of creation, one needs to make an interpretive judgment, in the sense of making a decision, first determining *what* exactly a 'thing' might be, and in light of that information, perceiving *how* it ought to be 'used' according to its primordial design, to further self and neighbor to the love of God.

This ability to judge is what we see going on in Augustine's famous quizzing of Creation in *Confessions* Book X:

> And what is this? I put my question to the earth, and it replied, "I am not he"; I questioned everything it held, and they confessed the same. I questioned the sea and the great deep, and the teeming live creatures that crawl, and they replied, "We are not God; seek higher." I questioned the gusty winds, and every breeze with all its flying creatures told me, "Anaximenes was wrong: I am not God." To the sky I put my question, to sun, moon, stars, but they denied me: "We are not the God you seek." And to all things which stood around the portals of my flesh I said, "Tell me of my God. You are not he, but tell me something of him." Then they lifted up their mighty voices and cried, "He made us." My questioning was my attentive spirit, and their reply, their beauty. (*conf.* X.6.9)

As R.A. Markus observes, echoing our own reading of Augustine and the role of judgment graciously guided by a grasp of the divine will, "Created things speak of their maker: but only to those who can hear, indeed only when they are put to the question, and by an interrogator who has the power of judgment. Reading creatures as signs requires, as do the signs of the Old Testament, the right kind of reader, readers with the right semiotic intention."[75] Truly, Augustine sees us as living "within a world of things which can and should be taken as signs."[76] As Augustine says elsewhere, "It is your calling, you saint of God, to question, and creation's part to respond to you. Its response is creation's song of confession, and as you hear it, you bless God and tell of his power" (*en. Ps.* 144.13-14). This power of judgment vanishes, however, if the will refuses to be subordinate to the divine will. "Human beings have the power to question, so that by understanding the things he has made they may glimpse the unseen things of God (Rom 1.20); but by base love they subject themselves to these creatures, and once subject can no longer judge" (*conf.* X.6.10).

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[74] This same independent literacy, we should remember, is the singular goal of *doc. Chr.* (Pr.9), which seeks to apply this universal hermeneutic to the Scriptures.

[75] Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 27.

[76] *Ibid.*, 26.

Flying blind

Indeed, it is because of the insubordination of the human will that we are forced to rely upon judgment at all. Augustine places such high value on judgment because of his belief in the blinding effects of the Fall. Here it will be helpful to examine how human vision will operate in the Eschaton, in order to understand just what it is we lack in this life, and how judgment helps us get by in the meantime.

The ideal for humans is intellectual sight guiding the rest of the senses. In Book XII of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* Augustine has a well-known discussion on the three human faculties of vision. "These three kinds of vision, therefore, bodily (*corporalis*), spiritual (*spiritualis*), and intellectual (*intellectualis*) must now be considered one by one, to enable the reason to climb up from the lower to the higher" (*Gn. litt.* XII.11.22).[77] In order to explain he illustrates these three with a reading of Mark 12.31: "When one reads 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' the letters are seen with bodily vision, the neighbor thought about spiritually, love observed intellectually" (*Gn. litt.* XII.11.22).[78] This is the same process of cognition we noted earlier: the words on the page, seen with the bodily eye, bring about the impression of one's neighbor in the soul, and also an intelligible and ineffable thing, love, within the purview of the intellect. Here we have a good example of all three sorts of vision operating at once (*Gn. litt.* XII.11.22, XII.24.51).

Consonant with the cognitive scheme we noted earlier, Augustine describes the same sensory scheme in *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, this time bringing the judgment of the intellect to bear on the data brought in by the senses and impressed in the soul:

> So then, this spiritual nature, on which it is not bodies but the likenesses of bodies that are impressed, has visions of a kind inferior to that enjoyed by the light of the mind and the understanding. This is what both assesses these inferior ones and perceives things which as well as not being bodies have no forms or shapes similar to bodies, such as the mind itself and every good disposition of the soul, as well as their opposites, its vices, which are very properly blamed and condemned in human beings. In what other way, after all, is the understanding observed but by understanding? So too 'charity, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, restraint' (Gal 5.22-23) and the rest, by which one draws near to God, and God himself, 'from whom are all things, through whom all things, in whom all things' (Rom 11.36). (*Gn. litt.* XII.24.50)

[77] Augustine's varied and casual use of the terms *anima*, *animus*, and *spiritus* are described in O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 7f. He notes that these all were generally equivalent.

[78] *corporaliter litterae videntur, spiritualiter proximus cogitatur, intellectualiter dilectio conspicitur.*

In other words, not only is the intellect able to observe itself and the various incorporeal items listed in Galatians 5,[79] but it can apprehend God as well, since it "has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light" (*Trin.* XII.24), including the 'memory' of God, however buried the memory of the divine might be (*Trin.* XIV.17). This superior vision of the mind is somewhat independent of the lower, dependent faculties, and in fact sits as judge over them as the final authority and arbiter in the decision-making process. In the immediately following section of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, commenting again on 1 Corinthians 2.15, 'Spiritual people judge all things, while they themselves are judged by nobody', Augustine says, "Spiritual vision is in need of the intellectual kind [of vision] in order to have a judgment or assessment made of it, while the intellectual is in no need of this inferior spiritual kind. And thus bodily vision is subordinate to spiritual, while each of them is subordinate to the intellectual kind" (*Gn. litt.* XII.24.51).[80] The hierarchy of all creation operates through the senses as well, the inferior subordinate to the superior.

With this adoption of the Stoic theory of the soul's vision mediating between the bodily and intellectual visual faculties, we can now begin to get a sense of how they are meant to work together in well-ordered unison.[81] The lower senses of vision can be fooled, as in the bodily case of optical illusions or an item that is deceptively similar to another, such as the well-known Stoic analogy of wax boiling in a pot being mistaken for a vegetable (*Gn. litt.* XII.25.52); likewise the soul can fail to 'understand' an unexpected corporeal sight, or it can mistake the *phantasmata* of dreams or hallucinations as being physical when they are not. But the intellect cannot be deceived by definition of its nature, as it can only 'see', properly speaking, that which is intellectual, and therefore true; whereas, what is not true is simply not seen intellectually. When all things are working together ideally, with the intellect at the controls, there are no illusions or mistakes in interpreting that which is apprehended, whether through the body or the soul. So correct interpretation lies in discerning the true 'forms' of Providence—which are inseparable from the particular 'things' of creation—and deposits its brief glimpses of truth into the memory for use in future discernment (*Trin.* XII.23). Thus Joseph "was more of a prophet than Pharaoh" when he interpreted the king's dream. "Most completely a prophet is the one who excels in both respects, so that he both

[79] See also, *Trin.* XIV.11f.

[80] On the Stoic notion of judgment (συνκατάθεσις) of these mental images (φαντασία/*phantasmata*) see Colish, *Stoic Tradition* vol 1, 51f; and in relation to Augustine see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 106ff.

[81] This is an essentially Stoic construction, with πνεῦμα as intermediary between sense and the mind as ἡγεμονικόν; see Colish, *Stoic Tradition* vol 1, 51f; and O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 80ff.

sees in spirit the significant likenesses of bodily things and also understands them by the liveliness of his mind" (*Gn. litt.* XII.9.20).[82]

Unfortunately, not many of us are prophets. While Augustine is eager to affirm that the pure in heart indeed shall one day see God (Mt 5.8), "not through any figure signified in either bodily or spiritual vision, as through a mirror in a code, but face to face (1 Cor 13.12)" (*Gn. litt.* XII.28.56), this is *not* the case for even the most holy Christians in this life prior to the resurrection. As he plainly says, qualifying the entirety of this discussion on the various faculties of vision, "But being weighed down by this mortal and perishable burden, we are strangers to this vision as long as we are walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5.6-7), even when we are living righteous lives here" (*Gn. litt.* XII.28.56; also *Trin.* I.1-4).

This reliance upon faith, referring the things that are seen to those which are invisible, causes Augustine to resort time and again to Romans 1.20, creating an almost existential method of operating in, or perhaps blindly stumbling through, the world. We find a clear expression of this in *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* Book IV, illustrating how humanity struggles to discern all things as they exist primordially in the Word:

> And so the human mind first experiences through the senses of the body the things that have been made, and from there gains such knowledge of them as its human weakness allows; and next it looks for their causes, if by any manner of means it may attain them where they abide primordially and unchangingly in the Word of God, and may thus come to 'an understanding of his invisible things through those that have been made' (Rom 1.20). Is anyone unaware of how slow and dull the mind is at doing this, how difficult it finds it, and what a long time it takes, on account of 'the perishable body which weighs down the soul' (Wis 9.15)—this, even when it is being hurried along by its fervent and eager desire to persevere in pressing on to this goal? (*Gn. litt.* IV.32.49)[83]

So fallen humans are completely dependent upon 'bodily likenesses,' 'significant visions' (*Gn. litt.* XII.26.54), 'coded symbols of the spirit' (*Gn. litt.* XII.27.55) that is, corporeal and spiritual *signa*, in order to gain knowledge of any sort whatsoever. "Thus, although understanding lies in the sight of the Eternal, faith nourishes in the cradles of temporal things as children are nourished with milk. Now 'we walk by faith and not by sight' (2 Cor 5.7)" (*doc. Chr.* II.12.17). This dependent and limited condition, responsible for all the ambiguities of human life, is Paul's dark glass (1 Cor 13.12),[84] where the mind is left virtually

[82] For more on prophetic vision in Augustine, see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, 120f. He cites further examples in *c. Adim.* 2 and *Simpl.* 2.1.1.

[83] See also *Gn. litt.* V.12.28, 23.44; *Trin.* II.25, VI.12, XV.39.

[84] 1 Cor 13.12 features regularly in Augustine's sermons, see especially: *s.* 5.7, 53.6.12, 72.18, 78.5, 117.8, 120.2.5, 346.2, 362.29; *en Ps* 33[1].10, 36[2].8, 48[1].5, 83.10, 98.3, 99.6, 102.10. For an overview of

blind and forced to take things on faith.[85] This is far from the Platonic ideal of ἐπιστήμη, actual knowledge; rather, Augustine restricts us to ὀρθὴ δόξα, right opinion.[86] Indeed, "How hidden you are, dwelling on high in your silence, great and only God, who by your unfaltering law spread the punishment of blindness over unlawful human lusts!" (*conf.* I.18.29). The glass is dark, because our faculty of mental vision is impaired—yet it remains a glass, in that we are granted a 'glimpse' of the eternal through corporeal revelation, and the gift of faith in things unseen guides our *judicium*, allowing us to operate safely in the dark. "It is for this reason that the faith by which we believe in God is particularly necessary in this mortal life, so full of delusion and distress and uncertainty" (*Trin.* XIII.10).

The human mind's need for bodily and soulish input is thus profound. The mind's visual superiority is truly ironic in this scheme, due to its being utterly in the dark for the duration of our earthly life, seemingly left only with memory of the truth. The fundamental ambiguity of understanding lies here, in the mind's failure to see clearly. But as we recall from our previous discussion, the mind still retains its adjudicative powers and, when applied rightly through the inspired filter of Christian *voluntas*, it discriminates truth in and among the various images thrown at it by the soul and body (*conf.* X.8.12f, 17.26, 25.36) much like a pilot flying in the dark or in inclement weather, without visibility, is forced to rely on his instruments to land safely.[87] Although our experience of bodily things after the resurrection will remain, it will pale in comparison to the clarity of our fully realized mental vision then; but for now this is *not* our experience.

So it is that the humble, discerning Christian mind is not content to gaze upon texts, animals, or even human bodies without reference to their meaning in the Word. Rather, the Christian mind takes in the raw data provided by the sensory impression on the soul and proceeds to arrange them into the meaning it sees fit, in accordance with the graciously revealed will of God; that is, all things referring to God as both beginning and end, that is, Creator and homeland. As Oliver O'Donovan describes it, "When man submits his will to God's will, he becomes in his active life a partner in God's providential conferring of utility

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Augustine's use of this passage see Frederick Van Fleteren, "Per Speculum et in aenigmate: I Corinthians 13:12 in the Writings of St. Augustine," *AugStud* 23 (1992): 69-102.

[85] R. A. Markus also points out the adjudicating role of the mind in producing a *verbum mentis*, which is, "above all a product of the judgment on the material presented by sense, imagination and memory in its light," as seen in *Trin.*, especially IX.7.12; "Augustine on Signs," 100.

[86] See Plato, *men.* 97b-c. See also *Trin.* I.1-4; *conf.* XIII.18.23.

[87] Augustine's description of the prophetic activity of dream interpretation in *Gn. litt.* XII.9.20 is an effective illustration of the Christian mind in action, interpreting the data of soulish vision. It reminds me of a device, called BrainPort, which enables the blind to 'see' via a pad placed on the tongue. Conveying data received from a video camera, the BrainPort creates impressed patterns on the tongue's surface that can be sensed and interpreted as images.

upon creation."[88] Again, our trouble lies in our mind's blindness, bringing about the difficult necessity of faith and our need for the vocabulary, or thesaurus, of Scripture. Trusting that the Christian account of reality is true, the mind self-consciously operates under and makes decisions by the criteria of Christian doctrine, faith seeking understanding (Is 7.9, LXX). As Augustine writes, "[Eternal things] you teach us with consummate wisdom in your book, which is the vault you provide for us, O our God, so that they may all become plain to us through contemplation of your wonders. Still, though, we must discern them through signs, and transient phases, and passing days and years" (*conf.* XIII.18.23).

Eyes in the sky

Earlier we remarked how God could have 'downloaded' knowledge directly into human heads *via* the angels, but chose not to in order to encourage Christian unity in sharing the truth with one another. Augustine suggests there are additional reasons he held back. In regard to the internal teaching of the Word, this restraint is an act of mercy and an accommodation to our conformity to the world. Regarding Christ's words in John 16.12, 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now', Augustine comments on the difficulty carnal minds have in receiving "the spiritual light and the spiritual voice" of the Interior Teacher:

> But that inner Teacher who, when he was still speaking externally to the disciples, said, 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now', if he were to wish to say to us internally what I said [earlier] about the incorporeal nature of God, just as he says [it] to the holy angels who always see the face of the Father, we could not yet bear these things. Accordingly, I do not think that his words, "He [the Paraclete] will teach you all truth'… can be fulfilled in this life in anyone's mind. For who, living in this body which is corrupted and presses down the soul, can know all truth, since the Apostle says, "We know in part?" (*Jo. ev. tr.* 96.4)

This candid admission of the fallen human mind's limited capacity points towards the prominence of knowledge conveyed through inspired human tradition.

In *The Trinity* Book XIV Augustine clearly describes the content of Christ's direct teaching in the human mind as knowledge of the need for the unique yet corporeal revelation provided by the church's ministry. The fallen, unconverted human mind does indeed possess a naturally embedded 'memory' of God, but it is merely the dim awareness *that* God is, accompanied by a very general sense of what is expected of us ethically and the fact that we ought to return to him; yet the mind is ignorant of who he is, or how to return to him.

[88] O'Donovan, "*Usus* and *Fruitio*," 365.

The Holy Spirit's prompting, however, results in a sort of education brought about by turning to the church.

> But when the mind truly recalls its Lord after receiving his Spirit, it perceives quite simply—for it learns this by a wholly intimate instruction from within—that it cannot rise except by his gracious doing, and that it could not have fallen except by its own willful undoing. Certainly it does not remember its happiness. That was once, and is no more, and the mind has totally forgotten [its former happiness] and therefore cannot even be reminded of it. But it believes the trustworthy documents of its God about it, written by his prophets, when they tell about the bliss of paradise and make known through a historical tradition man's first good and first evil. (*Trin.* XIV.21)[89]

The trustworthiness of the apostles and prophets derives either from their source, having heard it themselves from Christ or through inspiration, or from what they have been enabled by grace to see for themselves in an exceptional fashion. The question which drives all of Book XII of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, which famously describes Paul's ecstatic vision of Paradise, the third heaven (2 Cor 12.2-4), is: "How did Paul see Paradise?" (*Gn. litt.* XII.2.5). The discussion is largely about the nature of prophecy and its role as an authority for spiritually understanding both the biblical text and the created world,[90] and is worth considering here because it is enormously helpful in understanding how our judgment, informed by faith in their testimony, helps us navigate safely in spite of our blindness. The truth of their word allows us to operate in a faith which is almost as good as seeing for ourselves. Augustine is clear: what images in the memory are to the active portion of the mind, faith is to the intellect (*Trin.* XIII.2).

Paul's grace-induced, out-of-body vision of the 'third heaven' provided him with truly intellectual knowledge of all things as they exist eternally in the Word. Paul's experience was the same as that of Moses in the Tent of Meeting (Ex 33.7-11) brought about by ecstasy, the temporary removal of the blinding effects of the Fall, whereby one directly sees all things according to their eternal design in the Word. This is a superior form of prophecy, better than John's in the Apocalypse or what Moses also experienced at the summit of Sinai:

> Just as [John] has been rapt away from the sense of the body to find himself among these bodily likenesses which are seen in spirit, so too he may be rapt away from these to be carried up to that region, so to say, of things intellectual or intelligible. There, without any bodily likeness the pure transparent truth is perceived (*sine ulla corporis similitudine perspicua veritas cernitur*), overcast by no clouds of false opinions… There the glory of the Lord is to be seen, not through some significant vision (*visionem significatem*),

[89] *Trin.* XIV.9 and XIV.11 are also important passages on the relationship between human tradition and grace in understanding.

[90] We discuss *Gn. litt.* XII and the nature of prophecy in depth in Chapter Three.

> whether of the bodily kind such as was seen on Mount Sinai, or the spiritual such as Isaiah saw or John in the Apocalypse, not in code but clearly (*per speciem, non per aenigmata*), to the extent that the human mind can grasp it, depending on God's grace as he takes it up, so that God may speak mouth to mouth with any whom he has made worthy of such conversation—the mouth of the mind not the body, which is how I consider we have to understand what is written about Moses. (*Gn. litt.* XII.26.54)

This divinely-induced state allowed Paul to see 'Paradise' in its intellectual and prophetic sense above and beyond the literal. And what he saw was "the life in which we are to live forever after this life" (XII.28.56), "in its own proper reality, and not by means of images" (XII.4.14). This direct vision of things as they exist eternally in the Word gives prophets like Moses or Paul a supernatural authority to make reliable statements about the nature of reality. All divinely inspired prophets enjoy this authority, of course, as he indicates by including Joseph's and Daniel's interpretations of their respective kings' dreams (XII.9.20), Peter's vision when he saw the sheet lowered from heaven (XII.11.24), and other prophets including Isaiah and John, as we saw above.

In the Eschaton our vision will be of an even higher quality than these prophets enjoyed.

> Though the apostle was snatched away from the senses of the flesh to the third heaven and to Paradise, he certainly lacked that full and perfect knowledge of things which the angels have, in that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. This certainly will not be lacking when bodies have been received back in the resurrection of the dead, and 'this perishable thing puts on imperishability, and this mortal thing puts on immortality' (1 Cor 15.53). Then, you see, all things will be crystal clear and out in the open without any false impressions, distributed without any ignorance in their respective orders, the bodily, the spiritual and the intellectual, in perfect bliss with their natures entire and undiminished. (*Gn. litt.* XII.36.69)

As lofty as this will be, Augustine has been unwavering in his insistence that we shall have to rely on the mediation of prophetic testimony to what was seen through God's gracious aid until the restoration of all things at the resurrection of the dead. But his mention of the angelic knowledge of things allows us to glimpse an even more precise conception of what true intellectual sight entails; again, we do so in the interest of understanding how it is that our judgment, our 'crutch' upon which we rely while we await the removal of our fallen blindness, allows us to operate in the world.

The angelic knowledge of creation (and ours as well in the future) is in continual reference to the Word, of whom, by whom and in whom all things exist.

> They gaze so raptly upon that unchangeable substance of the creator that they not only put the sight and love of it before everything else, but also make judgments about everything in accordance with it, and align themselves on it in order to make themselves useful, and from it draw the lines on which to make use of other things. (*Gn. litt.* XII.36.69)

What he references here is the fact that all things were created in the Word, 'in the beginning' (Gn 1.1, Jn 1.1; *Gn. litt.* I.2.6-5.11), in one singular yet six-fold day (Gn 1.1-2.5; *Gn. litt.* IV.26.43). And when God declared "let there be light', and light was made' (Gn 1.3), it was then that the angelic hierarchy was formed (*Gn. litt.* I.9.17), "in the very act of its conformation [to the Word] it came to knowledge of it, that is, in its being enlightened by the Truth, to which it turned to be formed… At the first stage it was not made but begotten; here in the second stage, however, it is made, because formed out of formlessness" (*Gn. litt.* II.8.16). Their formation being indistinguishable from their enlightenment, "from the moment they were created they have been enjoying the eternity of the Word in holy and devout contemplation" (II.8.17).

> There can be no doubt that they have first come to know the universal creation, in which they themselves were the first to be established, in the Word of God himself, in whom are the eternal ideas (*rationes*) even of things which were made in time, as in the one 'through whom all things were made' (Jn 1.3). Only after that do they know creation in itself, by glancing down below, as it were, and then referring it to the praise of the one in whose unchangeable truth they originally see the ideas according to which it was made… angelic knowledge does not linger in what has been created without straightaway referring it to the praise and love of the one in whom it is known. (*Gn. litt.* IV.24.41)

Aided by this knowledge of creation and perpetually referring it to God in praise, the angels "simultaneously contemplate him without place or time, and carry out his orders in the lower spheres, moving themselves in time, bodies in both time and place as their activity requires" (VIII.24.45). So it is that they rightly 'make themselves useful' and 'make use of other things', by referring all creation 'to the praise and love of the one in whom it is known'.

Aided by the testimony of prophets, we too can operate in the 'angelic' manner, rightly making use of things according to the rule of faith by following the method of Romans 1.20 which we outlined above:

> It pertains to the loftier reason to make judgments (*judicare*) on these bodily things according to non-bodily and everlasting meanings; and unless these were above the human mind they would certainly not be unchanging, and unless something of ours were subjoined to them we would not be able to make judgments according to them about bodily things. But we do make judgments on bodily things in virtue of the meaning of dimensions and figures which the mind knows is permanent and unchanging. (*Trin.* XII.2)

But the only way that the fallen human mind knows what is permanent and unchanging is through the operation of Christ and the Holy Spirit, working within the tradition, that is, the church as the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit as teacher

Here we have come full-circle; if we would recall, seeing creation as good and referring it back to its maker is a work of the Spirit, and "it is evidently not they, but God, who sees that it is good" (*conf.* XIII.30.45-31.46). We have also noted how the Word as Teacher works primarily through what he has taught the apostles and the prophets. The eschatological revealing of truth, and our dependence on human teaching in this life, means the Holy Spirit shoulders most of the load in bringing humans into the saving knowledge of Christ. We know a few true things in this life thanks largely to the instruction provided through 'exterior' teachers, and so Augustine exhorts us to begin with this foundation and from there

> advance in the love that is poured forth in your hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to you, so that, afire in the spirit and loving spiritual things, you may [one day] be able to know, not by some sign apparent to the eyes of the body, nor by some sound making a loud noise in the ears of the body, but by the interior sight and hearing… for what is unknown is not loved. But when what is known in some degree, however slight, is loved, by this very love a better and fuller knowledge is effected. (*Jo. ev. tr.* 96.4)

We observed this same effect earlier, the enflaming of desire to know a person, especially Christ, based on reputation. Playing with a textual variant of John 16.13, where it is promised that the Spirit will either 'teach you all truth' or 'lead you into all truth' (*docebit/deducet*), Augustine allows for both readings because the acceptance of the will of God is the same as coming to him who is truth.

> Therefore, 'be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and understand what the will of God is, which is a good and acceptable and perfect thing, so that rooted and founded in love, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the length, the breadth, the height and the depth, to know also the love of Christ surpassing all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God' (Eph 3.17-19). For in this way the Holy Spirit will teach you all truth, when he will more and more pour forth love in your hearts. (*Jo. ev. tr.* 96.4)

And from the final words of his *Confessions*: "What human can empower another human to understand these things? What angel can grant understanding to another angel? What angel to a human? Let us rather ask of you, seek in you, knock at your door. Only so will we receive, only so find, and only so will the door be opened to us. Amen" (*conf.* XIII.38.53).

Seeing Sacraments Everywhere

Like the angels, part of interpreting the world around us involves seeing it as a revelatory expression of the Word of God and his work, existing in and from 'the beginning'. For example, allegorizing on the fifth day of creation (Gn 1.20-23) Augustine reflects on the relationship between the fixed, eternal seminal idea of creation and the varied, changeable things of creation.

> These same things [i.e. wisdom and knowledge, *sapientiae et scientiae*] work themselves out in the sphere of bodily things in a great variety of forms which constantly increase and multiply through your blessing, O God. You have soothed the scornful pride of mortal senses by arranging that our minds should attain to understanding, as one single truth is figuratively expressed and enunciated in many different ways through corporeal motion. (*conf.* XIII.20.27)

Though in the larger context of *Confessions* XIII he is, admittedly, using the Creation account from Genesis to reflect on the church and the growth of individual Christians, rather than on creation at large, this particular passage happens to touch directly upon how Augustine sees the relationship between eternity and creation. The key phrase in this passage for our purposes here is that of eternal, immutable wisdom and knowledge "working themselves out in the sphere of bodily things in a great variety of forms which constantly increase and multiply" by God's blessing. As we have just seen this perception is the inspired product of Christian judgment, seeing creation in and referring it to the eternal Word as origin, sustainer and goal. Our task here is to see more precisely what Augustine's properly Christian spiritual interpretation involves.

The images of Scripture, planted in the Christian memory, bring shape and form, and thus meaning, to the world around those who accept the authority and truthfulness of Scripture. Looking back to *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine begins his discussion on the interpretation of *res* (things) not with the 'things' of human language, i.e. gestures, written letters or spoken words,[91] but by mentioning examples of 'things' from creation, e.g. wood, stone, cattle, etc. He immediately gives away his purpose in distinguishing 'things' from 'signs' by qualifying the 'things' in his list: he explains that in mentioning wood, he does not mean the wood by which Moses sweetened the waters (Ex 15.25), nor by saying 'stone' the one Jacob used for a pillow (Gen 28.11), nor does he intend us to think about the ram which Abraham sacrificed *in lieu* of Isaac (Gen 22.13) when we hear him mention 'cattle' (*doc. Chr.*

[91] Augustine sees linguistic 'words' as more common, but not necessarily better than, other forms of communication (*doc. Chr.* II.3.4), *pace* Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 94, who sees human language as signs *par excellence* in Augustine. Often the 'words' of liturgical action and human life itself communicate much more effectively. See also Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 73-81, for precisely this point.

I.2.2). Yet, through this subtle rhetorical technique Augustine has made his point very nicely, and this allows us to launch straight in: he means, of course, that the Christian *does* in fact recall these things when hearing such words, or even in seeing such things. Rowan Williams comments on a similar metaphor, observing, "We may start with the supposition that an animal is a *res*, a distinct object bearing a name; but the ram, once brought into the narrative orbit of covenant and sacrifice, slaughtered to redeem Isaac, is not to be so easily shepherded and penned in. Even the most trivial talk about rams is now liable to be haunted by this metaphorization. Only God means nothing but God."[92]

Admittedly, in this particular discussion of 'things' Augustine seems to be merely distinguishing objects in themselves apart from what they may or may not signify beyond themselves, if anything. And yet, his point has been effectively made: the Holy Spirit working on the affections has conditioned the Christian to think not only in terms of the imagery of Scripture but to look for and find the natural reference of all 'things' to God their creator, "this Trinity [which] is one God and that of him, and by him, and in him are all things" (*doc. Chr.* I.5.5), and reference to the details of Scripture and the Christian faith as well. A commonly-used example of this is Augustine's brief discussion on the figurative reference of the word 'ox' (*bos*). Augustine explains,

> Figurative signs occur when that thing which we designate by a literal sign is used to signify something else; thus we say *bos* and by that syllable understand the animal which is ordinarily designated by that word, but again by that animal we understand an evangelist, as is signified in the Scripture, according to the interpretation of the Apostle, when it says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn (1 Cor 9.9)." (*doc. Chr.* II.10.15)

Hearing the word *bos*, non-Christian Latin-speakers think of a beast of burden. Christian Latin-speakers, on the other hand, cannot help but think of the Evangelist.[93] More generally speaking, Augustine writes, "I will not be idle in seeking out the substance of God, either through his scriptures or his creatures. For both these are offered us for our observation and scrutiny in order that in them he may be sought, he may be loved, who inspired the one and created the other" (*Trin.* II.1).[94] As David Dawson notes, "Rather than dissolving scriptural language into non-scriptural categories, allegorical reading should enable the Bible to refashion personal experience and cultural ideals by reformulating them in a distinctively biblical idiom."[95] And as Rowan Williams explains, we must remember that Augustine

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[92] "Language, Reality and Desire," 148. He uses the example of Abraham, Isaac and the 'ram' which refers to Christ, from *civ.* XVI.32.

[93] Luke is, of course, traditionally symbolized by an ox.

[94] See also, *en. Ps.* 44.6.

[95] David Dawson, "Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading," 123.

operates within a semiotic world, and therefore we ought not to be overly confident that we know the meaning of any 'thing' "independently of the 'culture' of Christian *caritas*".[96] Clear-eyed Christians are persistently (obsessively?) on the look-out for that which constantly fills their hearts and minds: Christ. And they see reference to him everywhere they look, whether in the pages of Scripture, in conversations with friends or colleagues, or generally in creation at large. So it is that Augustine's 'Christological epistemology' is really his epistemology, period.

Portraying the Christian as *peregrinans in via*, Augustine encapsulates his discussion of *res* in an important passage from *On Christian Teaching*:

> It is to be understood that the plenitude and end of the Law and of all the sacred Scriptures is the love of a Being which is to be enjoyed… That we might know this and have the means to implement it, *the whole temporal dispensation was made by divine Providence for our salvation*. We should use it, not with an abiding but with a transitory love and delight like that in a road or in vehicles or in other instruments, or, if it may be expressed more accurately, so that we love those things by which we are carried along for the sake of that towards which we are carried. (*doc. Chr.* I.35.39)

This dramatic, all-encompassing conclusion strongly supports our earlier reading; namely, that all 'things' are to be 'used' towards the end of faith in, hope for and love of God. What is more, Augustine's words here mean that this Christian utility is far from arbitrary, as if they are compelled to create fantastical references to the Gospel that simply are not there. The Christian *in via*, referring all things to their origin in the Word, 'uses' all created 'things' for the sake of enjoying God, *because that is how God arranged and created them to exist and function from the beginning*. The *signa naturalia* and *signa data* distinction from *On Christian Teaching* II.1.2f is here collapsed, in that all things were created by God to be used in this manner.[97] Clearly the Creator had the intention (*voluntas*) to signify in all that he made (*doc. Chr.* II.1.2-5.6). As Ayres notes, "Augustine equates attention to the truth with attention to Providence. To have the rule internalized is to be attentive to Providence's ordering of all things."[98] And as Carol Harrison rightly concludes, by *providentia* Augustine refers "to the divine action which is responsible for forming and ordering created reality in order to lead man back to God, by inspiring within him a love and delight for its form, order and beauty."[99] Again, this is seen only by those who have begun the ascent from the fear of God to wisdom, their reformed

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[96] Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire," 150, n 10.

[97] Recall our note above on this matter. Paul Kolbet comes to the same conclusion, *Cure of Souls*, 148.

[98] Ayres, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith," 46-47. Also, it is worth recalling Jackson's observations on this hermeneutic/*inventio* as the essence of the Christian vocation, "Theory of Signs," 125.

[99] Harrison, "'The Most Intimate Feeling of My Mind': The Permanence of Grace in Augustine's Early Theological Practice," *AugStud* 36.1 (2005): 51-58, at 56.

voluntas participating in the eternal, providential *voluntas* of God. "Gazing attentively at the whole of creation, he who travels the road to wisdom perceives how delightfully wisdom reveals itself to him on the way, and meets him in all Providence. The more beautiful is the road to the wisdom toward which he hastens, the more ardently he burns to complete the journey" (*lib. arb.* II.50).[100] Far from negating the value of the material world, this interpretation actually affirms its goodness and essential instrumentality. Though he does not explicitly say as much, Augustine is imposing Biblical imagery onto creation generally, his discriminating mind filling everyday items with an appropriate meaning and providential significance.[101] Commenting on the sacramentality of all creation, Van Der Meer describes how the term *sacramentum* has expanded beyond rites and thus "All boundaries become blurred and the whole of creation is transformed into a mystical ladder into heaven which is erected within the narrow scene of a man's own soul."[102] All of this is built on Christ as the method and means of knowledge.

Unlike superstitious pagans, who through divinization use the sun, moon and stars to predict the future for their own earthly well-being, Christians "take from them with religious devotion suitable likenesses for signifying something in a sacred manner. Thus with the freedom of Christians we use the rest of creation, the winds, the sea, the earth, birds, fishes, animals, trees, and human beings in many ways for speaking" (*ep.* 55.7.13).[103] The Christian use of creation is to take "symbolic likenesses" from all levels of creation "for the presentation of the sacraments." When done properly, free from superstition, carnal desire and fatalism, "the result is a certain eloquence of a teaching conducive to salvation that is suited to turn the affections of the learners from visible things to invisible ones, from bodily things to non-bodily ones, and from temporal things to eternal ones" (*ep.* 55.7.13). So for Augustine, all of creation is material for a discerning interpretation, in which he applies Scriptural imagery to 'common' objects in order to draw out their providentially-intended usefulness. Thus the spiritual 'judge all things' by the criteria of the Christian 'rule of truth' (*Trin.* IX.7.12; *doc. Chr.* I.8.8), in order to point mankind to God through faith, hope and love (*ep.* 55.21.38).

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[100] Williams, trans.

[101] Augustine did not believe in the narrow theory of single-meaning; he allowed for a plurality of meanings in interpretation, with the single stipulation that all exegesis end in the Double Commandment (*doc. Chr.* III.27.28).

[102] Van Der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 304.

[103] See also *doc. Chr.* III.8.12.

TOTUS CHRISTUS

If there was a Christian nuptial rite in fourth- and fifth-century North Africa, it does not appear to have been significant enough to warrant mention.[104] Thus when Augustine called marriage a sacrament he meant it as a sacrament of the type we have just been describing, that is, something taken from creation, in this case human society, and used "to turn the affections of learners from visible things to invisible ones, from bodily things to non-bodily ones, and from temporal things to eternal ones" (*ep.* 55.7.13). However, like many such sacraments, it was impressed into the Christian imagination through its appearance and use in Scripture. Just as both oxen and rams have been irreversibly associated in the literate Christian mind with the evangelist and the sacrifice given in place of Isaac and can no longer be 'penned in' regarding their signification, neither can marriage be contained, thanks to passages like Ephesians 5, Matthew 19 and Genesis 2. Just as Eucharist and baptism require a ritual spoken word in order to become sacrament, marriage has been spoken into sacramental existence through these passages, and like the cattle mentioned above it can no longer fail to bring Christ and the church to mind.

La Bonnardière complains about this very association and inevitable reference, stating that "giving only one meaning to the term *sacramentum* can lead one to assume that allusions to marriage exist wherever Augustine quotes Genesis 2.24 or Ephesians 5.31-32."[105] But I am suggesting that Augustine *does* in fact intend to allude to marriage in practically every instance; and even more, he means it to bring Christ and the church into view as well. The sacrament of a man and woman united in matrimony is the God-given means of imaging the union between Christ and the church. To bypass the sacrament and pretend an ability to see the mystery of Christ and the church directly without the mediation of sacraments is absolute hubris for Augustine. Just as we should never fail to be reminded of Christ and the church when we see a wedding or a married couple, neither can we imagine the unity of the Whole Christ in its fullest sense without the image they provide. And like we saw above with the sacrament of Christ's body and blood in regard to the Eucharist (*c. Faust.* XIX.16), *totus Christus* has been the true *terminus* of marriage all along. Thanks to certain plainly-worded passage of scripture, marriage has no chance of escaping this universal semiotic economy.

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[104] Hunter, "Marrying and the *Tabulae nuptiales* in Roman North Africa," in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400-1600*. P. Reynolds and J. Witte, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 95-113.

[105] La Bonnardière, "*Magnum Sacramentum*," 8-9.

Our question here is, if the words of the church (spoken and visible) are meant to produce images of Christ in the human soul, what image does marriage convey? A fairly straightforward answer to this question lies in the opening paragraph of *Sermon* 341, on the three ways of understanding Christ. The first way of understanding Christ is as divine, the inner Word, coequal and coeternal with the Father. The second and third ways of understanding Christ are really two equivalent versions of incarnation, the Word embodied: 1) Christ united to his own particular human flesh, "mediator and head of the church," and 2) likewise "as the whole Christ in the fullness of the church, that is as head and body, according to the completeness of a certain 'perfect man' (Eph 4.13), the man in whom we are each of us members" (*s.* 341.1). Thus marriage teaches us that the ascended Christ is really not absent at all; indeed, we are his body, we are his members, because we are forever united with our head, and we as the members of Christ are always present to ourselves and one another.

Duo in carne una, duo in voce una

So we see that in addition to discussing the rule of Christ using the *forma* language of Philippians 2, Augustine also speaks nearly equivalently of the union of these two 'forms' in the one person of Christ as 'the Whole Christ', *totus Christus* (*s.* 341.11-13). Though he occasionally uses this expression in reference to the incarnation of Christ with his flesh in and of itself,[106] his use overwhelmingly refers to Christ's eternal union as Head with his body,

[106] See for example *s.* 92.3 and 261.6.7. I am grateful to Michael Cameron, who kindly sent me a copy of an essay which unfortunately was never published, "*Totus Christus* as Hermeneutical Center in Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos*," 1999. Due to the paucity of quality material extant on *totus Christus* I rely heavily on him here; see also, *idem.*, "Transfiguration: Christology and the Roots of Figurative Exegesis in St. Augustine," *SP* 33 (1997): 40-47; *idem.*, "The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis," *Augustine and the Bible*, Pamela Bright, ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999): 74-103; *idem.*, "*Totus Christus* and the Psychagogy of Augustine's Sermons," *AugStud* 36.1 (2005): 59-70; see also his forthcoming *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: How Augustine Read the Old Testament Figuratively* (New York: Oxford University Press). Michael Fiedrowicz is also helpful, "General Introduction," *Expositions of the Psalms* 1-32, vol 1, *WSA* III/15: 13-66; on Christ and the church, see 43-60. Other notable studies include the classic survey of this theme in Patristic literature generally, Emile Mersch, *The Whole Christ*, Kelly, trans. (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1938), with considerable treatment on Augustine, 384-440. The fullest treatment of this theme in Augustine himself is Egon Franz, Totus Christus: *Studien über Christus und die Kirche bei Augustin* (Inaugural-Dissertation, University of Bonn, 1956). See also Michel Réveillaud, "Le Christ-Homme, tête de l'Église," *RecAug* 5 (1968) : 67-94; Gérard Philips, "L'influence du Christ-Chef sur son Corps mystique," *Augustinus Magister*, vol 2 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954): 805-815; Pasquale Borgomeo, *L'Église de ce Temps dans la Prédication de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972), 191-252; Madec, "Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra," *RecAug* 10 (1975): 77-85; *idem.*, *La Patrie et la Voie*, 178-185; Tarsicius Jan van Bavel and Bernard Bruning, "Die Einheit des 'Totus Christus' bei Augustinus." *Scientia augustiniana: Studien über Augustinus, den Augustinismus und den Augustinerorden.* Mayer and Eckermann, eds. (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1975): 43-75; William Babcock, *The Christ of the Exchange: A Study in the Christology of Augustine's* Enarrationes in Psalmos (Yale University: Unpublished Dissertation, 1971).

the church.[107] This relatively neglected theme[108] has nevertheless been called "le principe de cohérence de sa doctrine,"[109] especially as it involves his body the church, as there is "a hypostatic union between Christ and the church—an ecclesial incarnation."[110] Thus Augustine's doctrine of the Whole Christ (*totus Christus*), head and body, has been considered to be the center of his mature theology,[111] and as such "is not merely a theme or even the most important and central doctrine of Augustine's preaching. It rather forms the very atmosphere of the sermons, a subterranean stream of ever-flowing experience."[112] And finally, "Augustine's primary model for the just society [i.e. the church] makes use of the Pauline image of Christ as 'head of the body, which is the church' (Col 1.18, 1.24)."[113] These scholars of Augustine are right about the centrality of *totus Christus* for Augustine's Christological exegesis, and more widely on the reconciling work of Christ itself. Our purpose here is not to give a full treatment of Augustine's use of *totus Christus*, but after summarizing the doctrine to note that in all this scholarly discussion, none, apart from one or two important exceptions,[114] discuss this union in terms of marriage, the joining of 'two in one flesh' (*duo in carne una*), as does Augustine in extremely important moments in his writings, both sermons and treatises.

Augustine hardly initiated the practice of Christological interpretation of the Old Testament; the New Testament regularly used the Psalms in key moments for reflecting on the meaning of Christ and his work (e.g. Lk 24.44), especially regarding the crucifixion (Pss 21.68), the resurrection (Pss 15, 117), and his sitting at the right hand of God (Ps 109).[115] The Christological interpretation of the Psalms continued unabated in early Christian life, often borrowing similar interpretive techniques from secular interpretations of Homer or Plato in attempts to distinguish between the different voices heard in the Psalms, a strategy

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[107] Henri Marrou cites over two hundred occurrences of the theme in Augustine's *corpus*, *Théologie de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968), 43 [ET, *Time and Timeliness* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 35], and Cameron cites more than one hundred twenty-five occurrences in *en. Ps.* alone, "*Totus Christus* as Hermeneutical Center," 1 n. 2. Notable occurrences, almost all in sermons, include *en. Ps.* 30[2].3-4, 34[2].1, 37.6, 26-7, 44.3, 56.1, 74.4, 101[1].2, 122.1.1, 138.2, 142.3; *ep.* 140.6.18; *s.* 341.11-13; *Jo. ev. tr.* 21.8.

[108] Cameron suspects this is due primarily to 1) an overly narrow interest in Augustine's early statement, "I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing more? Nothing at all" (*sol.* 1.7), and 2) a tendency to neglect his sermons in favor of his treatises, "*Totus Christus* as Hermeneutical Center," 1-2.

[109] Madec, "scientia et sapientia nostra," in his subtitle and at 81.

[110] Madec, *La Patrie et la Voie*, 184-185.

[111] Franz, Totus Christus, 95.

[112] Cameron, "Psychagogy of Augustine's Sermons," 65.

[113] Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 147.

[114] The most notable example is the important article by van Bavel and Bruning, "Die Einheit des 'Totus Christus'," especially 61-66. I have not found another.

[115] Cameron, "*Totus Christus* as Hermeneutical Center," 2.

that has famously been called 'prosopological' exegesis.[116] Much in the same manner as the *forma* rule we observed earlier, Augustine maintains the single voice of the Psalms by applying different statements to Christ's various parts (*s.* 341.11-13). He explains the criterion as follows: "Now whatever is said in this psalm and cannot apply in strict terms to the Lord himself, the Head, should be referred to the church; for here the whole Christ is speaking, and all his members are contained in him" (*en. Ps.* 17.51).[117] As Fiedrowicz notes, "Augustine followed the pattern customary in early Christian exegesis, which interpreted the Psalms either as a word to Christ (*vox ad Christum*), or as a word about Christ (*vox de Christo*), or as a word spoken by Christ himself (*vox Christi*), or in an ecclesiological perspective as a word about the Church (*vox de ecclesia*), or finally as a word spoken by the Church (*vox ecclesiae*)."[118] Though of course, Augustine often identified several different voices in the same sermon.[119] But rather than being a problem, these several voices are the very means by which the unity of Christ is expressed, in that they all speak through his mouth. Fiedrowicz explains, "it is only by means of this variation that the figure of Christ without curtailment and in all its fullness of meaning comes into view."[120]

Augustine probably observed this exegetical practice in Tertullian, Ambrose and Hilary, but he was most influenced by the Donatist Tyconius, whose significant *Book of Rules* (*Liber regularum*, 380), most likely the first to articulate the church as body of Christ as an exegetical principle in addition to the proper practice of referring to his flesh, provided Augustine with ready-made criteria for a christo-ecclesial interpretation.[121] Three of the seven Tyconian rules for making sense of the ambiguities of Scripture deal directly with or are to be applied to the Lord and his Body, that is, Christ and the church (the final rule deals with the head and body of the devil[122]). These rules and their fascination with Christ as the Bridegroom, the Head of the church, under whom all its various members hold together (*doc. Chr.* I.16.15) left an indelible mark on Augustine's interpretive thought, and provided an indispensable image and criterion for his expression of the work of God in Christ. As Mersch notes, this exegetical principle was used to express the unity of the Whole Christ in

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[116] Fiedrowicz, "Introduction," 51. He cites M.J. Rondeau, *Les commentaries patristiques du Psautier (IIIe-Ve siècles)* vol II (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 220; Roma 1985): 365-388; her subtitle is *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie*.

[117] For the most thorough explanation of applying this rule, see *en. Ps.* 37.6.

[118] "Introduction," 44-45. See bibliography in n. 152.

[119] See for example *en. Ps.* 44.20.

[120] Fiedrowicz, "Introduction," 59.

[121] For Augustine's own rendering of these rules see *doc. Chr.* III.30.42f. Origen uses Christ and the church as an interpretive rule, but much less often and in a very different way. We give references in a note in Chapter Four.

[122] See also *Gn. litt.* XI.24.31.

prayer, suffering, sanctification, unification, and divinization.[123] And Michael Cameron explains that "*totus Christus* functioned for Augustine as a hermeneutical center in the *Enarrationes in psalmos* in at least three ways: by making the Psalms a *magnifier* for viewing the paschal mystery itself, a *frame* for highlighting the paschal nucleus of the Bible, and a *mirror* for discovering the self-understanding of the church to its members."[124]

This last function of *totus Christus*, as a mirror for self-understanding, suggests that in calling *totus Christus* a hermeneutic or an exegetical strategy we risk forgetting that it is also an oratorical device, one in which the preacher seeks to draw the congregation in and urge them to unite their affections to Christ's, to join their voice with his prayers, to participate in the very will of Christ heard in the Scriptures as they were read and sung in church. Cameron also notes that the 'mirror' of *totus Christus* applied to the text in preaching functions in the same way as the Eucharist, as we noted above, when Augustine exhorts his congregation, "Become what you see and receive what you are" (*s.* 272.1). Likewise, "*totus Christus* was a globalizing heuristic construct that gathered the disparate lines of textual meaning and the life experience of the bishop's people and lifted them into coherence with the entire history of salvation."[125] This union of text and life comes into focus in his *Enarration* of Psalm 61.4(62.3), which his Latin version rendered as, 'Kill me, all of you.' He brings *totus Christus* into play with the question,

> how could there be enough room in a single body for that person to be killed by all? There is, though, because we must understand this person as ourselves, as the person of our church, the one person that is Christ's body. Jesus Christ is one man consisting of head and body, the Savior of the body and the body's members, two in one flesh. They are two in once voice as well, and two in one passion; and when iniquity has finally passed away, they will be two in one rest. (*en. Ps.* 61.4)

Now we are in a position to see how integral the sacrament of marriage is for not only Augustine's Christology, but also for his exegesis, oratory and prayer. In the following passage, all of these occur simultaneously:

> We must turn our minds to the… psalm now, and see if we can recognize ourselves in the words of the prophet… it is Christ who is speaking… we must understand this as the whole Christ, head and body… Christ consists of head and body, bridegroom and bride, the Son of God and the church, the Son of God who became Son of Man for our sake, to make us who are children of men children of God. So by a great sacrament these two were to be united in one flesh (Eph. 5.32), the two who are hailed by the prophets as

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[123] *The Whole Christ*, 412-440. His discussion provides many examples, several from outside *en. Ps.*
[124] "*Totus Christus* as Hermeneutical Center," 10.
[125] *Ibid.*, 14-15.

> two in one voice (*atque ita essent duo in carne una in sacramento magno, qui agnoscuntur in Prophetis duo in voce una*). (*en. Ps.* 30[3].1)

Here we see that Augustine believes the *magnum sacramentum* of marriage pertains to Christ and also grounds his exegesis, as two sides of the same coin, enabling him to hear the voices of both the head and his body in a single text and person. "If two in one flesh, why not two in one voice?" (*en. Ps.* 30[2].4).[126]

This connection of the marital sacrament with the unity of Christ in his person and voice is hardly an isolated occurrence.[127] Turning to his *Enarration* of Psalm 44(45) we see an important instance of Christ's union with the church expressed as a marriage. Classifying the Psalm as an Epithalamium, a wedding song of Christ and the church, Augustine poses the question,

> Perhaps you are wondering whether there is any bridal chamber (*thalamus*) at this wedding to which we have been invited? Yes, there is; why else would another psalm say, 'He has pitched his tent in the sun, and he is like a bridegroom coming forth from his tent' (Ps 18.6(19.5))? The nuptial union is effected between the Word and human flesh, and the place where the union is consummated is the Virgin's womb. It is flesh, very flesh, that is united to the Word; as scripture says, 'they are two no longer, but one flesh' (Mt. 19.6). The church was drawn from the human race, so that flesh united to the Word might be the Head of the church, and all the rest of us believers might be the limbs that belong to that Head. (*en. Ps.* 44.3)

This striking passage illustrates the nuptial quality of the union between Christ and the church, and the totality of this identification between the two—even with individual members of the church—refuses to allow their separation for any reason. "We hear our voice in [the Psalm]: the voice, that is, of Christ, head and body. When you hear Christ mentioned, never divorce bridegroom from bride, but recognize that great sacrament, 'They will be two in one flesh' (Eph. 5.31)" (*en. Ps.* 34[2].1).[128]

The eternal and unbreakable nuptial bond between Christ and his body we saw in *On the Good of Marriage* 7.7 and 18.21 and in *On Marriage and Concupiscence* I.10.11 extends even from earth to heaven. "Just as when our foot is trodden on, our tongue yells, because of the organic unity of the human body," so too the unity of the heavenly Christ with his earth-bound body allows Augustine to flesh out this tension using Christ's prophecy to Nathanael

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[126] See also *en. Ps.* 34[2].1, 40.1, 68[2].1, 101[1].2, 138.21, and 142.3.

[127] Along with the roughly one hundred twenty-five occurrences of the theme of *totus Christus* Michael Cameron has identified in *en. Ps.* alone, by my count there are at least fifty-seven instances of explicit reference to marriage in *en. Ps.*, after a quick search for clauses from Ephesians 5.31/Genesis 2.24 (*duo in carne una*) and Matthew 19.6 (*sed una caro*), and relevant use of passages from the Song of Songs. They usually but not always accompany his explanations of the rule of *totus Christus*.

[128] See also *en. Ps.* 37.16.

in John 1.47-51 ('you will see heaven opened, and God's angels ascending and descending over the Son of Man'):

> God's angels ascend and descend upon the Son of Man, because the Son of Man is enthroned on high, and to him we ascend in our hearts; in this respect he is our head. But the Son of Man is here below, inasmuch as his body is on earth. His members are here, the head is in heaven; we ascend to the head, and descend to his members. Christ is there, and Christ is here. If he were present above only, and not here, how could the voice from heaven have demanded, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' (Acts 9.4). (*en. Ps.* 44.20)[129]

And confirming our above analysis on the link between believers and God consisting not of sight but of love/will, "The head of the church is enthroned in heaven, from where he rules and guides his body; and though the body is still debarred from the vision of him, it is linked to him by charity" (*en. Ps.* 56.1).

Unity and Subordination of the Body

What of the theme of universal ordered subordination which has featured so prominently in our discussion until now? Given the prominence of the theme, a text like Ephesians 5.24, 'As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands,' would appear to be obvious. But the *Enarrations on the Psalms* are curiously all-but silent in this regard; while exhortations to obedience can be easily found (e.g. *en. Ps.* 32[2].1-2, 50.12-13), I have found none which occur in discussions on the relationship between Christ and the church apart from *Enarration* 56.1, quoted above. This is perhaps due to the fact that Augustine's sermons on the Psalms tend to emphasize Christ's sympathy and union with his members, as seen in the following: "The bridegroom has loved not a beautiful bride but one whom he can make beautiful…" (*en. Ps.* 132.10). But notable occurrences of Ephesians 5.24 and the subjection of the church do appear in *On the Good of Marriage* and in *On Continence*, and in a couple other texts as well,[130] suggesting that the point was not lost on him.

Whatever his reasons for omitting this aspect of the relationship between Christ and the church in his sermons, the point that we ended with in our last chapter still stands: Christ and the church, as exemplar and archetype for the unions of husband and wife and spirit and flesh, maintains "the beauty and orderliness of one being superior and in charge and the other honorably subordinate… The first member of each pair cares for the second,

[129] See also *en. Ps.* 122.1.1.

[130] Helpfully, one occurrence is in the anti-Manichaean work *c. Adim.* 3, and the other in the anti-Donatist work *Cresc.* II.21. The first defends marriage, and the second defends the church, a nice balance for our purposes.

the second is subordinated to the first" (*cont.* 9.23). A passage from *On the Good of Marriage* is best here: "Just as the sacrament of that age [the Patriarchs], of the marriage to many, was a symbol of the plurality of people who would be subject to God in all nations of the earth, so too the sacrament of marriage to one, of our time, is a symbol that in the future we shall all be united and subject to God in the one heavenly city" (*b. conjug.* 18.21).

We should also recall the rhetorical Manichaean criticism of his comparison of the human body with the church in relation to their respective heads, especially as he has continuously used Galatians 5.17 to describe that relationship, 'The flesh has desires opposed to the spirit'. On this basis they bring Ephesians 5.24 in as a rebuttal, 'the church is subject to Christ'. Augustine's reply uses the other half of Galatians 5.17 in an anti-Pelagian response, 'the spirit lusts against the flesh'.

> Obviously the church is subject to Christ, since the reason why the spirit has desires opposed to the flesh is to make the church subject to Christ in all its parts, and the reason why the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit is that the church has not yet achieved the perfect peace it has been promised. So the church is subject to Christ because of the salvation it has been pledged, and the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit because of the illness that infects it. (*cont.* 11.25)

Quoting 1 Corinthians 3.3 ('Because there is envy and rivalry among you, are you not carnal persons?') and 1 John 1.8 ('If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves…'), Augustine portrays the members of his body as very much in need of subjection. But here we note that this is not accomplished with overwhelming force in domination, but through a gentle and harmonizing healing:

> When the one who 'heals all our infirmities (Ps 103.3) has brought the church to the promised healing of its infirmities, there will then be no spot or wrinkle, however slight, in any of its members. Then in no way will the flesh lust against the spirit, and so there will also be no reason for the spirit to lust against the flesh. This whole battle will then come to an end; there will then be the greatest concord (*summa concordia*), then no one will be carnal, so much so that even the flesh itself will be spiritual (*caro sit spiritalis*).
> (*cont.* 11.25)

The absence of subordination language from the *Enarrations* should not prevent us from accepting the centrality of subordination in Augustine's understanding of *totus Christus*, as we have made it abundantly clear that the universal work of Christ, subjecting all things to himself and presenting them to the Father in contemplation, is actually their healing, their restoration, their elevation, and their natural beatific end, that for which they were made 'in the beginning'. Rather, we should see the sermons and ascetical treatises as complementary, fleshing out the manifold images the sacrament of marriage provides us with for reflecting

on the incorporating richness of the enduring union between Christ and his body, the church.

> "Let us congratulate ourselves then and give thanks for having been made not only Christians but Christ. Do you understand, brothers and sisters, the grace of God upon us? Do you grasp that? Be filled with wonder, rejoice and be glad: we have been made Christ! For if he is the head and we the members, then he and we are the whole man (*totus homo*)." (*Jo. ev. tr.* 21.8)

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have looked closely at Augustine's sacramental theology, and how for him the sacraments, whether liturgical or discerned in the world around us, provide us fallen humans with the corporeal foundation we need in order to progress towards the divine. Marriage was seen as particularly important in this process, in that it not only teaches us about Christ's union with his body the church, but also our union with him as members of that body. In the next chapter we see that the sacrament of marriage also reveals the twofold nature of the universe. This will set the stage for the other two unions from *On Continence*, spirit and flesh, and husband and wife.

3

HEAD AND BODY, HEAVEN AND EARTH

'For what we saw was heaven and earth, the head and body of the church which you predestined before time began…'

– *conf.* XIII.33.48

INTRODUCTION

Continuing our exploration of the effect the sacrament of marriage has on Augustine's ascetical vision, in this chapter we elucidate the extensive ramifications of marriage's signification of *totus Christus* in the light of Augustine's conviction that Christ united to the church comprises the divinely-established twofold design and governance (*ratio*) of the universe. Thus the sacrament of marriage helps us to discern not only the Whole Christ, but the twofold order of all creation. We discover this extended reference through a close reading of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, where Augustine expresses this design working out not only in the various spiritual and corporeal natures of creation, but in the volitional ordering of the universe as well. We conclude the chapter with a discussion on Augustine's ideal of creaturely well-being as part of this twofold universe, and willing participation the twofold Providence which governs it.

Scholarship on Augustine's *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (*De Genesi ad litteram*) has generally taken a thematic approach, exploring his thoughts on the origins of creation,[1] the relationship between creation and conversion,[2] the origin of the human soul,[3] his practice of

[1] Examples of studies on the origins of creation include C.P. Mayer, "*Creatio, creator, creatura*," *AugLex* 2; M.J. McKeough, *The Meaning of the Rationes Seminales in St. Augustine* (Unpublished Dissertation: Catholic University of America, 1926); Jules M. Brady, "St. Augustine's Theory of Seminal Reasons," *NS* 38 (1964): 141-158; F.-J. Thonnard, "Les Raisons Séminales selon Saint Augustin," *Proceedings of the XIth International congress of Philosophy* vol 12 (Brussels, 1953): 146-152.

[2] This refers of course to the work of Marie-Anne Vannier, see "*Creatio," "Conversio," 'Formatio" chez S. Augustin.* (Paradosis, 31.) (Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1997); *idem.* "Le rôle de l'hexaéméron dans l'interprétation augustinienne de la création," *SP* 22 (1989): 372-381; her article "Aspects de L'Idée de Création chez S. Augustin," *RSR* 65.3 (1991): 213-225, looks at *Gn. litt.* very little.

literal and figurative interpretation,[4] his theory of the three modes of vision,[5] his conception of gender and sexual relations,[6] etc. Outside of a few introductions to translations,[7] there is only one thorough study dedicated to the scope and argument of the complete text.[8] The reasons for this neglect are difficult to pin down, but can perhaps be attributed to two factors. First, as Augustine himself notes, the inherent problem in composing a literal, historical account of the origins of the created universe was bound to be full of "reams of obscure discussion," the tiresome quality of which was bound to scare off potential readers (*Gn. litt.* VIII.2.5); undoubtedly the treatise's considerable size contributed to this reluctance, for readers both ancient and modern. Secondly, relating specifically to modern readers, the *Literal Interpretation* is indeed full of outdated scientific discussion, much of which is of limited interest to most.[9] Undoubtedly there are other factors contributing to the neglect of what used to be one of Augustine's most-loved texts, if the large numbers of surviving manuscripts are any testimony to its pre-Enlightenment popularity.[10]

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[3] See most notably R.J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987); see also Roland Teske, "Augustine's theory of soul," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Stump and Kretzmann, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 116-122; R.J. Rombs, *Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O'Connell and His Critics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

[4] The best examples are Katherine Greene-McCreight, *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1-3* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) and more recently Sabine McCormack, "Augustine Reads Genesis," *AugSt* 39.1 (2008): 5-47.

[5] To name a few, Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* and *Confessiones*." *JR* 63.2 (1983): 125-142; R.J. O'Connell, "Faith, Reason, and Ascent to Vision in St. Augustine." *AugStud* 21 (1990): 83-126; M.E. Korger, "Grundprobleme der augustinischen Erkenntnislehre: Erläutert am Beispiel von *De Genesi ad litteram* XII," *RecAug* 2 (1962): 33-57.

[6] Note Kari Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence*; *idem*, "In Defence of Augustine: How *Femina* is *Homo*," *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*; *Collectanea Augustiniana* vol 1. Bruning, Lamberigts, van Houtem, eds. (Peeters: Leuven, 1990): 411-428; Elizabeth Clark, "Heresy, Asceticism"; Susan Schreiner, "Eve, the Mother of History," *Genesis 1-3: Intrigue in the Garden*. G.A. Robbins, ed. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988): 135-186; Richard McGowan, "Augustine's Spiritual Equality: The Allegory of Man and Woman with regard to *Imago Dei*," *REAug* 33 (1987): 255-264.

[7] The best general introductions are Michael Fiedrowicz, "Introduction," *On Genesis. WSA* I/13: 13-22, and his "General Introduction," 155-166; A. Solignac, "Introduction Générale," *La Genèse au Sens Littéral.* trans. Agaësse and Solignac, BA 48 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972): 11-79; and the English translation of J.H. Taylor, "Introduction" *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol 1. *ACW* 41 (New York: Newman Press, 1982): 1-17. See also Roland Teske's piece on *Gn. litt.* in *AugLex.* A good recent discussion of Augustine's writings on Genesis, though not exclusively dealing with *Gn. litt.*, is Sabine McCormack's "Augustine Reads Genesis".

[8] John J. O'Meara's *The Creation of Man in St. Augustine's* De Genesi ad Litteram (Villanova University Press, 1980) is a useful and sensitive general reading. Michael Gorman's doctoral dissertation is a notable first study in English on *Gn. litt.* and contains thorough commentary, but in my view is of little help in understanding Augustine's purpose and structure, *The Unknown Augustine: A Study of the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Toronto, 1974). Admittedly, I do prefer his rendition of the title of this text, *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, to the usual *Literal Commentary* or *Literal Meaning*, and will use it throughout my own discussion here.. Gilles Pelland's *Cinq études d'Augustin sur le début de la Genèse* Recherches Théologie 8 (Paris Desclée, 1972) is a notable French study.

[9] O'Meara's *Creation of Man* has a good discussion on the relationship of *Gn. litt.* to modern science.

[10] Taylor, "Introduction," 12-13.

Composed between 401-416,[11] Augustine was writing this text alongside *The Trinity* (399-422),[12] in-between the bookends of *On the Good of Marriage* (401) and *On Continence* (418) we established earlier. And as such both of these massive texts are useful in tracing the development of his thought in the period in question. It is helpful to think of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* as a companion treatise to *The Trinity* for a number of reasons. First, where *The Trinity* is of course based upon Trinitarian doctrine, the *Literal Interpretation* is Christological, as we will demonstrate. A second difference is the objectives of their respective inquiries; each is an *inventio* based on Romans 1.20, but where *The Trinity* examines mankind exclusively, particularly the human mind, the *Literal Interpretation* investigates all of creation, including mankind. A third difference involves what we noted earlier, how *The Trinity* really seems aimed at defeating human knowledge, whereas the *Literal Interpretation* seeks to provide human thought with the necessary corporeal foundations upon which we build understanding and lovingly rise to the divine.

Reading into the background of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, one quickly gets the idea that Augustine saw this as an opportunity to do right a job he had once performed inadequately by including the literal sense of Genesis in his interpretation.[13] Some have suggested that Augustine's inclusion of the literal meaning of the creation narrative was due to criticisms from the Pelagian controversy over the goodness of marriage and sexual relations, but as Elizabeth Clark has demonstrated, his affirmation of the body and even the possibility of sexual intercourse in prelapsarian Eden occurred several years before engagement with Pelagius.[14] So we ask the question: what motivated Augustine to write a literal interpretation? I suggest it most likely had something to do with his debates with the Manicheans and Jerome over the truthfulness of the literal words of Scripture, in both of which controversies Paul's literal affirmation of the goodness of marriage were being disputed, among other things.[15] The outcome of this debate is Augustine's insistence that Christians ought to hold together both the figurative *and* the literal; the very same position with which he begins his *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*.

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[11] The precise dating is disputed; see Solignac, "Introduction Générale," 25-31.

[12] See *ep.* 159.2.

[13] Se *Gn. litt.* VIII.2.25; *retr.* I.10.2, II.24.

[14] See Clark, "Heresy, Asceticism," 364f.

[15] Unfortunately, space and relevance prevents discussion on this debate over Gal 2.11-14, which also involved 1 Cor 7.10-16 on marriage. See especially *ep.* 28.3.4-3.5. See also *ep.* 28, 40, 71, 75, 82; *s.* 162C; *ex. Gal.*; *virg* 18-21; *c. Faust.* XI.2, XXII.68-70; *bapt.* II.2; *mend.* 8f; *c. mend.* 26f; *etc.* An overview of this controversy can be found in R. Hennings, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Augustinus und Hieronymus und ihr Streit um den Kanon des alten Testament und die Auslegung von Gal. 2, 11-14* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 121-130, and in Ronald Cole-Turner, "Anti-heretical Issues in the Debate over Galatians 2:11-14 in the Letters of St Augustine to Jerome," *AugStud* 11 (1980): 155-166.

In the single narration of a given scriptural text, "what one asks is whether they are all to be taken as only having a figurative meaning (*secundum figurarum*), or whether they are also to be asserted and defended as a faithful account of what actually happened (*secundem fidem rerum gestarum*). *That* they should be taken as figurative, he is confident: "No Christian…will have the nerve to say that they should not be taken in a figurative sense" (*Gn. litt.* I.1.1). But the Christian should always "take them first in their literal sense, and then to chisel out from them what future realities the actual events described may figuratively stand for" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.1.2), by which he means future events or ethical application (*Gn. litt.* I.1.1). Throughout the *Literal Interpretation,* in his consistent and dogged attention to the literal, almost always omitting the figurative,[16] he shows at least a threefold concern: 1) providing an apology for the Christian meaning of the material creation for simple Christians and nonbelievers tempted by impious and carnal interpretations by so-called experts;[17] 2) a continued emphasis on the necessity of beginning with the literal before attempting to progress to a spiritual meaning;[18] and 3) as a rebuke (by repeatedly withholding the figurative) for those carnal teachers who are leading their people astray through a vain obsession with obscure trivia which "contributes nothing to their salvation" (II.9.20).[19] The key to making the right prophetic interpretations, Augustine argues, is beginning with the literal and applying to it the right religious interpretation, that is, the mind of Christ. Indeed, the literal objects and texts which seem so close and familiar are only deceptively so; understanding the true *ratio* of all things is actually very difficult. Rather, "the One who created is nearer to us than the many things which he made… It is much harder work to find out about them than about the one by whom they were made, and furthermore it is incomparably more satisfying and worthwhile for the devout mind to come into the slightest contact with him, than for it to comprehend the whole universe [in itself]… The foundations of the earth, after all, are inaccessible to our eyes, and the one who laid the earth's foundations draws near to our minds" (*Gn. litt.* V.16.34). Only by grace operative in the traditional teaching of the catholic church can we truly understand the literal text of scripture, and the corporeal world it describes.

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[16] Interpreters regularly assume Augustine is engaging in figurative exegesis when discussing the eternal foundations of creation in the mind of God, and the angelic cognizance of creation; for Augustine these are not prophetic, but simply describe actual 'events'; for him such interpretation is simply history, however foreign to our usual understanding of the term. See especially *Gn. litt.* VIII.1.3.

[17] *Gn. litt.* I.19.39-21.41, IX.12.22.

[18] See *Gn. litt.* I.20.40-21.41, VIII.1.1-4.8.

[19] *Gn. litt.* I.20.40, II.9.20-10.23, III.3.4. Again, space and immediate relevance to the argument at hand will not allow further discussion. For more on my analysis of this text see my intended article, "Interpreting Augustine's *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*."

THE TWOFOLD UNIVERSE OF *THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS*

Seeing Creation 'In the Beginning'

Thankfully Augustine has not given us just eleven books of literal interpretation in *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*; he has given us eleven books of literal interpretation with a twelfth book which teaches us how to discern the eternal and prophetic meaning of it all. The guiding question of Book XII, "How did Paul see paradise?" (*Gn. litt.* XII.2.5), is really the guiding question for the whole treatise: How should *we* see paradise?[20] Reviewing the mode of vision practiced by the angels discussed in the previous chapter, we remember that

> they have first come to know the universal creation, in which they themselves were the first to be established, in the Word of God himself, in whom are the eternal ideas (*rationes*) even of things which were made in time, as in the one 'through whom all things were made' (Jn 1.3). Only after that do they know creation in itself, by glancing down below, as it were, and then referring it to the praise of the one in whose unchangeable truth they originally see the ideas according to which it was made… angelic knowledge does not linger in what has been created without straightaway referring it to the praise and love of the one in whom it is known. (*Gn. litt.* IV.24.41)

and,

> They gaze so raptly upon that unchangeable substance of the creator that they not only put the sight and love of it before everything else, but also make judgments about everything in accordance with it, and align themselves on it in order to make themselves useful, and from it draw the lines on which to make use of other things. (*Gn. litt.* XII.36.69)

Likewise, human beings are no less intellectual than angels, and all intellects, angelic or human, were created to gaze "upon the unchangeable Truth itself, which is the light by which it passes judgment on all these other things" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.25.47).

We of course remain unable to see creation in this manner apart from extraordinary grace, but we *are* able to accept the testimony of those prophets who have. Taking his cues from Tertullian's portrayal of ecstasy as a prophetic state of awareness,[21] we recall here that 'ecstasy' is the term Augustine uses to describe the way in which Paul was enabled to see the third heaven in Book XII. Augustine uses the term ecstasy (*extasis/ecstasis*) fairly often

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[20] The purpose of Book XII has been suggested to be elucidating modes of communication, Gorman, *Unknown Augustine*, 235; Taylor is closer, suggesting it is an essay on vision and the meaning of Paradise, "Introduction," 8. Korger is best when he identifies the question of Paradise as central to the whole text, "Grundprobleme," 34. Watson's conclusion is dissatisfying, "St Augustine, the Platonists and the Resurrection body: Augustine's use of a Fragment from Porphyry," *ITQ* 50 (1983): 222-232, at 231.

[21] *an.* 11.4, 45.3. Outside of Tertullian and Epiphanius, *adv. haer.*, PG 41:864B-D. I have been unable to find another Christian precedent for this use of *extasis*. Agaësse and Solignac provide references for its usage Plotinus and Porphyry, *La Genèse au sens littéral*, 529-30. The best background treatment I have found thus far of *extasis* as prophecy, before and in Augustine, is in Philip Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 284-7.

throughout his corpus, usually in reference to graciously-induced prophetic vision.[22] Outside its most-frequent use in the *Enarrations on the Psalms*, the vast majority of occurrences in Augustine are here in *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*; Paul's ecstasy and vision of paradise in the third heaven in Book XII contains the most by far.

Just as Isaiah and John were "rapt away from the senses of the body" to find themselves "among these bodily likenesses which are seen in spirit," so too prophetic ecstasy can move even beyond 'bodily likenesses seen in spirit' to "be rapt away from these to be carried up to that region, so to say, of things intellectual or intelligible" (*Gn. litt.* XII.26.54), as was Moses in the Tent of Meeting (Ex 33.7-11). As we noted earlier:

> There the glory of the Lord is to be seen, not through some significant vision, whether of the bodily kind such as was seen on Mount Sinai, or the spiritual such as Isaiah saw or John in the Apocalypse, not in code but clearly, to the extent that the human mind can grasp it, depending on God's grace as he takes it up, so that God may speak mouth to mouth with any whom he has made worthy of such conversation—the mouth of the mind not the body, which is how I consider we have to understand what is written about Moses. (*Gn. litt.* XII.26.54)

The vision enjoyed by Moses in his meetings with God outside the Israelite camp was of a superior, intellectual nature compared to the 'bodily' visions he experienced on Sinai, or those enjoyed by Isaiah and John.

Augustine connects the three varieties of vision we examined earlier—bodily, spiritual and intellectual—with the three 'heavens' from Paul. The first heaven is the sky we see with our bodily eyes. The second heaven is seen by the soul in spiritual images, after the manner of Isaiah, John or Peter when he saw the sheet being lowered from heaven.

> Then finally is the third one that is observed by the mind, when it has been so secluded and removed and totally snatched away from the senses of the flesh and purified, that it is inexpressibly enabled by the Holy Spirit to see and hear the things that are in heaven, and the very substance of God (*ipsam dei substantiam*) and God the Word 'through whom all things were made' (Jn 1.3). (*Gn. litt.* XII.34.67)

This is the result of the highest form of prophetic ecstasy, seen by Paul and Moses and, as we will see below, by Adam as well. These three exceptional prophets saw the very Word himself, 'through whom all things were made'. They saw also the "things that are in heaven." Seeing all things intellectually in reference to their eternal *ratio* in the Word, which "were in the knowledge of the maker before they were made, and of course were better there, where they were truer, where they are eternal and unchangeable" (*Gn. litt.* V.15.33), is

[22] For more on prophetic ecstasy, see *en. Ps.* 30[2].2, 67.36, 115.3; *qu. Gen.* 80; *qu. Num.* 28; *s.* 7.7, 12.4; *ep.* 80.3, 140.5.13, 147.13.31; *Simpl.* II.1.1; *c. Faust.* XV.6.

the interpretive key for *The Literal Interpretation*, and makes the successful transition from literal to figurative interpretation possible by making sense of everything in reference to its eternal formula (*ratio*) in the Word.[23] Even if Augustine has not given us a figurative reading in this text, he *has* given us the essential methodology with which to make good, spiritual use of the more-than-thorough literal foundation he has laid. Though the entire text implies a rebuke of both materialists and those tempted to over-spiritualize the creation narrative, we see here that Augustine has not left them empty-handed but provided them with what they need to succeed by interpreting the literal and figurative in harmony with one another. And as we will now see, he has even buried significant clues intended to guide just such a reading, provided that his former opponents will be humble enough to take to the task at hand.

Equipped with the definition of prophetic ecstasy from Book XII and the numerous discussions of the angelic visual method scattered there and throughout the entire book, we are well-positioned to make sense of the highly important passage which occurs at the end of Book IX. He begins by explaining that everything which was done miraculously in creation, that is, in a marked departure from the usual course of nature, was done so "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known" (Eph 3.10), "to predict or to proclaim the advent of that seed" (IX.18.35), that is, Christ. The woman's unusual manner of creation, from Adam's side, was just such a miracle.

> So by the same token that ecstasy, which God cast on Adam, to put him into a deep sleep, may rightly be understood as cast upon him precisely in order that he too in his mind might through ecstasy become as it were a member of the angelic court (*per extasim particeps fieret tanquam angelicae curiae*), and so 'enter into the sanctuary of God and understand the last things'[24] (Ps 73(72).17). Finally, on waking up, full of prophecy (*prophetiae plenus*) so to say, when he saw his wife brought to him he immediately blurted out (*eructuavit continuo*) what the apostle holds up to us as a great sacrament: 'This is now bone out of my bones and flesh from my flesh, this shall be called woman, since she was taken out of her man; and for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall stick to his wife; and they shall be two in one flesh (*duo in carne una*; Gn 2.23-24).

[23] As Brady notes, "The Greek Stoics, Marcus Aurelius, and Plotinus used the terms *logoi spermatikoi* while Cicero and Seneca wrote about the *rationes*," "Theory of Seminal Reasons," 142. Augustine's use and modification of Stoic and Neo-Platonic thought (especially Plotinus) in the origins of creation is an interesting topic, but largely outside our scope here. For helpful discussions see also Thonnard, "Raisons Séminales"; J. Wytzes, "Bemerkungen zu dem neuplatonischen Einfluß"; and O'Meara, *Creation of Man*, 42-47. Vannier, "L'Idée de Création," is helpful but looks at texts other than *Gn. litt.*

[24] *et intrans in sanctuarium Dei intelligeret in novissima*. More familiar to English readers, the Hebrew version ends with understanding 'their end' (לְאַחֲרִיתָם). But as Augustine and his congregation knew it from the Old Latin translations of the LXX, the ambiguous final phrase '*in novissima*' is rightly read as 'the end' or 'last things', as the Greek is εἰς τὰ ἔσχατα. Augustine's eschatological reference for this passage is consistent, see also *ep.* 140.5.14 and *en. Ps.* 72.23.

> While scripture itself testifies that these were the words of the first man, the Lord all the same declared in the gospel which God spoke to them; he said, you see, 'Have you not read that the one who made man from the beginning made them male and female? And he said: For this reason a man shall leave father and mother and stick to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh?' (Mt 19.4-5). From this we may conclude that through the ecstasy which Adam had just experienced he could be treated by God as a prophet. (*Gn. litt.* IX.19.36)

The sign-post of Eve's unusual generation does not stand alone: she is accompanied by her husband, a prophet of the highest order whose ecstasy enables him to make an authoritative declaration on the eternal meaning of her unusual creation. Like the other prophets referenced, Adam was freed from the constraints of his (unfallen!) body through prophetic ecstasy; and of the two degrees of ecstatic vision, Augustine believes Adam's to have been of the superior sort, "participating in the angelic court" where, after the angelic manner of the Psalmist he was able to 'enter into the sanctuary of God and understand the last things'. As we saw above, such ecstasy enables the prophet "by the charity of the Holy Spirit to see and hear the things that are in heaven, and the very substance of God and God the Word 'through whom all things were made'" (*Gn. litt.* XII.34.67). In his vision Adam saw 'the last things' 'in the beginning', that is, the perfect design of creation as it exists eternally in the Word himself.[25] And his instant proclamation of the apostle's *magnum sacramentum* upon 'coming to' and authoritatively interpreting the meaning of his wife's miraculous generation tells us what he saw while 'asleep': the Word himself eternally united to his body, *totus Christus*. In Book XII Paul provided us with the correct method for referencing creation to its eternal design in the Word, and here in Book IX we see that Adam provides us with the sacrament of marriage as an image of the eternal Word himself, the originating and organizing principle of all creation, perpetually united with his Body. Indeed, Augustine meant what he preached: "When you hear Christ mentioned, never divorce bridegroom from bride, but recognize that great sacrament, 'They will be two in one flesh' (Eph. 5.31)" (*en. Ps.* 34[2].1).

Recalling a few more well-known examples of this connection between Christ and the church in Genesis 2 will further establish this connection as we find it in *De Genesi* IX.[26] In his 15th *Tractate on the Gospel of John* Augustine explicitly connects, if in a less dramatic and

[25] On all things existing in Christ as 'the beginning' (Gn 1.2, Jn 1.1-3) see *Gn. litt.* I.1.2-6.12, V.5.16; *conf.* XI.7.9-9.11.

[26] Though he does not look at Augustine, Jean Daniélou is the only author I have found who does justice to this theme; see chapter 4, "The Sleep of Adam and the Birth of the Church" in *From Shadows to Reality*, Wulstan Hibberd, trans. (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), 48-56. He examines the theme in Tertullian, Methodius of Philippi, Hilary of Poitiers, and Gregory of Elvira.

profound way, the creation of Eve from Adam with the church issuing from Christ in a much more familiar and 'traditional' passage. He says,

> Adam, who was 'the model of the one to come' (Rom 5.14), provided us with a most telling pointer of the mystery—or rather God did so in him. For not only was he privileged to receive a wife while he was asleep, but besides that his wife was made for him from his rib, because from Christ asleep on the cross the church was going to issue from his side, from the side of one sleeping, that is; because it was from his side, pierced by the lance as he hung on the cross, that the church's sacraments flowed out" (*Jo. ev. tr.* 15.89).[27]

As God is omnipotent, he could have gone about the creation of Eve in any number of ways, suggests Augustine: Why did Adam need to be asleep? Why not make her from flesh instead of bone? Why replace bone with flesh rather than more bone? Such speculation highlights all the more the truth that all these things were done by God in *this* way rather than another (in both actual events and the text) for a specific purpose.[28] Augustine's conclusion on the matter is characteristic: such unusual methods *must* signify *something*. "So what does it all signify? The woman was made, as it were, strong in the rib; Adam was made as it were weak in the flesh. It is Christ and the church; his weakness is our strength" (*Jo. ev. tr.* 15.8). More than a deliberate conflation of the creation of Eve with the nature of the church for illustrative purposes, Augustine is asserting that God intentionally revealed his eternal plan for the salvation of humanity in the Garden events themselves, giving spiritual readers testimony to the eternal purposes of God.

As we saw in Chapter Two when we looked at *Confessions* XIII, the Holy Spirit graciously enables Christians to see creation rightly; or rather, God sees creation—and through it Himself—through our eyes (*conf.* XIII.29.44-31.46). Throughout *Confessions* Book XII Augustine's driving question, as for much of the *Literal Interpretation*, is what we ought to make of the words 'heaven and earth' in Genesis 1.1. He gives several popular analyses then current, but waits until the very end of Book XIII to do something which he rarely does: settle on "one meaning only, one that is inspired by you as true, certain and good, even if many suggest themselves in those places where indeed many may" (*conf.* XII.32.43).[29] He spends the bulk of Book XIII expounding the six days of creation as allegory of various aspects of the church: beginning with the Trinity, he goes on to discuss heaven and earth as representing the spiritual and carnal members of the church; the creation of the day as the conversion of souls (XIII.12.13f); the firmament standing for the scriptures (XIII.15.16f); the

[27] See also the nearly identical passage in *Jo. ev. tr.* 9.10, see also *s.* 218.14. On the sleep of Adam and the 'sleep' of Christ, see also *En. Ps.* 56.11, 65.7, 126.7 and 138.2. See also *civ.* 22.17.

[28] See our discussion below on the deliberate nature of Providence working within time.

[29] Even though in *conf.* XII he says that several different interpretations are possible and edifying, his goal here is to arrive at what he believes to be the best possible reading.

separation of the earth from the sea as the drawing out of Christians from the seething mass of humanity (XIII.17.20f), etc. But even with all this focus on creation representing God's reforming and healing work within the ministry of the church, it still comes as a surprise when Augustine finally gets to the end and reveals his interpretation of the full figurative meaning of the creation account's 'heaven and earth':

> We scrutinized the text to discover what figurative meaning you intended to suggest in willing these things to happen, or at any rate to be written, in this particular order. In your Word, your only Son, we saw them severally as good and collectively as exceedingly good; for what we saw was heaven and earth, the head and the body of the church which you predestined before time began, when there was neither morning nor evening" (*conf.* XIII.34.49).

The penetrating depth of his conclusion, moving from creation, to the church, to all of creation as it exists eternally united to the Word, is a dramatic assertion of the centrality of *totus Christus* at the center of his universe.

Augustine is not conflating *totus Christus* with the divine Word. But through prophets like Adam, Moses, and Paul and their proclamation of the *magnum sacramentum*, Augustine believes he has learned that the *ratio* of Christ's union with the church, which had yet to be created in time but was proclaimed through the declaration of the 'great sacrament' of 'two in one flesh', was the predestined meaning upon which all creation has been established, and to which all creation points: both heaven and earth.[30] Once the interpretive rule of *totus Christus* had captured his heart and mind, the entire creation was pulled into its gravity and structured around the mystery of the invisible God as seen in the incarnate Word united to the church. The theological shorthand he uses in his *Enarration* on Psalm 47 perhaps makes this most explicit. Noting how Christ said that Moses wrote of him (Jn 5.46), Augustine notes, "Everything that was written, even about God's first creation, can be interpreted as a sign of things to come. So you can say that God created light when Christ rose from the dead, for then light was truly divided from darkness, when immortality was marked off from mortality. What was his next task? To provide the head with a body, the church" (*en. Ps.* 47.1).

This insight into how the prophetic use of marriage reveals the nature of the Whole Christ as the *ratio* of creation in the mind of God provides us with greater understanding of the connections between Genesis 2.4 and Ephesians 5.32. Now we see that for Augustine these passages give us the key to make sense of the eternal Christ and his nuptial union with

[30] René Bernard's "La prédestination du Christ total selon saint Augustin," *RecAug* 3 (1965): 1-58, is a nice presentation of Augustine's thoughts on election as it relates to *totus Christus*, with most of his discussion based on *praed. sanct*. However, his essay does not treat the universal (cosmic) implications of *totus Christus* lying at the center of God's design.

the church. Prophetic vision of the Whole Christ, whether we call *totus Christus* 'the beginning' or 'the last things' is one and the same; it is the eternal truth whereby we see all things rightly, as existing in and referring us back to him and what he has done in uniting himself with the church (*Gn. litt.* VIII.5.10). And as we now turn to consider the nature of creation as Augustine sees it 'in the Word', according to the rule of *totus Christus*, we will see that his universe is curiously twofold, one might even say christo-form.

The Twofold Universe

If we would recall, the second exegetical principle Augustine gives in the opening paragraph of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, the figurative meaning of 'And they shall be two in one flesh', is given as a mandate for figurative interpretation. Looking at what comes before and after this 'rationale', we gain insight into how Augustine means for it to lead us to a certain sort of figurative reading. Pointing to the Old and New Testaments, Augustine begins the *Literal Interpretation* with, "All divine scripture is twofold…" And referring to the need for both figurative and literal interpretation, he says immediately after noting the apostolic meaning of 'two in one flesh', "So if *that* text [Gn 2.4] has to be treated in both ways, what is meant by… 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth?' (Gn 1.1)" (*Gn. litt.* I.1.2). In his *On Genesis against the Manichees* Augustine used the apostle's *magnum sacramentum* as determinative for figurative interpretation, as "a kind of clear sign which sets the rest in order" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37). This is proof that Augustine uses *totus Christus* as an interpretive rule to make sense of more than just the Psalms. As Michael Cameron notes, Augustine "took this [Eph 5.32] as a 'clear sign' (*signum manifestum*) to interpret the remainder of Gen 1-3 within a christo-ecclesiological frame."[31] Given the universality of this rule and its ability to marshal everything along particular lines Augustine says, "With this in place I don't think [expressing the prophetic meaning] will take us very long." This sentiment testifies to the way in which Augustine believes the interpretation of Scripture to be relatively simple; regardless of its variety of expression it is all about Christ when understood prophetically and thus fully.

Illustrating how his Christology functions as a rule for biblical interpretation, Augustine then moves into the classic discussion of Christ leaving his mother the "Synagogue and her old literal observance of the law, and stuck to his wife, that is, to the church, so that they might be two in one flesh. The apostle after all calls him the head of the

[31] Cameron also recognizes the importance of this earlier passage, not only as a vivid explanation of his exegetical method, but also as a central text in the development of his doctrine of the Whole Christ (*totus Christus*); Cameron, "Christological Substructure," 77.

church, and the church his body" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37). Just as Christ was born of David and yet left David's community in order to be joined to the church, Augustine is implying that we who were born into merely literal thinking with the rest of humanity ought to leave them behind and proceed to the prophetic meaning of scripture. Though in the text we start with the creation of Eve from Adam's side, we leave her behind and proceed to reflect on the generation of the church from Christ's side, when the lance pierced him as he 'slept' on the Cross and the sacraments flowed forth (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37). "So then, what as a matter of history was fulfilled in Adam, as a matter of prophecy signifies Christ, who left his Father when he said, 'I came out from the Father and have come into this world' (Jn 16.28)" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37). Augustine openly gives the *forma* rule of Philippians 2 as his interpretive rationale here as well and in typical fashion correlates the pedagogic nature of Christ's flesh to the letter and historical meaning of the text. In 'emptying himself' he "did not show himself to us in the honor and rank he enjoys with the Father, but spoke ingratiatingly to us in our weakness while we did not yet have hearts and minds clean enough to see the Word 'in the beginning' as God with God" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37).

With this reference to Genesis 1.1 ('in the beginning') in *On Genesis against the Manichees*, we come back to the opening question of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*: "What is meant by… 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth?'" (*Gn. litt.* I.1.2). As here in the *Literal Interpretation* Augustine takes his cue from Colossians 1.16 ('in him were fashioned all things in heaven and on earth') and he means for 'in the beginning' to stand for the Word in whom all of creation exists seminally and eternally, and remembering what we noted above how in *Confessions* XIII where 'in the Word' Augustine saw creation as "heaven and earth, the head and the body of the church which you predestined before time began" (*conf.* XIII.34.49), we see that Augustine is inquiring how the 'heaven' and 'earth' of creation are patterned on the 'heaven' and 'earth' of the Whole Christ, head and body. However difficult he might be to pin down on this matter, we find the answer in Book V when he reviews the entire treatise up to that point. In Book II he casually, yet approvingly, notes how "the total spiritual and bodily creation is often named heaven and earth" (*Gn. litt.* II.13.27), and in Book V he settles on this principle with relative finality: whatever we might choose to call it, 'heaven and earth' or something else, "it was in the order of causes, not of time (*non itaque temporali, sed causali ordine*), that the first thing to be made was formless and formable material, both spiritual and corporeal, from which would be made whatever had to be made" (V.5.13).

'Heaven' and 'earth' is this raw 'stuff' of creation, the formless yet formable[32] material out of which all things spiritual and corporeal are formed.[33] Building upon this two-fold foundation—all things spiritual and corporeal (heaven and earth) sacramentally built upon the model of the 'heaven' and 'earth' of the one Christ's head and body—Augustine's *Literal Interpretation* is a portrait of creation dominated by several sets of pairs: heaven and earth, figurative and literal, light and dark, day and evening, eternity and time, spirit and body (I.1.1-3.8).

Creation: Finished, but Not Yet

In a dense passage Augustine describes this twofold creation as existing in two modes: 1) eternally in the mind of God, as we have already seen, and 2) coming to be within time; in other words, as known by the creator, and as known by his creation.

> So then, the unchangeable formulae (*rationes incommutabiles*) for all creatures in the Word of God are one thing, another those works of his from which he rested on the seventh day, yet another these which carrying on from those he is working on until now; and of these three it is the one I put last that is known to us somehow or other through the sense of the body and our familiarity with this life. (*Gn. litt.* V.12.28)

The second 'stage' of creation is divided into two, based on our ability to know them; knowing them as those things from which God 'rested' refers to the intellectual angelic knowledge of all things resting in God, and the second of course refers to our confinement to our bodily senses in this life.

Springing forth instantaneously and simultaneously from the Word (Sir 18.1),[34] time commences according to Augustine at the flowing forth of the fountain[35] which watered all the earth (Gn 2.6; *Gn. litt.* V.7.20), and this marks the second stage in creation, when all these *rationes* seen by the angels came to be temporally, and in material form where applicable. This is when the formless material of the *rationes* of creation begins to take shape. In their seminal form in the first 'stage' they were

> both completely finished then in a certain way and also started off in a certain way; completely finished indeed, because they have nothing in their natural manner of running their course in time which was not made causally in that primordial creation; started off, however, since they were seeds in a sense of future realities, destined to germinate in suitable places from hidden

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[32] 'And the earth was formless and void…' or as Augustine has it, 'and the earth was invisible and shapeless…'

[33] See also *Gn. litt.* I.9.15, II.13.27, IV.18.32.

[34] See *Gn. litt.* IV.33.51-52, V.1.1-3.6, V.17.35, VI.3.4, VI.6.11, VI.9.16, VII.28.41, VIII.20.39.

[35] The Masoretic text describes it as a mist (יְעָלֶה), but LXX and Vulgate render it 'fountain' (ἡ πηγή, *fons*).

> obscurity into the manifest light of day through the course of the ages. (*Gn. litt.* VI.11.18)

In other words, there was nothing new to create (IV.12.22-23); all that remained was for everything to unfold in space and time in order to come to the full fruition and maturity of its eternal design (VI.11.19).[36]

So Augustine believes creation to have been a twofold process, having been accomplished eternally and yet still being brought about through time. He arrived at this scheme exegetically, affirming both Genesis 2.2 and John 5.17:

> God so rested from all his works which he had made that from now on he set up no new kind of nature any more, not so that he stopped holding together and directing the ones which he had already set in place. Thus both statements are true: that 'God rested on the seventh day' (Gn 2.2), and that 'he is working until now' (Jn 5.7). (*Gn. litt.* IV.12.23)[37]

Augustine likens the combination of these two creative stages as the production of a tapestry on a loom; that is, the eternal, natural establishment of all things comprise the warp, or vertical threads, while the temporal work provides the weft, or horizontal threads which are shuttled through (*Gn. litt.* V.11.27). With the beginning of time in the narrative commencing from the fountain flowing forth to water the earth, "whatever the narrative tells of was henceforth done through periods of time, not 'all things simultaneously'" (V.11.27). Another image he provides is that of the primordial design and potentiality "unfolding" (*explico*) in time, "God unwinds the ages which he had folded into the universe when it was first set up. These, however, would not go on being sent forth to run their course if the one who set them going stopped moving them on by his providential regulation" (*Gn. litt.* V.20.41).

Augustine portrays his exegesis as "being directed through holy scripture by the same divine Providence," and he unites his interpretation of scripture and interpretation of the entire universe, using the structure provided by this scripturally-derived rule of twofold Providence to shed light on the organization of the world around him. So he says,

> We… must now make every effort to track down with God's help, from the clues also supplied by his very works, where and how he created simultaneously, and when he rested form his complete works, i.e., these things we see around us, on whose forms and appearance he is still working right up till now through the succession of times and seasons. (*Gn. litt.* V.23.44)

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[36] See also *Gn. litt.* VIII.20.39.

[37] See also *Gn. litt.* IV.10.20-11.21-12.23, V.4.11, 11.27-12.28, 20.40-21.42, 23.44-45, VI.3.4, VIII.19.38f.

With these structures and his method in place he uses the image of a tree's growth to explain the branching forth of all creation from its single, seminal design in the mind of God. He praises the wonder of how a single seed has such inherent power that, out of the 'earth' in which it is hidden it grows, stage by stage, "into the specific wood of that tree, into the spread of the branches, into the green and the shape of the leaves, into the succulent form of the fruit and the wonderfully disposed order of all these" (*Gn. litt.* V.23.44). Just as this tree was invisibly and simultaneously present in its seed even prior to its growth, "so too that is how, when God created all things simultaneously, the whole creation is to be thought of as having had simultaneously in it and with it all the things that were made 'when the day was made' (Gn 2.4)" (*Gn. litt.* V.23.45). "Thus it is that without setting up any further creature, but steering and guiding by his regulatory action all the things he made simultaneously, he continues to work without ceasing, simultaneously both resting and working" (V.23.46).

Providence as Universal Subordination and Union

Augustine has this twofold creative process effected by a twofold divine Providence (*divinae providentiae bipertitum*): one part natural, the other part volitional (*partim naturalis, partim voluntaria*; *Gn. litt.* VIII.9.17). This is the primary and secondary causation in *The Trinity* III.9-16 which we noted in Chapter Two. Natural Providence both there and in this text refers to the eternal *rationes* which exist in the mind of God, the seminal design of all created things. Volitional, or voluntary Providence operates in the temporal and corporeal aspects of creation. Led to a concise summary of this twofold Providence through an explanation of how souls operate within time but not within space, Augustine hopes to convince his readers that God works within neither, but is "perfectly unchangeable (*perfecte incommutabilem*)" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.22.43).

> God the almighty, holding all things under his sway, always the same in his unchangeable eternity, truth and will, while unmoved himself either through time or space, moves the spiritual creation through time, the bodily creation also through time and space. By such movement he administers outwardly the natures which he set in place inwardly, doing this both through the wills subject to him (*per voluntates sibi subditas*), which he moves through time, and through the bodies (*corpora*) which are subject both to him and to these wills, and which he moves through time and space, the time and local space whose idea or formula (*ratio*) is life in God himself (Jn 1.4) without either time or place. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.26.48)[38]

The wills he mentions here belong to the angels, which as a proxy intimate what we can do now, in however limited a fashion, when aided by grace and the rules provided by the

[38] See also *Gn. litt.* VIII.23.44.

traditional faith. And the inward and outward workings of God apparently refer to his seminal establishment of all things and the volitional influence he applies through angels and humans.

As interesting as all this is, his comments on Providence in Book VIII are most striking in a passage which combines his twofold Providence with the twofold structure of the universe, heaven and earth governed in terms of natures and wills, organizing all into hierarchical order through their appropriate subordination:

> So then, God's Providence rules and administers the whole of creation, both natures and wills; natures so that they may simply be, wills on the other hand so that neither the good ones may be unfruitful nor the bad ones go unpunished. First of all he subjects all things to himself (*subdit primitus omnia sibi*), and then the bodily creation to the spiritual, the non-rational to the rational, the earthly to the heavenly, the feminine to the masculine (*femineam masculinae*), the weaker to the stronger, the needier to the better endowed; while with wills he subjects the good ones to himself, the rest on the other hand to those who are at his service, so that the bad will may suffer what the good one does on God's orders, whether directly or through another bad will, by means of things at least which are by nature subject (*subdita*) even to bad wills, which is to say by means of bodies. For bad wills have within themselves as their interior punishment their very own iniquity. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.23.44)[39]

The primordial pattern provided by *totus Christus* organizes and structures everything around the relationship of Christ's head to his body: bodily, irrational, earthly and feminine subordinate to the spiritual, rational, heavenly and masculine. This presentation of Providence is the mirror image of what we noticed in our discussion of *The Trinity* Book III; there the language was more 'positive', speaking of "the grosser, inferior bodies" being "governed in due order (*ordine reguntur*) by the more subtle and potent ones" (*Trin.* III.9). The effect to which these two passages point is the same, and reflects the universal work of Christ subjecting all things to himself (Phil 3.20), that he may present them to his Father (1 Cor 15.24; *Trin.* I.15-20). The work of God within time operates with the goal of subordinating all things in order to elevate them to their completion in the Sabbath rest of God.

Of course the progression of all things to their subjection to God, wherein they find their fulfillment and perfection according to their design in the mind of God, comes about by the temporal joining together in harmony (marrying?) of the myriad pairs we mentioned just above. As we noted above, only when actualized temporally do things begin to progress towards their completion:

[39] See also *s.* 37.23.

> If those first works of God, you see, when he created all things simultaneously, had not been complete in their own fashion, there can be no doubt that what was needed for their completion would have been added later on, to put together a kind of completeness of the universe from all the particular elements of its two halves, so to say, as if they were parts of a whole which would be completed by joining them together (*quarum coniunctione ipsum totum, cuius partes fuerant, compleretur*). (*Gn. litt.* VI.11.18)

The union of these varied realities one with another is brought about through time by bringing them together into their natural, appropriate order in relation to one another and all of them to God. Augustine has indeed used the whole Christ, eternally united to his body, as "a kind of clear sign which sets the rest in order" (*Gn. adv. Man.* II.24.37). As Philip Reynolds says, "Given Paul's lead in this matter, everything fell beautifully into place."[40] With the literal text as the true and faithful witness to the world around us,[41] *totus Christus* as interpretive principle gives a christo-ecclesial shape and meaning not just to the text of Genesis 1-3 but to everything. So it is that in its natures and wills all creation is founded upon and points to, and thus mediates, Christ, primordially united with his body. So it is that for Augustine the sacrament of marriage reveals the structure of the universe, and the way to God through ordered subjection to his Son, in the church.

PARTICIPATING IN THE TWOFOLD UNIVERSE

Looking to the next paragraph on the angels' volitional participation in this governance, the "good wills" subjected by God to himself, we see them performing their work according to the rule of hierarchical, voluntaristic subordination, righteously administering the things over which they rule. In language virtually identical to the several other examples we have used, the angelic method of 'use' in laudatory reference to God perhaps finds its fullest expression here in relation to Providence.

> And thus to the sublime angels, who enjoy God in obedience and serve him in bliss, are subjected every bodily nature (*subdita est omnis natura corporea*), every non-rational form of life, every will whether weak or bent. This is so that they may act upon or together with the things subjected to them, whatever the order of nature (*naturae ordo*) requires in all of them, on the orders of him to whom all things are subject. Accordingly they see in him unchangeable truth, and in accordance with this they direct the wills subordinate to them. They therefore are made participants in the eternity, truth and will of the one who is always without time and place. But at his direction, while he remains motionless in terms of time, they are moved in terms of time; not, however, in such a way that they pull or drift away from

[40] *Marriage in the Western Church*, 285.
[41] Thinking again of his debate with Jerome over Gal 2.11.

> contemplating him, but simultaneously they contemplate him without place or time, and carry out his orders in the lower spheres, moving themselves in time, bodies in both time and place as their activity requires. And thus it is that God presides over his universal creation by the twofold operation of his Providence (*bipertito providentiae*); over specific natures that they may come to be, over wills on the other hand that they may do nothing without either his orders or his permission. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.24.45)

While Augustine believes God able to directly intervene in creation if needed, he generally chooses to do so through the mediation of angels. The most famous example of the former is what we noted above, the creation of Eve from Adam's side, which God had to do himself because angels lack the power to create (*Gn. litt.* IX.15.26). But in instances of theophany or vocal communication, the mediation of angels operating in creation under the orders of God allows Augustine to answer those who struggle to understand the immateriality of the Son (*Gn. litt.* VIII.27.49-50).[42] Likewise God was able to move Adam's mind within time in the same way the angels' minds are moved; but instead usually had Adam depend upon the angels for mediation of the truth as men today depend upon prophets. The example Augustine gives here is typical: how is it that Adam and Eve were able to hear God's voice in the garden, since God himself has no corporeally audible voice? "When God speaks he only does so through a creature, either through a spiritual one alone whether in dreams or in ecstasy in the likeness of bodily things, or also through a bodily one, when some specific appearance is presented to the sense of the body, or some sounds and words are heard" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.27.49). Thus it is that through their interaction with mankind on behalf of God, the angels participate in the order and functioning of Providence, rightly 'using' earthly things, even animals (IX.14.24-25), in accordance with the design and wishes of God.

Looking yet again at the angelic method of seeing and referring creation to God, we see that the way Augustine describes the appropriate intellectual cognition of creation bears a striking resemblance to the work of Providence which we just noted above, where we saw God subordinating all things and joining them together in time. Augustine describes this angelic knowledge in terms of the day, evenings and mornings narrated in the opening passages of Genesis. In *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* V.1.1-3 we find him grammatically analyzing Genesis 1.1-2.5, where he concludes that the *fiat lux* of Genesis 1.3, combined with Genesis 2.4 ('when the day was made, God made heaven and earth and all the greenery of the field'), points us to the angelic *curia*'s knowledge of all creation in its *rationes* in one six-fold intellectual instant immediately prior to its temporal and corporeal generation. Augustine suggests the 'Let there be light' occurred when the angelic mind turned "to him

[42] See also *Gn. litt.* IX.14.24f and *Trin.* Books II and III on the Old Testament theophanies.

and was enlightened" (*Gn. litt.* I.9.17). This 'day' of instant generation, conversion and formation of the righteous angelic intellect was "a spiritual day in the harmonious unity of the angels' mutual companionship" (*Gn. litt.* V.2.4), in which "all this order of duly ordered creation was known to that day… coming to know them first in the creator and subsequently in themselves. It did not linger in them, however, but referred this subsequent knowledge of them to the love of God" (*Gn. litt.* V.5.15).

With the nature of the 'day' established Augustine had yet to account for the 'evenings' and 'mornings' which occurred within this sixfold day. We noted above that Augustine believed the multiple declarations of creation's goodness were proclaimed by God seeing and loving himself in creation through us, and here the function of evenings and mornings runs along similar lines. We see that for Augustine evening and morning can take a couple of different meanings in this text, sometimes with evening denoting "the end of a finished work; while morning on the other hand points to a work that is yet to come" (I.17.35); but he primarily uses them to discuss the angelic vision and referral of the seminal creation it saw in the mind of God. Knowledge of a thing in the Word of God "rightly belongs to the day," and evening is knowledge of the thing in and of itself (IV.23.40). The angelic understanding begins in the daylight of the Word, and when they turn to consider the seminal creation itself, their gaze descends into the twilight of 'evening' knowledge; then immediately the morning comes again when they "straightaway refer it to the praise and love of the one in whom it is known, not as already made but as due to be made" (IV.24.41). And far from 'morning knowledge' denoting a form of knowledge rising up from the ignorance of the 'night' of bodily things, it is in fact "the raising up of evening knowledge to the glory of the creator" (IV.30.47), the elevation of bodily things into the light of truth. So, intellectual knowledge of creation follows the causal order of creation, moving in a single six-fold spiral of apprehending, comprehending and referring the whole creation to God in praise (IV.24.41-30.47). This method can be practiced in the temporal creation, as we see when the Psalmist prays, 'At evening and morning and noon I will declare and proclaim; and you will hear my voice' (Ps 55.17), but it most properly occurs "without any succession of times in the home country, for which [the Psalmist] was yearning and sighing in his exile" (IV.30.47). This "raising up of evening knowledge to the glory of the Creator," their laudatory referral of all things to their maker, is the same motion as God's joining all things together in ordered subjection. Their participation is thus far more than simple obedience; it is the very means by which God accomplishes his primordial christo-form design and intention within the temporal economy.

CONCLUSION

In Book VIII Augustine returns to the analogy of all creation as a great tree springing forth from a small seed and combines it with his understanding of God's dual Providence. The role of the all-pervasive will of God in creation's growth and formation extends to every aspect of its maintenance, not just to human and angelic minds. Here in the *Literal Interpretation* Augustine leads into this presentation by describing Adam's 'work' in Paradise in a manner similar to the quizzing of creation we noted in our previous chapter:[43] He was meant to converse "with the nature of things" (*cum rerum natura*), his participatory husbandry causing him to question each organism "on what its inner vital force can or cannot do, what helps and what hinders it, what is the range of the inner, invisible power of its own numerical formula," all of which brings him to conclude that it is God 'who gives the growth' (1 Cor 3.7), and this applies even to Adam himself (*Gn. litt.* VIII.8.16). Once this universal Providence is discerned as the establishing and operative force of all creation,

> From this the eye of the mind can now be raised up to the universe itself as if it were all some huge tree, and in this too will be discovered the same twin functioning of Providence, partly through natural, partly through voluntary activity; through natural activity indeed is working the hidden management of God, by which he also gives growth to trees and herbs, while voluntary activity comes through the works of angels and human beings. As regards the first mode [i.e. their natural establishment] celestial things are arrayed up above, terrestrial ones down below, the great lights and constellations shine, day and night are moved around in turn, the earth with its foundations in the waters has them washing round it and in amongst it, the air is poured over it at a higher level, shrubs and animals are conceived and born, grow up, grow old and perish, and whatever else happens in things through the inner impulses of nature; while in this other mode [i.e. the volitional ordering] signs are given, taught and learned, fields cultivated, communities administered, arts and skills practiced, and whatever else is done, whether in the higher company of the angels or in this earthly and mortal society, in such a way as to be in the interests of the good even through the unwitting actions of the bad. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.9.17)

The inclusion of all aspects of life into their proper volitional order echoes the continuity of attention and will throughout the whole individual which we noted from *The Trinity* XI.10 in our last chapter, but here the 'individual' in question is the entire creation, which of course includes not only the ordering of the universe, but human society as well. Finally, we might think the perversion of bad wills could disrupt this order, but the providential principle governing Augustine's universe more-than absorbs their effects. "God, after all, while being the best creator of natural things, is also the most just coordinator of sinners; so that even if

[43] *conf.* X.6.9 and *en. Ps.* 144.13-14.

things individually become deformed by transgressing, nonetheless the totality together with them in it remains beautiful" (*Gn. litt.* III.24.37).

Right after the long passage just quoted above Augustine continues tying all things together, and turns to discuss humanity's place and participation in this massive structure; and here we find that not only are we made according to the same twofold pattern of Christ's head and body, but we too are wrapped up in the same twofold Providence. Augustine continues where we left off,

> *And in the human individual we see the same twin power of Providence at work*: first with respect to the body, nature provides for its coming to be, its growth, its aging, while the provision of food, shelter, health care I left to voluntary activity; likewise with respect to the soul, nature ensures that it is alive, sentient and conscious, while to learn and give its consent is left to the will. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.9.17)

Here, where Augustine refers simply to the creation and maintenance of the human body we begin to see the inclusion of mankind in Augustine's universal ordering and orientation of all creation according to the pattern of *totus Christus*, as revealed by the sacrament of marriage. The inclusion of mankind into this order has profound implications for his understanding of humanity's vocation, which we will discuss in our final two chapters on the two remaining unions, husband and wife, and spirit and flesh.

We have seen that Adam believes *totus Christus*, as revealed through the sacrament of marriage, to be 'in the beginning', the foundation of creation which is coming to fruition through time. Next we will see that we too are built on this same twofold pattern, and that we participate in the same providential/volitional activity within time and space; and along with the rest of creation, we will find our perfect eternal design fulfilled in unity with one another and in subjection to God.

PART II:
OBSERVING THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

4

HEAD AND BODY, SPIRIT AND FLESH

'Then you gave form to the believing soul… and subordinated its rational activity to the sovereignty of intellect, as woman is to man.'

– *conf.* XIII.34.49

INTRODUCTION

As we turn now to see how Augustine's ascetical vision is built upon his understanding of the sacrament of marriage, this chapter outlines the 'nuptial' character of human participation in Providence through Augustine's figurative application of gender to the various aspects of the human being, rational mind and irrational soul and body. Having seen how the sacrament of marriage teaches us about both the nature of Christ's union with the church and the structure of the universe patterned after *totus Christus*, we are now well-positioned to observe how and why Augustine presents human well-being as marital concord (or discord) between the rational and irrational parts of the individual human person. The result is the satisfying irony of asceticism's dependence upon the sacrament of marriage for its own rationale and goals.

INTERPRETING GENDER: FIGURATIVE AND LITERAL

In our previous chapter we noted Augustine's continued refusal to engage in figurative interpretation in his *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*. We also saw there that his most provocative omission of the figurative was his repeated insistence that the manner of Eve's literal generation, from Adam's side and within time, was designed by God to provoke further reflection on its latent spiritual meaning: a meaning he of course withheld.[1] Our

[1] *Gn. litt.* IX.12.20, 12.21, 13.23, 14.24, 17.32, 18.34-35.

conclusion, of course, was that Augustine believed the manner of Eve's generation, as interpreted by her prophetic husband, sacramentally indicated the church eternally united to Christ: *totus Christus*. Elsewhere in the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* Eve yet again becomes an occasion for flirtation with the figurative: but this time the allusion to the prophetic concerns the spiritual meaning of her literal Fall in relation to Adam. Reflecting on the whole Genesis narrative of temptation and capitulation, Augustine tantalizingly hints at the figurative nature of gender in this process, so different from humanity's creation:

> The commandment, you see, went from the Lord through the man as far as the woman, while the sin went from the devil through the woman as far as the man. All this is full of mystical significance, not put there by the characters between whom it took place, but by the supremely potent Wisdom of God directing them to that end. However, we are not now engaged in unlocking the treasures signified, but in defending the reality of things actually done. (*Gn. litt.* XI.34.45)

Likewise Augustine hints at—yet refuses to reveal—his figurative interpretation of the curse as it pertains specifically to the woman, beyond Adam and Eve's shared mortality:

> 'And to the woman he said: "Multiplying, I will multiply your grief and your groaning; in grief you shall bring forth children, and you shall return (*conversio*) to your man, and he shall rule (*domino*) over you"' (Gn 3.16). These words too, addressed to the woman, can be much more aptly understood in a figurative and prophetic sense. (*Gn. litt.* XI.37.50)

He also prefers a figurative reading of the curse on the man:

> So then he also said to her husband: 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you from it alone not to eat, accursed is the earth in your works. In grief shall you eat it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and you shall eat the hay of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat your bread, until you are turned into the earth from which you were taken, because earth you are and into earth shall you go' (Gn 3.17-19). Who does not know that these are the toils and troubles of the human race (*humani generis*) on earth? …there should be no reluctance to take these words first and foremost in their proper historical sense. All the same a prophetic signification is to be looked for and expected, and it is this that the divine author here has chiefly in mind. (*Gn. litt.* XI.38.51)

This material is familiar to most: the woman is consigned to greatly aggravated childbirth and subjection to her husband, and the man is guaranteed suffering and frustration in manual labor. Likewise, Augustine's appeal to the figurative meaning of this narrative, as what "the divine author here has chiefly in mind," is hardly unusual. But as we noted in our previous chapter, these passages come in the midst of several refusals to indulge in the prophetic

meaning and he leaves his interpretation secret in Book XI; this forces us to look elsewhere for his thoughts on the true significance of gender.

Thankfully, much earlier in the *Literal Interpretation* itself, Augustine gives us a figurative reading of male and female other than as Christ and the church; indeed, one wonders whether this disclosure was intentional or if he has given his position away in spite of himself. Either way, in Book III.22.34 we find him 'reading' male and female human bodies in the same way he reads the rest of the bodily creation: as literal entities built upon, and therefore requiring spiritual interpretation according to, the twofold pattern of *totus Christus*. Unlike other un-named interpreters, who believe Genesis 1.27 ('God made man to the image of God; he made him male and female') refers to the creation of the 'interior man', or spirit, and Genesis 2.7 ('And God fashioned the man from the mud of the earth') to the body, Augustine defends the creation of woman in the image of God by insisting that the body was included in the primordial creation of Genesis 1.27.[2] He expresses his exegetical criteria negatively in his criticism of these 'heretics', whose problem is that "They have disregarded the fact that mankind can only have been made male and female with respect to the body" (*Gn. litt.* III.22.34). Augustine believes this very point lies behind the inclusion of gender in the primordial creation account of Genesis 1.27, "In case anyone should think it was only the spirit of man that was made [at that time]; although it was only in the spirit that he was made to the image of God, 'he made him', it says, 'male and female' (Gn 1.27)" (*Gn. litt.* III.22.34). He presumably derived this principle in thinking through 1 Corinthians 11.7 on women wearing veils in church, where Paul states that the man alone 'is the image and glory of God, while the woman is the glory of man'. Augustine recognizes that if left without the accommodation of a figurative interpretation, the text plainly denies that women are made in the image of God. But Augustine is unwavering in his commitment to woman's possession of the image, through his reflections on Genesis 1.27, Galatians 3.28 and Colossians 3.11, among other passages: "It is simply in the body that she is female, [and she] is also being renewed in the spirit of her mind in the recognition of God according to the image of him who created that in which there is no male and female" (*Gn. litt.* III.22.34). Placing the creation of bodies within the seminal design for all creation allows Augustine to affirm not only the goodness of bodies, but also the image as belonging equally to both males and females.

[2] On the difficulties of discerning Adam's relation to gender prior to the creation of Eve in Augustine's account, see Gillian Clark, "Adam's Engendering: Augustine on Gender and Creation," in *Gender and Christian Religion*. Swanson, ed. (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1998): 13-22.

With this important foundation in place, we are now in a position to look at Augustine's figurative version of the Fall as it relates to the categories of 'male' and 'female'. What follows amounts to little more than a passing comment in the *Literal Interpretation*,[3] but I believe it to be a highly significant sign of continuity with his thought more fully expressed elsewhere,[4] when he writes of

> the subtle explanation of mankind's mind itself, in which he was made to the image of God, that its activity as a kind of rational life is divided between [1] the contemplation of eternal truth, and [2] the management of temporal affairs; and that in this way it was made, as it were, male and female, with the former directing, the latter submitting (*illa parte consulente, hac obtemperante*)… this external diversity of sex in the bodies of two human beings symbolizes what is to be understood internally in the one mind of a single human being. (*Gn. litt.* III.22.34)[5]

While we do not know for sure where or from whom Augustine became familiar with such a figurative interpretation[6] it is likely that he was original in his application of it, especially in maintaining the full humanity and dignity of the woman.

Even without reference to sin, this passage in Book III of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* enables us to identify and reflect further on the figurative application of gender we

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[3] Silvia Soennecken reads Augustine on gender in *Gn. litt*. much as I do in her excellent yet usually-ignored essay, "Die Rolle der Frau in Augustins De Genesi ad litteram." *Signum Pietatis*. Zumkeller, ed. (Würtzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989): 289-300.

[4] See our discussion immediately below on his more-famous treatment of gender in *Trin.* XII.

[5] Curiously, in *civ*. 14.22 Augustine appears to deny this very interpretation. "Now it is true that much of what is here said [Gn 1.28] is susceptible of a spiritual interpretation, but it makes no sense to say that 'male' and 'female' are allegories of two qualities in a single person, for example that 'male' stands for the part that rules and 'female' for the part that is ruled." In the broader context he is defending the literal quality of the prelapserian command 'to increase and multiply' and the existence of bodily gender from the beginning, as well as objecting to the practice of divorce; perhaps he means, it makes no sense to take the allegorical as the *only* meaning of the text, to the exclusion of the literal.

[6] Hill suggests Tychonius, in a note in his translation and in "A Possible Debt of Augustine's to Tychonius: The 'male' contemplative and 'female' active functions of the human mind, *De Trinitate* XII." *SP* 38 (2001): 181-183. Tychonius is certainly a possibility, but I find Philo to be an especially compelling option after reading Richard Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) and even more so Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993) who in their valuable studies utilize several passages from Philo's treatments of Genesis which almost perfectly match many of the important passages I drew on above in Chapter Three, such as *Gn. litt.* VIII.23.24 and Philo's *crea.* 24. For the discussion on whether Augustine knew Philo's work see David T. Runia, "Philo of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Thought, Alexandrian and Jew," *SPhilo* 7 (1995): 143-160. Another fascinating option is Origen. He frequently uses Christ and the church as an interpretive rule (*hom. Gen.* 2.6), and even cites Eph 5.32 on occasion (for example, *c. Cels.* 4.49). He also discusses the human interior as 'male' and 'female', their agreement in terms of harmony, and their offspring as virtuous thoughts, see for example *hom. Gen.* 1.15, 4.4; *hom. Exod.* 13.5; see also *princ.* IV.3.12, *hom. Num.* 20.3, *comm. Matt.* 14.16. György Heidl's study *Origen's Influence on the Young Augustine* (Louaize, Lebanon: University of Notre Dame and Gorgias Press, 2003) is revealing, especially on parallels in their treatment of Gen 1.27-28, see Chapter Six, especially 128-130. See also Elizabeth Dively Lauro's work, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), especially 142f. Her unpublished dissertation is also helpful, *The Temporal Means to the Eternal Hope: The Rehabilitation of Origen's Two Higher Senses of Scriptural Meaning* (University of Notre Dame, 2001), especially 172f. It is entirely possible, of course, that both Augustine and Origen picked up on the same reading of Philo, or that Augustine read Origen and not Philo, etc. For now it is sufficient to locate the possible precedent in Alexandria.

saw in Book XI. To make that link more clear we are forced beyond the *Literal Interpretation* and look, of course, to his infamous discussion on gender in *The Trinity* XII, which we noted in Chapter Two. Again he interprets 1 Corinthians 11.7 in light of Genesis 1.27 (and not the other way around), and he affirms, in exactly the same manner we saw in Book III of the *Literal Interpretation*, that 1) there is no difference between women and men when it comes to the image of God (Gal 3.26), and 2) gender is exclusively a matter of the body and not the mind (*Trin.* XII.10-12).[7] "The apostle Paul had worked out a symbolism of something more mysterious in the obvious distinction of sex between male and female… it is clear what the apostle intended to signify, and he did it figuratively and mystically" (*Trin.* XII.11). Augustine in fact finds Paul's literal comment in 1 Corinthians 11.7 quite arbitrary and meaningless "if it does not refer to some hidden sacramental or symbolic meaning" (*Trin.* XII.11). Thus in a famous passage he can say that just as Adam found no assistant among the animals like himself,

> So too our mind, with which we consult the highest and innermost truth, has no assistant like it in the parts of the soul we have in common with the beasts, for making use of bodily things in a way to satisfy the nature of man. And therefore something rational of ours is assigned the duty of this work, not in the sense of being divorced from the mind in breach of unity, but as derived from it in a helpful partnership. And just as male and female are two in one flesh, so our understanding and activity, or counsel and execution, or reason and reasonable appetite, or whatever more meaningful terms you may find, are embraced in the one nature of mind (*una mentis natura*). Thus as it was said of those 'They shall be two in one flesh (*duo in carne una*)' (Gn 2.24), so it may equally be said of these "Two in one mind (*duo in mente una*)"… So when we discuss the nature of the human mind we are certainly discussing a single entity, and we are not doubling it into the two aspects I have mentioned except in terms of functions. (*Trin.* XII.3-4)

[7] See also *c. Faust.* 24.2; *en. Ps.* 48[2].11; and perhaps most dramatically, "Who is so completely out of his mind as to say that we either are or shall be like God because of our body?" (*ep.* 92.3). Augustine is consistently and widely misread on these very two points, in spite of some good articles which demonstrate that this is in fact the case. The best extant reading of Augustine on *Trin.* XII is T.J. van Bavel, "Woman as the Image of God in Augustine's 'De Trinitate XII'," *Signum Pietatis.* Zumkeller, ed. (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989): 267-288. Genevieve Lloyd's *The Man of Reason* is also particularly good, see 28-33; David Vincent Meconi, "*Grata Sacris Angelis*: Gender and the *Imago Dei* in Augustine's *De Trinitate* XII," *ACPhQ* 74.1 (2000): 47-62; and Richard McGowan, "Augustine's Spiritual Equality". For misreadings, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Mysogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in Ruether, ed. *Religion and Sexism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974): 150-83, at 156; Cornelia W. Wolfskeel, "Some Remarks with Regard to Augustine's Conception of Man as the Image of God," *VigChr* 30 (1976): 63-71; Margaret Miles, "Corpus", *AugLex*; and several pieces by Kari Børresen, who refuses to engage van Bavel's argument, including "Imago Dei, privilège masculin? Interprétation augustinienne et pseudo-augustinienne de Gen 1,27 et 1 Cor. 11,7," in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition,* Børresen, ed. (Oslo: Solum, 1991), and *idem.*, "Patristic 'Feminism': The Case of Augustine," *AugSt* 25 (1994): 139-152. E. Ann Matter's essay "Christ, God and Woman in the Thought of St Augustine," in Dodaro and Lawless, eds. *Augustine and His Critics* (London: Routledge, 2000): 164-175 cites van Bavel but does not engage his argument, which runs contrary to the thesis of her essay. But her summary of feminist criticisms of Augustine is helpful, 169-173.

And later in Book XII he says that Paul "wanted to use the distinction of sex between two human beings to signify something that must be looked for in every single human being" (XII.19). Plainly this is the same reading Augustine put forth in Book III of the *Literal Interpretation*; and having made this connection, we are able to return to his comments on the Fall in Book XII of *The Trinity*, which we briefly discussed in Chapter Two.

In Book XII we see him using the same passages, 1 Corinthians 11.7 in the light of Genesis 1.27, with Galatians 3.28 and Colossians 3.11 also in the background. In Chapter Two we noted the proper ordering of the human soul in relation to 1 Corinthians 11.7, how the image of God, i.e. the intellect, ought

> not to be curbed or required to moderate or restrain its exertions in this direction [towards the eternal], and therefore 'the man ought not to cover his head'. But as regards that rational activity which is occupied with bodily things and temporal things, too many advances into this lower territory are dangerous, and so it 'ought to have authority over its head' (1 Cor 11.10); this is indicated by the covering, which symbolizes its need to be curbed. (*Trin.* XII.10)

This matches the volitional ordering of the rest of creation in its appropriate subordination of lower things to higher, with the higher refusing to take its attention from God. More to the point, humanity works best when the upper portion of the mind is ruled by God, and the body is ruled by the mind (*Trin.* XII.7, *Gn. litt.* VII.3.4-4.6), bringing one closer to the *terminus* of the glory of being subject to Christ and thus face-to-face with the Father. But we also noted how the male portion of the mind has indeed made "too many advances into this lower territory," and once the female portion has her mate's attention the danger lies in "the masculine portion in the [mental] faculty of counsel failing to curb her" (*Trin.* XII.13). Augustine is of course discussing the Fall in the present tense, as something which is ongoing in the life of every human soul,[8] as we see in the following passage; when the mind's 'Adam' does indeed consent to the wayward direction of its companion,

> the sight of eternal things is withdrawn from the head himself as he eats the forbidden fruit with his consort, so that the light of his eyes is no longer with him. Thus they are both stripped naked of the enlightenment of truth, and the eyes of the conscience are opened to see what a shameful and indecent state they have left themselves in. (*Trin.* XII.13)

Augustine describes this process of Adam being stripped of intellectual sight resulting in the blindness of both mind and body more fulsomely a few paragraphs later. Recounting how the serpent did not eat from the tree but only incited them to eat, and how "the woman did not eat alone but gave some to her husband and they ate together," so too:

[8] Van Bavel notes this as well, "Woman as the Image," 282-283.

> With this kind of hidden and secret couple that is distinguishably exhibited even in one man the carnal, or if I may so put it the sensual, motion of the soul… is shut off from the reasoning of wisdom. Bodily things are sensed, after all, with bodily sensation; but eternal, unchangeable and spiritual things are understood with the reasoning of wisdom. But the reasoning of knowledge has an appetite very close to it, seeing that the function of this knowledge is to reason about the bodily things that are perceived by bodily sensation. If it does this well [i.e. guided by wisdom], it does this in order to refer them to the highest good as their end; if badly [i.e. without wisdom's guidance], in order to enjoy them as goods of a sort it can take its ease in them with an illusory happiness. (*Trin.* XII.17)

Augustine is describing the same consequence of the Fall which we noted in Chapter Two, the penalty of intellectual blindness which forces us to rely on grace and external authorities. Without the ability to align ourselves with truth, the mind loses its ability to use the world rightly, in laudatory reference to God, and falls into radical and pathetic privatization; the body is in the dark by virtue of its dependence upon the intellect's mediation of truth.

Enter the 'serpent' of daily temptation: the relatively innocent mind is busy going about its daily life, living more or less in reference to God,

> and along comes that carnal or animal sense with a tempting suggestion for self-enjoyment, that is, for enjoying something as one's very own private good and not as a public and common good (which is what the unchangeable good is); this is like the serpent addressing the woman.[9] To consent to this temptation is to eat of the forbidden tree. (*Trin.* XII.17)

Augustine readily admits that the metaphor has its limitations, as Adam and Eve as individuals acted independently in a way that the singular human mind cannot: if our body 'eats' when tempted, there is no escaping culpability by saying that the 'woman' ate, but one's mind was pure (*Trin.* XII.18); the body partakes of nothing without the mind's consent. But in other ways Augustine *does* enjoy exploiting the hypothetical space between Adam's and Eve's respective tastings of the tree and the possibility of Adam refusing to partake. We find a notable example of this in an explanation of temptation in the terms of the Fall. When he explains that if the mind takes pleasure in the temptation suggested, but "the authority of the higher counsel restrains the members of the body 'from offering themselves to sin as weapons of iniquity' (Rom 6.3), then I think it should be regarded as if the woman alone ate the forbidden food" (*Trin.* XII.17), he not only drives home his point about the categories male and female describing aspects of the common human mind, but he also uses the volitional independence of Adam and Eve as a rich rhetorical playground for reflecting on sin and grace. As we will see, Augustine finds this drama of the Fall and ongoing sin

[9] See also *s. Dom. mont.* I.12.33-34 for the 'serpent' as unbidden motions of the soul.

expressed in marital terms exceptionally useful in expounding sin's effects and the therapy of asceticism, and the brief space between the choices of 'Adam' and 'Eve' becomes full of tension and strife once grace begins to operate within the individual. For Augustine, the Christian's own interior household is far from *summa concordia* in this life.

Given the consonance of these passages in Book XII of *The Trinity* with those we observed earlier in Book III of *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*—and without any other evidence to suggest another possible interpretation—we can now return to Book XI of the *Literal Interpretation* and safely discern Augustine's prophetic understanding when he literally elaborates on the Fall of Adam and Eve. Far from fanciful and tenuous, we will see in the section following that this methodology actually bears much fruit in helping us understand why and how Augustine is able to make such a strong connection between the unions of Christ and the church, husband and wife, and spirit and flesh. And here we begin to see just how much *The Trinity* and *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* enrich our understanding of the delightful combination of marriage and spiritual continence which he begins to give us in *On the Good of Marriage*, and which comes into its own most completely over fifteen years later in *On Continence*.

THORNS, THISTLES, AND MALE DOMINATION

We ended Chapter Three with a lengthy quotation from Book VIII of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, which describes how the discriminating Christian mind sees the universe as a giant tree in which the "twin functioning of Providence" is operative, instituting and guiding all creation towards its completion (*Gn. litt.* VIII.9.17), and in which rational angels and humans volitionally participate in their respective spheres. We then closed with the following passage, which situates humanity within that same Providence:

> in the human individual we see the same twin power of Providence at work; first with respect to the body, nature provides for its coming to be, its growth, its aging, while the provision of food, clothing, shelter, health care is left to voluntary activity; likewise with respect to the soul, nature ensures that it is alive, sentient and conscious, while to learn and give its consent is left to the will. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.9.17)

We find this statement in the midst of a section in which Augustine discusses Adam's 'working' and 'guarding' of Paradise (Gn 2.15), a passage which greatly enriches our understanding of the nature of the curse placed on the woman and the man.

Working and Guarding Paradise

Augustine the urbanite struggled with the notion that prelapsarian mankind would have found hard agricultural labor in paradise pleasurable; he never would have believed it had he not seen for himself certain farmers whose work was their greatest joy. With perhaps a measure of mirth Augustine the faithful exegete quips, "So then whatever delights there *are* to be found in agriculture, they were of course far and away more complete at that time when neither earth nor sky was putting any difficulty in the way." He seems happy to describe agricultural work as a form of participation when he continues, "You see, there was no stress of wearisome toil but pure exhilaration of spirit, when things which God had created flourished in more luxuriant abundance with the help of human work" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.8.15). Such participation is, of course, enabled by the human [or angelic] mind correctly seeking out the seminal formula of the 'plants' in his care:

> What greater or more wonderful spectacle can there be, after all, or when is human reason more able after a fashion to converse with the nature of things, than when after seeds have been sown, cuttings potted, shrubs planted out, grafts made, each root and seed is questioned, so to say, on what its inner vital force can or cannot do, what helps and what hinders it, what is the range of the inner, invisible power of its own numerical formula, what that of the care bestowed on it from the outside? And then to perceive by these very considerations that 'neither the one who plants is anything nor the one who waters, but the one who gives the growth, God' (1 Cor 3.7), because the work and skill applied from the outside is applied by one who also was nonetheless created and is being governed and directed invisibly by God? (*Gn. litt.* VIII.8.16)

From this portrait of participative gardening Augustine continues with the passage we noted above and in our previous chapter, "From this the eye of the mind can now be raised up to the universe itself as if it were all some huge tree…", where angels and humans work as gardeners, rational agents voluntarily cooperating with God, externally helping all creation flourish according to its internal, primordial design.

Augustine's idea of 'gardening' has long ago left flowers and shrubs far behind, and he means now for it to stand for mundane human activities such as education, large-scale agriculture, human government, arts and crafts, etc.; in short, all facets of human and even angelic society, engaging the whole universe in their respective spheres of operation (VIII.9.17). Likewise, the same principle can and should be applied to the management and care of the human being itself sharing in the structure and operation of the larger universe, the rational mind caring for its irrational soul and flesh.

> Now just as in the case of a tree agriculture works from the outside to ensure the effectiveness of what nature is busy with on the inside, so in the case of a

> human being; as regards the body, what nature is doing for it inwardly is being preserved outwardly by medicine; and again as regards the soul, in order that nature may be blessed within, education offers its services from without. On the other hand, what neglect of cultivation is to the tree, that is what failure to take proper medical care is to the body, is what slackness of studies is to the soul; and what harmful spraying does for a tree, that is what poisonous food does for the body, what inducement to wickedness does for the soul. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.9.18)

The mind's volitional gardening of its irrational companions aptly describes Augustine's pastoral understanding of volitional lordship, each rational faculty operating within its own sphere of responsibility and influence for the good of all. This is characterized, of course, by the irrational being appropriately subordinated to the rational. "Since therefore no mere body and no non-rational soul has free will, these things are subordinate to the natures which are in fact endowed with free will—not every one of them to all of them, but according to the just distribution of the creator" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.23.44).[10] Here the subordination of the irrational to the rational simply comprises one step of the rope-ladder of the will we noted previously (*Trin.* XI.10); and the continuity of this chain of subordination requires the same submission of the rational mind to its own superior, God, as we see in one of his reflections on the prelapsarian activity of 'guarding' in Paradise:

> What he worked on the land he should also guard and keep in himself through discipline; that is, that just as the field submits to the man tilling it, in the same way the man himself should submit to his Lord and master commanding him, so that having grasped the commandment he might yield the fruits of obedience, not the thorns of disobedience. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.10.20)

When submissive to God the human mind is fruitful in its use of the body to engage the wider physical world.

Highlighting the role of grace, and offering an alternative and complementary interpretation of the 'working' and 'guarding' of Genesis 2.15, Augustine confidently points out that God, whose loving creative activity he described earlier as working in order that creation "should be, and in order that it should abide" (*Gn. litt.* I.8.14), is actually the one who 'works' and 'guards' us. Just as we can participate in Providence as volitional agents by gardening,

> so much more does God, who created the man to be a man, work him to be a just man, if he does not part company with God through pride… [and thus] God is said to work the man, who was already a man, into also being godfearing and wise; and to guard him, because the man could not safely be

[10] For more on the angelic dimension, see *Gn. litt.* VIII.24.45. On the hidden 'gardening' of the angels, *Gn. litt.* IX.16.29.

> left to delight in his own power and authority rather than that of the one above him and to ignore his rights as Lord and master. (*Gn. litt.* VIII.10.23)

For Augustine both the literal, external working of the land and the figurative, internal guarding of the soul which it symbolizes are nothing less than derivative activities directed by the same Providence which guides all creation, and is repeated in countless ways and in numberless pairs throughout the universe where God "first of all subjects all things to himself, and then [he subjects] the bodily creation to the spiritual, the non-rational to the rational, the earthly to the heavenly, the feminine to the masculine, [etc]" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.23.44). When it comes to mankind, whether we discuss agriculture or the wielding of the body, the universal principle of appropriate subordination applies equally to both.[11] And as we saw above, the subordination of bodily things is actually the "raising up of evening knowledge to the glory of the creator" (*Gn. litt.* IV.30.47).

The Rebellion of the Earth

As we noted above, the human mind which refuses to submit to the cultivation of God yields thorns rather than fruits of obedience, an obvious reference to the curse which highlights the fact that the man has, through his indiscretion, injured and inconvenienced himself as much as, if not more than, he has harmed the rest of creation (*Gn. litt.* VIII.23.44, XI.5.7). Both the man Adam, and the common human mind which he represents, were afflicted with rebellion in order to humiliate him/it, to reveal 'his' impotence when he fails to recognize his creator as Lord. This pride was, as we noted earlier, the source of mankind's sin.

> There was first in the man's soul a certain self-aggrandizement that needed to be stamped on, so that, humiliated by sin, he might learn how false and unjustified was his presumptuous opinion of himself… the soul… that exalted itself and was excessively over-confident… in its own powers had to be given a demonstration by experiencing punishment of precisely how not-well a created nature fares, if it draws away from the one that made it. (*Gn. litt.* XI.5.7)

Thus the curse is really a cure, and part of the strategy behind the cure is to reveal to the 'man' just how utterly inappropriate such pride is. The demonstration is, of course, the rebellion of the earth. Just as the field was once submissive to the man's will when he was subordinate to the will of God (*Gn. litt.* VIII.10.20), the opposite now applies at both levels:

[11] It is much more helpful to discuss mankind as existing in various degrees of participation when discussing the effects of the Fall, rather than the frequent recourse scholars often take to discussing the 'redemptive' vs. the 'created' order; see Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence*, 93; her dichotomy was taken up by both Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, 289 and by Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'," 263.

"Eventually, since he refused to guard in himself by his submission the likeness of Paradise tilled by himself, he was condemned to receive in the field the likeness of himself: 'Thorns,' it says, 'and thistles shall it bring forth for you' (Gn 3.18)" (*Gn. litt.* VIII.10.20). The field now resists the man's will and labor so that he might be provided with a corporeal image of his own failure to cooperate with God in the design and workings of Providence.

Famously, Augustine sees the like rebellion of the body against the mind almost exclusively as unbidden genital arousal and the involuntary enflaming effect the sight of another's genitals can have, "the disorderly behavior of disobedient members in the bodies of disobedient human beings as an eminently just tit for tat" (*Gn. litt.* XI.1.3). Almost as famously, he affirms that sexual intercourse would have occurred had mankind not fallen, but hurriedly asserts that the *quality* of unfallen human mating would have been vastly different from our common experience (*Gn. litt.* IX.3.6).[12] Augustine speculates, in a manner perfectly consonant with all that we have seen of the harmonious ideal operation of humanity and the whole universe of which it is a part, that

> before sin those two human beings were able to control and command their genital organs for the procreation of children in the same way as their other limbs, which the soul moves for all kinds of action without any trouble or any sort of prurient itch for pleasure… just as they commanded the feet when they went walking, so they could have commanded at will the organs that bring the fetus into being, so that it would have been neither sown in palpitating heat nor brought forth in piteous pain. (*Gn. litt.* IX.10.18)[13]

The prelapsarian body obeyed and agreed with the mind in all things. But of course, the opposite is now in effect. Echoing Pauline language Augustine explains,

> Now however, as the just deserts of their transgressing the commandment, they found the movement of that law fighting back against the law of the mind in the members of the body of that death they had contracted… And what penalty could be more just than that the body, the soul's attendant, should fail to serve it at its every beck and call, just as the soul itself declined to serve its own Lord and master? (*Gn. litt.* IX.10.18-11.19).

The rebellion of the soil, as we have said, was a medicinal punishment given to hubristic humanity in order to demonstrate the impropriety and foolishness of pride and privatization, with a view to their eventual return to the joy of humility.

These literal, corporeal punishments of uncooperative fields and uncontrollable genitals were not, for Augustine, the only visible manifestations of the mind's rebellion against God. The same spiritual stubbornness and volitional conflict is also literally

[12] See also *civ.* 14.21.
[13] See also *civ.* 14.23f, as one of a multitude of further examples.

represented in the nature of the curse applied to the woman. Augustine believes the part of the curse dealing with pain in childbirth is satisfactorily left at the literal level; but the phrase 'and you shall return to your man, and he shall rule over you' requires more thought.

> It is not fitting, after all, to suppose that even before sin the woman was made otherwise than to have the man ruling over her and to be herself turning towards him in service (*serviendo converteretur*).[14] But we can rightly take it that the service indicated here is one of slavery rather than of delight (*est potius quam dilectionis*): so this kind of service, by which human beings later on began to be the slaves of other human beings, turns out to have arisen from the punishment of sin.[15] The apostle indeed says, 'Serving one another through love' (Gal 5.13); but he would never have dreamt of saying, "Rule over one another." And so married couples can indeed serve each other through love; but the apostle does not allow a wife to rule over her husband. It was God's sentence, you see, that gave this position to the man, and it was not by nature but by fault (*non natura, sed culpa*) that the woman deserved to have her husband as her master. Unless this is accepted and observed, however, nature will become even more distorted, and the fault will be aggravated. (*Gn. litt.* XI.37.50)

The distinction here of service rendered in love or delight rather than from power is indicative of the nature of God's own Providence universally: "He is almighty, sure, but with the strength of wisdom, not unprincipled might" (*Gn. litt.* IX.17.32). Nor is the language of the apostle in terms of domination; he envisions an economy of love and mutual, if ordered, service.[16] Augustine is frequently criticized for his supposedly misogynistic comments on how another man would have been a more suitable helper in the fields, and a better companion generally than the woman; but few note[17] that even between two male friends Augustine maintains that there still would have been hierarchical order between the two: "one should be in charge and the other should comply, to avoid a clash of wills disturbing the peace of the household" (*Gn. litt.* IX.5.9).

For Augustine relationships are defined by power only after the Fall, as the above comments on slavery and the quality of the woman's subordination suggest. In the case of slavery we have an example of power abused;[18] in the case of the woman we have an example of power inappropriately sought, which upsets the divinely established order: "Married couples can indeed serve one another through love, but the apostle does not allow a wife to rule over her husband." Implied is a naturally inappropriate desire to dominate the husband, which the curse is meant to counteract; the man was not seeking power over his wife, but

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[14] Van Bavel speculates Augustine had been reading Ambrosiaster, who says the same (*Ef.* 5.33); "Augustine's View on Women," *Aug(L)* 39 (1989): 5-53, at 12.

[15] See also *c. Jul. imp.* VI.26.

[16] See also *mor.* I.30.63.

[17] Soennecken is a notable exception, "Die Rolle der Frau," 293.

[18] See also *civ.* XIX.15.

was given it in order to maintain order against her unnatural desire: "It was God's sentence, you see, that gave this position to the man… Unless this is accepted and observed, nature will become even more distorted, and the fault will be aggravated" (*Gn. litt.* XI.37.50).

The nature of this interpretation is undoubtedly literal and, I would suggest, over-stated if left as it is. Like Augustine's analysis of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11.7 in *The Trinity* XII.11, I suggest something similar here: 'If this does not refer to some hidden sacramental or symbolic meaning, it will remain quite pointless.' The biblical narrative does not indicate that Eve had been particularly insubordinate to Adam, and Augustine himself gives no particular reason why the woman deserved such suppression.

I suggest that this interpretation of the curse is an example of Augustine's literal exegesis being driven by the unspoken figurative meaning he sees behind the narrative; indeed, after quoting the text describing Adam's curse Augustine straightaway addresses the situation in general language suggesting his comments are meant to cover aspects of both the sexes' respective curses. "Who does not know that these are the toils and troubles of the human race on earth? …there should be no reluctance to take these words first and foremost in their proper historical sense. *All the same a prophetic signification is to be looked for and expected, and it is this that the divine speaker here has chiefly in mind*" (*Gn. litt.* XI.38.51). The figurative nature of literal gender is confirmed when we look again at Augustine's comments on the nature of the help Eve provides Adam. Yes, he does say that another man would have been more effective as a farmhand and comrade (*Gn. litt.* IX.5.9); but this is a matter of comparing apples with oranges. By rejecting Eve as in ideal co-laborer Augustine indicates that Adam needed help not with his labor in the fields, but with an entirely different work for which another man would be useless: reproduction. "What other reason was a helper like him sought in the female sex, than that a wife by her very nature should assist him, like fertile soil, in sowing and planting out the human race?" (*Gn. litt.* IX.9.15). Eve was the medium in which Adam worked to perpetuate the human race, not a co-laborer in producing grain and livestock. More than a mere farmhand, Eve actually made possible Adam's labor in this great undertaking. Picturing Eve as fertile soil capable of resistance once fallen, the parallels of agricultural, genital and female insubordination are simply too numerous to ignore in the light of all that we have seen, and Augustine seems to be putting all three forward as images of the singular universal cognitive failure of all humanity, continuously and proudly taking its attention off its creator and refusing to refer all creation back to him in praise. All three are instantiations of human spiritual disobedience, all three faithfully illustrating the destructive disorder mankind has wrought within itself.

This analysis is proved when we look to what may seem like throw-away comments in other texts and sermons, but which are, I would argue, evidence of this theme and mode of thinking underlying Augustine's thoughts in multiple contexts. We find him in places talking about the "sweet *consortium* of spirit and flesh" (*ep.* 140.16), but it is even more enlightening to observe him discussing the Fall and asceticism in terms of a married couple, in light of Romans 7.22-23, Galatians 5.17, and Ephesians 5.28-29. As we noted in Chapter One it is this combination of scriptural passages, and the rule of *totus Christus*, which eventually led him to produce the three parallel and wonderfully synthetic unions of *On Continence*. The use of the sacrament of marriage and the eternal union of *totus Christus* to defend the goodness of the flesh and, as we will see, promote an ascetic scheme of increasing harmony with Providence underlies not only texts like *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Continence*, but also provide vital elements for much of his writing, including, as we have already seen, what are usually thought of as much more important texts, such as *The Trinity* and the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*.

Augustine returns often to these same passages, and on several occasions he resorts to this same image of the human interior as a household of varying states of order and propriety. Speaking to both men and women he declares:

> This is the firm truth: your flesh is like your wife, and so no one hates his own flesh (Eph 5.29). Yet what does the apostle say elsewhere? 'The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh' (Gal 5.17). Your flesh lusts against you like a wife opposing your wishes, so you must both love it and discipline it until undivided concord reigns, through the reformation of your whole self. (*en. Ps.* 140.16)

And a portion from a much longer discussion:

> This [Gal 5.17] does not mean that there are two opposed natures at war within you; it is more like the case of a husband and wife sharing their home. If they are at loggerheads there is misery, trouble, and danger. If the husband is subservient and the wife dominates him there is peace of a perverse kind. If the wife submits to her husband's rule there is a rightly ordered peace, yet there is no question of her being subdued by some alien nature, for woman was made for man, from his own essence. (*en. Ps.* 143.6)

Another example comes from *Sermon* 400, *On Fasting*, where he proclaims the purpose of fasting as the loving subjection of the body, much like one tames and subdues a spirited horse in order to complete a journey. Likewise, Augustine speaks there of "a sort of marriage between spirit and flesh" and continues the analogy (admittedly distastefully by today's standards) to speak of subduing the body as men commonly subdue their wives, sons or servants with loving discipline (*s.* 400.4-5).

Perhaps the most evocative (and a somewhat more agreeable) use of the sacrament of marriage as model and figure of both the fallen condition and its healing is found in Augustine's treatment of the woman at the well in his 15th *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, and Christ's suggestion to the woman, 'Call your husband' (Jn 4.16). Augustine is upfront with his congregation. He is trying to get them all, men and women both, to recognize within themselves "the soul's husband… the intelligent mind itself" (*Jo. ev. tr.* 15.18). After providing his audience with a fundamental explanation of the intellect as the distinguishing factor between humans and animals, and how not applying the intellect to life results in living "an animal life," he explains that Christ perceived the woman had been living just such an 'animal' life, that is, without the enlightenment provided by the use of human intelligence.

> This part of the soul, which is called intelligence and mind, is enlightened by a higher light; this higher light, by which the human mind is enlightened, is God. 'That', you see, 'was the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world' (Jn 1.9). That is the kind of light Christ was; that is the kind of light that was talking to the woman; and she was not there with her intelligence, which could be enlightened by that light, and not only be bathed in it but also enjoy it. It is as if the Lord were saying, "I want to enlighten, and no one is here to enlighten." 'Call your husband', he said; "summon the intelligence by which you can be taught, can be directed.'"
>
> So then, think of a soul without intelligence as a woman, of a soul which has intelligence as a man. But this man does not direct his wife well, unless he is directed from above. For 'the head of the woman is the man, while the head of the man is Christ' (1 Cor 11.3). The head of men was speaking with the woman and the man was not present. It is as if the Lord wanted to say, "Bring along your head so that he might welcome his head." So 'call your husband and come back here' means, "Be present, be truly with me; I mean, you are elsewhere as long as you do not understand the voice of Truth here present; be present yourself, but not alone; be present with your head." (*Jo. ev. tr.* 15.19)

Augustine's engagement with the inner workings of the members of his congregation—through his presentation of Christ's engagement with a woman—powerfully illustrates the nature of fallen cognition in marital terms, and the restoration of proper interior order as a restoration of the household of our true selves. When Augustine continues his reflection on the woman's present adultery and her previous marriages to five husbands, who allegorically represent her five senses, the image is even more pointedly reinforced: the woman's interior order was completely overturned, and she had lived her entire life thus far being directed by her sensual appetites rather than by her true 'husband', her mind. Additionally, it is worth looking beyond the impropriety (by today's standards) of his rhetorical play on the woman's gender and marital status to note that Augustine (through Christ's words) was actually

treating her as an equal, challenging her as an individual human to rise up to the universal standard Christ requires of all humanity.

We close with a pair of passages from the seldom-discussed, yet vitally important Book XIII of the *Confessions*, where Augustine gives the divine ideal for his human creation:

> And just as within the human soul one faculty deliberates and makes decisions, while another must be submissive and obedient, so too was woman made physically subordinate to man. Though equal to him by nature in her rational mind and intelligence, with respect to bodily sexuality she was subjected to the male, even as the impulse to action must be submissive in order to conceive from the rational mind the sagacity to act aright. (*conf.* XIII.32.47)

> Then you gave form to the believing soul, the soul truly alive because by robust self-control it had reduced its impulses to good order. Its mind was now subject to you alone, and needed no human norm to imitate, for you made it new after your own image and in your likeness, and subordinated its rational activity to the sovereignty of intellect, as woman is to man. (*conf.* XIII.34.49)

These comments come at the height of Augustine's allegorical reflections on creation at the end of the *Confessions*, and right before his concluding comments that what he saw when he looked at creation through the eyes of faith, "in your Word", was "heaven and earth, the head and body of the church which you predestined before time began, when there was neither morning nor evening" (*conf.* XIII.34.49). These passages show that these principles function as universal rules in Augustine's mind, governing his understanding of what creation is, and how it was created to be.

MARITAL LOVE AS THE FOUNDATION OF CONTINENCE

We briefly mentioned above the subtle distinction between an act of sin, which Augustine allegorized as both the man and the woman eating from the tree, and the 'mere' enjoyment of the idea of sin, which is represented by the hypothetical situation of only the woman partaking, that is, only our bodies sinning (*Trin.* XII.17-18). "One cannot deny" that the former is a sin, but "still it is much less of a sin than it would be if it were decided to complete it with action" (*Trin.* XII.18). This distinction between 1) impulse without bodily fulfillment and 2) active consent undergirds *On Continence*, where he exploits the narrative gap between the individual sinful consents of Eve and Adam in order to reflect on the passages we noted previously in Chapter One: Romans 7, especially Paul's famous passage in Romans 7.22-23, 'For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another

law at war with the law of my mind'; Galatians 5.17, 'For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit lusts against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would'; and Ephesians 5.28-29, in the immediate context of the proclamation of the *magnum sacramentum*, 'Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church'. And it is precisely in this temporal and volitional gap between the yet-unfallen Adam and the tragic figure of sinful Eve, so full of familiar disappointment and resignation, that Augustine begins to work out an ascetic scheme, full of tension and difficulty but also, thanks to the loving, subordinating work of Christ in his body the church, surprisingly full of hope and real potential for joy.

Exploiting the Gap

Following Augustine's thinking here requires us to be mindful of the distinction we observed in Chapter Two, Christ's death and resurrection functioning as *sacramentum* for the death and resurrection of the Christian soul in this life, and as *exemplum* in relation to our hope for the future when our body will be raised from the dead as well; his 'single' matching our 'double' (*Trin.* IV.4-6). The first we enjoy now, the other we await in faith. In *On Continence*, Augustine uses Colossians 3.1-4 to explain that in all these other texts Paul is speaking to the single/double sort of Christian: "We must understand who is being spoken to here; rather we must listen more attentively. What could be clearer? What could be more open? Unmistakably he is speaking to those who have risen with Christ, not yet in the flesh, to be sure, but in the spirit" (*cont.* 13.28). As we noted in Chapter One, Augustine has no time for classical philosophic notions of the glory of the human mind versus the lowliness of flesh: both are in profound need of grace (*cont.* 4.11), both 'Adam' and 'Eve' have eaten of the tree, both mind and flesh are dead under the curse and in need of resurrection.

The half-way quality of the Christian's salvation in this life—risen in mind, not yet in body, Adam before Eve—creates what Augustine regularly describes as open war between the lively mind and the still-dead body. When both were dead, there was what Augustine considers a perverse *concordia* between the 'man' and 'wife' of the human individual, consisting of their mutual agreement in sin which brings with it the illusion of blessedness. But the Christian, enlightened by the Law and transformed by grace ("which makes us love what the Law commands"), shares in Paul's profound inner conflict brought about by the resurrection of Adam apart from Eve: 'I find pleasure in God's law in my inner self, but I am aware of another law in my body that rebels against the law of my mind' (Rom 7.22-23; *cont.* 3.6-8). Augustine speaks of the conflict between spirit and 'flesh' throughout *On*

Continence, but waits until the end of the treatise to give us a more precise picture of what is rebelling, and how: "The desire involved in sinning is not only bodily desire, but also that of the soul" (*cont.* 13.28). And these desires, "whether in the body or the soul (*sive in carne sive in anima*)," have a certain life of their own and intrude unbidden into the mind (*sine nostrae mentis consensione*), with or without its pleasure or bodily consent (*cont.* 13.29). These desires attack the "citadel of the mind (*arcem mentis*)" until they get what they want; that is, the mind for their slave. "Then sin will reign in the mortal human body, exacting obedience to its desires; then one's body will be offered 'to sin as a weapon for deeds of wickedness' (Rom 6.13)" (*cont.*14.31).[19]

The identification of the 'woman' with the rebellion of both soul and body in every individual is confirmed by Augustine's use of Ephesians 5.29 in *On Continence* 21-23.[20] Where the Manichees and other groups would blame and reject the body and lower parts of the soul by virtue of their rebellion, Augustine's response is just the opposite. Rather than looking forward to the freedom of 'divorce', Augustine points to the solidarity of the husband with his wife, and the strength of their conjugal bond modeled on Christ's union to his body. Acknowledging that indeed "'the corruptible body' still 'weights down the soul' (Wis 9.15)" and that 'the body is dead because of sin' (Rom 8.10), Augustine qualifies these statements with the words of Paul in Ephesians 5, where "he gives that testimony in support of our flesh, that is, the inferior and material part of us, with the words… 'No one ever hates his own flesh… but nourishes and nurtures it, just as Christ does the church' (Eph 5.29)" (*cont.* 21). Contrary to the Manichaean myths, "the true Teacher exhorts husbands to love their wives on the model of their love for their own flesh, and exhorts them also to do it on the model of Christ's love for his church" (*cont.* 9.22). Even though Ephesians 5.25-29 straightforwardly applies to husbands and wives, Augustine is mindful that the *magnum sacramentum* is only a couple lines away and he feels free to read the passage in reverse, using the affection of a husband for his wife and Christ for his church as illustrations of the affection of the mind for the body:

> as you read, 'the flesh has desires opposed to those of the spirit' (Gal 5.17), and 'goodness does not dwell in my body' (Rom 7.18), read also, 'No one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and nurtures it, just as Christ does the church' (Eph 5.29). As you read, 'but I see another law in my body that rebels against the law of my mind' (Rom 7.23), read also, 'As Christ loved the church, so too husbands should love their wives like their own bodies' (Eph

[19] C.P. Mayer is very good on this subject, even if he does not make the connection with marriage that we have, "Caro—spiritus," *AugLex*, especially 750f.

[20] For Augustine's use of this passage elsewhere, see the thorough discussion by van Bavel, "'No One Ever Hated His Own Flesh': Eph. 5:29 in Augustine," *Aug(L)* 45 (1995): 45-93.

> 5.25, 28). Do not be cunning about the evidence provided by holy scripture in the first of those texts, and deaf to it in the second, and you will be correct about both. If you accept the second as you should, you will also try to achieve true understanding of the first. (*cont.* 9.22)

Thus Ephesians 5, with its wonderfully elusive boundaries between marriage, theological anthropology and Christology, provides Augustine with the Christological lines along which to expound on not only the goodness of the body, but the uniquely Christian affirmation of the essential solidarity between spirit and body.

Here our presentation of Augustine's figurative use of the categories 'male' and 'female' to describe two aspects of a single human individual runs into some difficulty. In *The Trinity* XII and the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* III Augustine deliberately applied figurative gender to the human mind only, that is, what is "not common to man and beast" (*Trin.* XII.2-3, 21). Yet here in *On Continence* the theme of both the soul and flesh as 'female' in relation to the mind features prominently, and seemingly in direct contradiction of his principle in those other works, in that *anima* and *caro* as he is using them here are common to both humans and animals. It is helpful here to be mindful of Augustine's goals in both *The Trinity* and *On Continence*. The most obvious difference lies in the scriptures used: he clearly believes 1 Corinthians 11.7 calls for a different figurative application of gender than does Ephesians 5.25-29. But more importantly, he has chosen these texts for specific purposes. His concern in *The Trinity* XII is to identify the one human mind and the ways in which it is characterized as 'male' or 'female' based upon the object(s) of its attention, that is, heaven and/or earth, which correlate to male and female in the wider organization of the universe. This would include attention to its own body as 'female', or 'earth'. There the quality of the mind's attention and the shape of the soul was determined by its object, and undue attention to the 'feminine' or 'corporeal' rendered the mind in appropriately 'feminine' as well. In *On Continence* the concern is with the whole human, not just the mind, and the relationship of its parts one to another. So in a sense we might say that *On Continence* describes the relationship between the 'heaven' and 'earth' of the human individual, or in this case, the 'male' and 'female', without regard for the effects improper attention has on the mind. What was the object in *The Trinity* XII, the body, is now part of the subject of *On Continence*. The two figurative interpretations are certainly related, but they employ the same imagery to slightly different ends; and I suggest this accounts for their apparent contradiction.

The more intimate account we have in *On Continence* allows Augustine to expound on the effects that the rebellious body and soul have on the mind. In *The Trinity* XII we were restricted to considering only the intellectually blinding effects of the Fall; in *On Continence* we

get a glimpse into the equally important effect of the open warfare between the resurrected Christian mind and its dead yet vigorously-resistant soul and body. As we noted above Augustine's favorite term for this opposition, this 'other law in my members' (Rom 7.23), is desire/lust against or contrary to the mind (*concupiscit adversus spiritum*) (Gal 5.17; *cont.* 2.5f). For Augustine this is all-out warfare and, as we noted in Chapter One, the battle is enjoined under the Apostolic trumpet-call: 'Do not let sin rule in your mortal body!' (Rom 6.12; *cont.* 3.8f). The victor's prize is the body: "Sinful desire must not take over our bodies, but continence must claim them for herself, so that they will be God's weapons for justice, and not the weapons of sin for deeds of wickedness" (*cont.* 3.8). So it is that the mind, guided by God's grace and leadership is set free from its corruption (*cont.* 5.12-7.18); and yet baptized though the mind may be, "under the hands of that same Physician , nature still contends with its sickness" (*cont.* 7.18) in the body, by reason of original sin: "There is now war, since perfect health has not yet been achieved," and complete wholeness/salvation will be achieved by the mind seeking God's help: "'I said, Lord, be merciful to me, heal my soul, because I have sinned against you' (Ps 41.4). The soul would not have needed healing, if it had not corrupted itself by sinning, with the result that its flesh has desires opposed to it; that is to say, it is in conflict with itself to the extent that it has acquired sickness in the body" (*cont.* 7.18). But just because the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit (Gal 5.17), and good does not dwell in our flesh (Rom 7.18), and the law in our bodies rebels against the law of our mind (Rom 7.23), this "does not mean that there is a mingling of two natures, created from opposing elements, but that the one nature is divided against itself as a consequence of sin" (*cont.* 8.21). So it is that 'under the hands of the same Physician' we have been left with the gaping wound we noted in Chapter One, where the Law was given to sinners in order to aggravate their fallen condition, placing stress on the cracks emerging between head and body brought about by the Fall, "making their injuries worse so that they will want the physician" (*cont.* 3.7). This good physician applies the sweet, gracious tonic of healthy desires, enticing the mind away from the harmful and inferior sweetness of earthly pleasure. Once the mind begins to appreciate the delights of continence, "our land produces its harvest, providing food for the soldier who fights with God's help in the battle against sin" (*cont.* 3.7). Continence might not yield the fruits enjoyed in Eden, but it is the beginning of overcoming its thorns and thistles; and the few sweet fruits produced are a foretaste of things to come, and sustenance for the long fight of our mortal lives: continued continence as not yielding our bodies to sin, and the beginnings of righteousness as rightly wielding the body as a tool for good (*cont.* 7.17).

Waging Benevolent War

As we have repeatedly noted, the foundation of the mind's fight for the body is love (Eph 5.29). In the interests of developing the story, a look back at the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* helps us understand the nature of the mind's affection for the body in relation to its fall and redemption. In his closing remarks in Book XI, essentially the end of the commentary before the methodological Book XII, Augustine leaves us with a moving sketch of what might have been Adam's reason for accepting Eve's offer of the fruit. Skeptical that Adam could have been deceived outright, as he is the image of the mind's attention to divine things, Augustine wonders if the model of Solomon's fall from grace might not apply.

> Take Solomon, for instance, a man of such outstanding wisdom; are we really to believe that he believed there is anything to be gained by worshiping idols? But he was unable to resist the love of women dragging him into this evil, and into doing what he knew ought not to be done, lest he should inhibit the deadly delights in which he was wasting and draining away his life. In the same way Adam too was unwilling to cross the woman who had taken a bit from the forbidden tree after being led astray, and had given some to him so that they might eat together; he believed she might easily pine away without him to comfort her, if she found herself estranged from his way of thinking, and might quite simply perish from that conflict. (*Gn. litt.* XI.42.59)

Adam was not seduced by Eve or his own flesh; he fell out of compassion for his wife's pitiable condition and lonely future. He did this "out of benevolent concern for their friendship, as frequently happens, when we offend God while trying to keep human friends from becoming enemies" (*Gn. litt.* XI.42.59).[21] This suggestive interpretation of Adam's literal Fall is clearly modeled on his exegesis of Ephesians 5, and incorporates not only the parallels of Adam and Eve with the two realms of the one human nature, spirit and flesh, but also reflects the loving disposition of the mind towards the body. His desire to remain with his wife is commendable to a certain degree, but is of course seen to be foolish in the end, and justly deserves punishment (*Gn. litt.* XI.42.60).

So it is that Adam slips into the darkness of spiritual blindness, accompanied only by his wife, just as the human mind dwells in darkness with only the extremely limited and inadequate company of its body, united in perverse collusion towards obtaining sensual delights, and both lie dead in their sin. Of course, 'Adam' begins to stir in discomfort under the Law and, once revived by grace, awakens from his perversely peaceful slumber to find

[21] See also *civ.* 14.11. J.J. O'Meara ingeniously compares Augustine's portrait of Adam succumbing to Eve's suggestion, rather than doing his duty, to Orpheus and Eurydice from Virgil's *Georgics*; all three of these, Adam, Orpheus and Eurydice fell out of compassion for women, and failed where Virgil's Aeneas succeeded. In obeying Jupiter rather than succumbing to Dido, Aeneas rightly chose duty over human love; O'Meara, *Creation of Man*, 68ff.

himself in the midst of a war with the wifely flesh which, once his friend, now literally tries to drag him back to the grave that she might continue to enjoy his company in morbid delights. This time, humbled and empowered by grace, the now clear-eyed and truly-benevolent Adam seeks to make good on the friendship, to the opposite effect: where he once followed her to the grave, he now seeks to raise her up to new life and restoration through continence and the subjection of righteous action. However she might rage, and whatever physical or psychic suggestions she might throw his way, he is in no way obligated to indulge her; the soul may be full of suggestions, but is without true power otherwise, and ultimately the body will obey the mind, with or without the soul's volitional agreement. He remains benevolent, seeking to raise her up to the glory of her Creator, but she responds to his loving care with continued rebellion.

In Augustine's eyes this relationship perfectly parallels Christ's relation to his yet-to-be perfected body, the church. Though the church lusts against Christ through the contrary desires of its still-imperfect members, Christ does not crush the opposition with raw power but lovingly brings it back into appropriate order. "He restrains it with corrections, lest it become puffed up and destroyed by being spared punishment, and he comforts it and supports it, lest it succumb under the weight of its infirmities" (*cont.* 11.25). This of course models how Christians ought to treat their own bodies: "The true continence that comes from above does not aim to suppress some evils in order to have other evils, but to cure all evils with good" (*cont.* 13.28). And elsewhere he says,

> All those who live according to Christ now act towards their body in [the same] way: on the one hand, they have desires opposed to its evil inclinations, because they do not yet possess it in its healed condition, and while it still needs healing they restrain it; on the other hand, they nourish and nurture its natural goodness, because 'no one ever hates his own flesh' (Eph 5.29). (*cont.* 11.25)

The process he describes here is moving the church/flesh from a posture of opposing desires to delighted subjection. In the case of Christ with the church, the process is inevitable: his love for it is stronger than its opposition to him, and its subjection is a matter of time. The only reason it still has desires opposed to Christ is simply because the promise is in the process of being fulfilled.

Patiently Awaiting the Grace of Victory

Augustine ties the individual Christian's full bodily healing with the final healing of Christ's own body, the church, as we see in the following:

> When he who 'heals all our infirmities' (Ps 103.3) has brought the church to the promised healing of its infirmities, there will then be no spot or wrinkle (Eph 5.27), however slight, in any of its members. Then the flesh will have no desires in any way opposed to the spirit, and so there will also be no reason for the spirit to have desires opposed to the flesh. This whole battle will then come to an end; there will then be the greatest concord, then no one will be carnal, so much so that even the flesh itself will be spiritual… So then, when Christ's church has unshakable security without any fear, we can hope for our flesh to be perfectly sound without any rebelliousness. (*cont.* 11.25)

The three unions driving this thesis, Christ and the church, husband and wife, and spirit and flesh, are for Augustine much more than clever analogies or rhetorical devices. Passages like the one above demonstrate that he is delineating his literal view of the structure of reality in terms of, and as participating in, the eternal design of God in uniting Christ and his body the church. These things are wrapped up with one another, participating in the same providential life, and built upon the same primordial design. Clearly the fulfillment of the divine design, brought about volitionally within time, awaits the future resurrection of the dead and the eventual subjection of all things to Christ their head.

For the Christian individual, as we already mentioned above, this bodily death and resurrection means the *exemplum* of Christ's death and resurrection finally become actual for the body and God finally restores it, too, and reunites the rightly-loving body, free of rebellious promptings, with its rightly-loving mind. In the following passage we see that the quality of the mind and body relates directly to the nature of the body's irrational will. Immediately after he connects the resurrection of the body to the healing of the church he discusses the union of spirit and flesh in terms of marriage and friendship. At the resurrection the spirit and flesh will no longer lust after one another, and "this whole struggle will then come to an end; there will then be *summa concordia*; then no one will be carnal, so much so that even the flesh itself will be spiritual" (*cont.* 11.25). At death the flesh is not cast aside and abandoned, but to the contrary as a friend

> It is put aside to be received back, and once received back it will never again be relinquished. 'A 'soulish' body (*corpus animale*)[22] is sown', however, 'and a spiritual body (*corpus spiritale*) rises up' (1 Cor 15.44). Then the flesh will no longer have any desires opposed to the spirit. It will itself be called spiritual,

[22] See our note on this translation of *corpus animale* in Chapter One. The clause is difficult, but the *NPNF*s 'animal body', the *FC*'s 'natural body', and certainly not the 'material body' of the WSA's translation, are hardly preferable in light of the Greek; and Augustine's own usage indicates he knew the Greek. He clearly picks up on Paul's comparison of the pre-resurrection σῶμα ψυχικόν with the post-resurrection σῶμα πνευματικόν. The concept is adjectival, referencing a body characterized by *anima*/ψυχή rather than *spiritus*/πνεύμα. 'Soulish' might not be good English (and even worse Latin in most circumstances), but it nicely captures Augustine's Pauline reading in a way that makes for good English sense.

> as it will be subject to the spirit without any resistance, and without any need of bodily food to sustain its eternal life. Accordingly, because we are made up of both these two things that at present oppose one another within us, we pray and work that they might agree (*ut concordent*). (*cont.* 8.19)

This internal human participation in the larger ordered harmony of the universe, progressing volitionally throughout time according to the eternal divine design, is a major feature of the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* as well. There we find the entire human race progressing from *animale* to *spiritale* from its inception, in almost Irenaean fashion.

1 Corinthians 15.44 first appears in the *Literal Interpretation* in Book VI, and Augustine narrows his focus to one phrase on the quality of the resurrected body—*seminatur enim corpus animale, resurgit corpus spiritale* (*Gn. litt.* VI.19.30)—in exactly the same way we saw immediately above in *On Continence*. Briefly, Augustine speculates here in *Literal Interpretation* VI on the nature of Adam's body as described in the creation narrative, when it was formed from dust. After some deliberating, he decides that Paul's description of the first Adam as a 'living soul (*anima vivens*/ψυχή ζῶσαν)' (1 Cor 15.45) is determinative; when contrasted with the clearly superior *corpus spiritale* Paul promises us in the resurrection in 15.44, Augustine concludes that the first man too was awaiting a spiritual body, into which he "had not yet been changed, but into which he was to have been changed if he had not earned the death of his 'ensouled' body by sinning" (*Gn. litt.* VI.24.35). Augustine does not equate the body's 'soulish' condition with sin, but with Adam's innocent-yet-vulnerable immaturity and ability to change, "It still remained for [his body] to be changed and made spiritual and so receive full immortality… if the man lived justly his body would be changed into a spiritual state" (*Gn. litt.* VI.26.37). Adam's vulnerability in his 'soulish' state placed him in the curious position of being both immortal and mortal: "mortal because it was *able* to die, and immortal because it was able *not* to die" (*Gn. litt.* VI.25.36). The determining factor in the man's future was the presence of God's grace, for his immortality depended on access to the sacramental Tree of Life, not on his "natural constitution" (*Gn. litt.* 25.36).

Adam's unfallen body may have been *animale*, but his mind was spiritual, according to the image of God (*Gn. litt.* VI.28.39). This spiritual quality of the mind was the very righteousness (*justitia*) he lost in the Fall (*Gn. litt.* VI.24.35-28.39), and it is this which we acquire when we are 'renewed in the spirit of our minds' (Eph 4.23), 'according to the image of him who created us' (Col 3.10); that is, when the mind is resurrected according to the

sacramentum of Christ.[23] But the body, 'Eve', yet abides under the penalty of death. And it is this unequal state which brings about the warfare of Romans 7 (*Gn. litt.* XI.31.40). Our curious state of being half-alive/half-dead is irreversible in this life.

> With us, however, even if we live justly, the body is going to die; and it is because of this necessity, coming down from the sin of that first man, that the apostle called our body dead, since 'in Adam we all die' (1 Cor 15.22). Again, he says: 'As the truth is in Jesus, you are to put off, in line with your previous habits, the old man, the one who is being corrupted on the lines of deceitful desires', that is, who has become Adam through sin. But see what follows: 'But be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, the one who in line with God was created in justice and true holiness' (Eph 4.21-24). There you are; that is what Adam lost through sin. So it is in this that we are being renewed as regards what Adam lost, that is, the spirit of our minds; but as regards the body, which is sown embodying soul and will rise embodying spirit (1 Cor 15.44), we shall be renewed with a better one, which Adam did not yet have. (*Gn. litt.* VI.26.37)

This sowing and rising of the body is the very essence of the Christian hope in Augustine's eyes. But the grounds for this hope go well beyond the promise of a renewed and better resurrected body, but in its joyful reunion with the resurrected mind. Now we experience the body as a distraction which 'mars and weighs down the soul' (Wis 9.15). But the relationship between spirit and flesh will be completely different when they are both risen and the old friends spirit and flesh are reunited:

> When [the mind] receives back this body, now no longer just 'soulish' but thanks to the transfiguration to come spiritual, it will have the measure of its proper nature complete, it will be both obeying and commanding, both quickened and quickening with such inexpressible ease, that what was once its burden is now its glory.[24] (*Gn. litt.* XII.35.68)

Paul's statement on the woman being 'the glory of man' (1 Cor 11.7) acquires new life with this statement, that the risen body will be the glory of the renewed mind. Their post-resurrection concord brings them into healthy volitional tension and harmony with the rest of creation, and the whole human being, as a member of Christ's body, will be subject to its head, and presented to the Father. Thus Augustine can say that in this "apt coordination between them, both entities point to God being the maker of each" (*cont.* 9.23).

The ascetical vision of spiritual continence and right use of the body, which permeates *On Continence*, is exclusively oriented towards hope in this eschatological volitional reunion, as we saw above. "Accordingly, because we are made up of both these two things

[23] In this discussion Augustine claims that Adam's Fall resulted in the loss of the image of God; in *retr.* II.24.2 he heavily qualifies this statement: "[This] must not be understood as though none of it remained in him, but that it was so deformed that it needed to be refashioned."

[24] See also *Gn. litt.* IX.11.19; *s.* 241.7.

(spirit and flesh) that at present oppose one another within us, we pray and work that they might enjoy concord (*ut concordent*)" (*cont.* 8.19). But the Christian ascetical task remains a life-long endeavor of restraining the desires of the soul and flesh:

> There would be no need for [the flesh] to be controlled if it were not aroused. One day good will be perfected, and evil eliminated; the one will be present to its utmost, and the other not at all. We deceive ourselves, however, if we think this is to be hoped for in this mortal life. It will happen then, when there is no death; it will happen there, where life is eternal. In that world and that kingdom there will be consummate good and no evil; and love of wisdom will be perfect, and continence will have nothing to do. (*cont.* 8.20)

Earlier in *On Continence* he expresses the glory of this eschatological reunion as perfect peace following the return of Christ from a wedding:

> We will have perfect peace (*pax…perfecta*) when our being holds fast to its creator and there is nothing in us that fights against us. This, as I see it, is what the Savior himself meant when he said, 'Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning' (Lk 12.35). What does it mean to have one's loins girt? To restrain lust, and that has to do with continence. To have lamps burning, however, is to shine and glow with good works, and that has to do with justice… 'Be like persons waiting for their master to return from a wedding' (Lk 12.36). When he comes, he will reward us for holding back from what sensuality demanded and for doing what charity directed, and so we shall reign in his perfect, everlasting peace, without any struggle against evil and with perfect enjoyment of the good. (*cont.* 7.17)

Augustine does not expand on these comments, but the clear allusion is to our participation in the wedding celebration of the master who, when he returns from his wedding feast and finds his members ready and waiting, enters within their household and 'will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them' (Lk 12.37). The image is of Christ returning as judge; but when he returns and finds his members faithful, he demonstrates the nature of his loving headship by serving the members of his body and tending to their well-being and honor.

CONCLUSION

We usually find Augustine at his best in his sermons, and in one of his *Enarrations on the Psalms* we find the figurative relationship between Augustine's two unions of husband and wife and spirit and flesh (built upon the union of Christ and the church) perhaps summarized best. Expanding on the idea of the household of every human interior which he probably

developed shortly after writing *On the Good of Marriage*,[25] we find a succinct discussion which gives us a preview of the much-later *On Continence*, and which neatly summarizes his argument at least ten years earlier. The extensive passage is well-worth quoting in full as we reflect on all that has come before:

> Now your flesh is like your wife or your servant: call it what you like, but bring it under your control and, if you have to fight it, make sure the fight turns out well for you. Your advantage lies in the subordination of the lower to the higher, and this means that if you want what is inferior to yourself to be subject to you, you must in your turn subject yourself to one who is higher.
>
> Recognize the due order and seek peace. You are to be subject to God, and your flesh to you. What could be more just? What more seemly? You submit to one greater than yourself, and what is less than you submits to you. Serve him who made you, so that what was made for your sake may serve you. But notice that what we are recognizing and recommending is not this order of things: that first your flesh must be subject to you, and then you to God. No, this is what we are saying: you must be subject to God, and then your flesh will submit to you. If you disdain to submit to God, you will never succeed in bringing your flesh under your control. If you do not obey the Lord, you will be tormented by your servant. If you have not first submitted to God and thereby ensured that your flesh is submissive to you, will you ever be able to say, 'Blessed be the Lord my God, who trains my hands for battle, and my fingers for war?' If you attempt to go into action untrained, you will be beaten and condemned for it. Put yourself under God's command first, and then, under his training and with his help, you may say of him, 'He trains my hands for battle, and my fingers for war.' (*en. Ps.* 143.6)

It can be striking to observe Augustine figuratively using marriage and gender to illustrate the ongoing dynamic of the Fall in every person today, and how the sacrament's requirement of fidelity to one's spouse becomes the way to salvation. It can also be a delight, when reading him sympathetically, to observe Augustine using the inherent tensions between marriage and continence to illustrate a balanced position relative to the debates raging around him—a position which rises above popular notions of both continence and marriage—spiritualizing both in what results in a universally applicable ascetic program for both married and monastic, bringing both celibates and non-celibates into the glory of harmonious participation.

But most striking of all are Augustine's rare usages of Ephesians 5.31 to describe the submission of the Christian mind to Christ. "The holy church is the wife of the Lord Jesus Christ in secret. Secretly, of course, and interiorly in a hidden spiritual recess, the human soul clings to the Word of God so that they may be two in one flesh, and the apostle

[25] Hombert dates the sermon to 406.

commends this great sacrament in Christ and in the church" (*c. Faust.* XXII.38).[26] Though the union of Christ with the Christian mind was not one of the three unions from *On Continence* and mentions of this union exceptionally rare, the metaphor illustrates a striking continuity of thought and adds yet another layer onto an already rich scheme.

Our next task is to observe how Augustine applies this universal program to the individuals in a marriage, both as individuals and, ideally, as friends in Christ. This will bring our discussion full-circle; where we began with the social understandings and tensions surrounding the relationships between men and women, we will end with an examination of how Augustine sees the Christian sacramentalization of marriage affecting actual Christian men and women who choose a life of marriage. We will see that the relationship is radically transformed in some ways, and remains remarkably mundane in others

[26] One prominent example is *en. Ps.* 34[1].12. See also *en. Ps.* 35.5 and *ep.* 127.2 for similar images of the mind as the lover of Wisdom; there however the Christian mind is male, Wisdom female, Augustine playing with grammatical gender.

5

HEAD AND BODY, HUSBAND AND WIFE

"If you can't agree with your own tongue, how can you live in concord with me?"

– *s.* 9.4

INTRODUCTION

As we conclude our examination of the importance of the sacrament of marriage for Augustine's ascetical vision this chapter returns to Earth, so to speak, and explores how Augustine applied his nuptial vision of spiritual continence to the lives of actual married men and women. We look to his sermons and letters for clues of this application, and in doing so we leave behind the relatively tidy vision of *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Continence* and find an Augustine who, while not relinquishing his ideal of continent marriage, is very much aware of humanity's vitiated state and its difficulties and limitations. Here we will see that Augustine was indeed prepared, in a certain sense, to allow the ideal relationship of husband and wife to fade into the background for the sake of the individual's inner *concordia* and union with Christ her head. For Augustine even the best Christian marriages 'today' only faintly exhibit the Pauline image we have of that brief, shining moment in Paradise, and only the Whole Christ is able to bring such union to fruition in even the best of Christian couples.

MARRIED LIFE UNDER BISHOP AUGUSTINE

In Chapter One we noted the classical Roman ideal of marital concord and household harmony, a true *symbiosis*, or *consortium*, founded upon the mutual respect of spouses for one another and their mutual agreement in all areas in life, partners sharing all things in common. We noted also the fundamental ordering of the household which they saw as making this harmony possible, the headship of the husband and the subordination of

the wife as consonant with the order of the universe, and as the foundation of the state. And finally, one can never overestimate the degree to which they prioritized raising up legitimate heirs. In the best and most thorough treatment extant on Augustine's understanding of how Christian men and women ought to relate to one another in marriage, Tarsicius van Bavel rightly notes that Augustine also saw both the social (but not intellectual) subordination of women and friendship as of the utmost importance for the harmony of the Christian household.[1] We also noted previously how Augustine placed this ordered friendship (*societas*) as the fount from which flowed the first two goods of marriage, reproduction (*proles*) and sexual faithfulness (*fides*). Up until this point his vision of marriage is not at all unlike the best and most sensitive articulations of married life we read in ancient non-Christian philosophers such as Seneca, Musonius Rufus or Plutarch.

But these similarities ought not to distract us from just how radically different the Christian vision of the marital relationship became due to Christian Scripture, even above and beyond the addition of the Pauline *magnum sacramentum* of Ephesians 5.32. Perhaps the most dramatic departure from the classical tradition was the new ideal derived from the sacrament of episcopal consecration, which mandates that candidates for bishop be the 'husband of one wife' (*unius uxoris vir*; 1 Tim 3.2). What a striking about-face this is from the famous classical emphasis on the *woman* being *univira*, the wife of one man! Augustine, of course, makes this strict standard normative for all Christian marriages (*b. conjug.* 18.21), adding to this perhaps an unprecedented emphasis on the impropriety of remarriage after divorce.

This shift of scrutiny from the chastity of wives to the sexual faithfulness of their husbands brings almost unheard-of moral pressure on married men and, by implication, levels the moral playing field for both sexes and grants a practically unprecedented dignity and honor to women by standards then-current. As van Bavel has noticed, Augustine seems to assume most of the time that women generally surpass men in sexual faithfulness, in spite of the men's supposedly greater strength and virtue.[2] Apparently this spotlight on men, exposing the double standards for promiscuity and divorce favoring males enshrined in social custom and Roman law,[3] frequently offended Christian husbands and emboldened wives in their complaining; surely Augustine was right when he assumed that not a few men went home and privately cursed their bold and radical bishop for upending the 'peace' and

[1] van Bavel, "Augustine's View on Women"; see also Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'.", and Harrison, "Marriage and Monasticism".

[2] "Augustine's View on Women," 15f. We discuss and present examples of this and the following emphases in much greater detail in the sections below.

[3] See for example *adult. conj.* II.8.7 and *nupt. et conc.* I.15.17.

quiet of their household! "'How come this fellow ever came here, and why did my wife go to church that day?!?'" (*s.* 9.4). Doubtlessly his frequent references to 1 Corinthians 7.3-4 ('the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights… the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does'), often as a deliberate challenge to Roman male prejudice, added to their frustration.

Equally dramatic as shifting the burden of chastity from women to men, and perhaps more consequential, was Augustine's important proclamation that married Christians were no longer to bear children after the flesh if they could manage to abstain. While Augustine does indeed put forth a notable vision of holy marriage involving sexual relations subordinated to sober procreation,[4] for him this is second-best when compared to the purity of continent marriage. This profoundly eschatological focus in marriage, evidence of the increasingly-ascetic culture of the Western Church, was most likely relatively new to mainstream Christianity and undoubtedly sounded a radical note in the ears of most in his congregation. But as we will see, such consistent application of his theological convictions points not merely to a middle-way between Jerome and Jovinian, but to a profound integrity of thought and practice; and it also points to a remarkably un-elitist vision of the Christian life. All those within earshot of the bishop's voice or listening to a reading of his works were presented with the ideal Christian life in the hope that grace might be working within the hearts of all—whether married or single, male or female—to inspire them to an ordered life of subordination to God: they were to remain as they are, yet love God alone through the continence of their minds and the appropriate use of their bodies after the pattern of Christ united in *concordia* with his body, the church.

CONTINENCE AS THE FOUNDATION OF MARITAL LOVE

This eschatological ascetic focus comes out clearly in a favorite passage of feminist readers of Augustine,[5] where he suggests how husbands ought to relate to their wives: "Love the human being in her, but hate that which makes her a wife" (*s. Dom. mont.* I.15.41). Børresen believes Augustine to be distinguishing here "between woman, the creature of God… and woman in her role as helpmate."[6] Reading this comment in context, however, reveals a vastly different understanding. Augustine continues:

[4] This is Harrison's important concluding analysis in "Marriage and Monasticism," 99.
[5] Børresen, for example; *Subordination and Equivalence*, 117-118.
[6] *Ibid.*, 118.

> The same is to be understood for father and mother and the other ties of blood, that in them we hate the lot of humankind to be born and to die, while loving what can be taken with us to that kingdom where no one says 'my father,' but all say 'our Father' to the one God; not 'my mother' but all say 'our Mother' to 'that Jerusalem;' not 'my brother,' but 'our brother' indifferently to all. Yes, our marriage with Him, once we have all been brought into one will be as to one spouse who by the shedding of his blood freed us from the prostitution of this world. The disciple of Christ, therefore, must hate the transient in them whom he wants to come with him in to the everlasting. And this hatred will be in proportion to his love of them. (*s. Dom. mont.* I.15.41)

Augustine is not denigrating a man's love for his wife; following Luke 14.26 and Matthew 10.37 he is denigrating any and every relationship in any individual's life that might detract from his or her faith, hope and love being directed to God alone. Clearly the distinction being made here is what we observed in Chapter Two, that of loving things and other persons in and of themselves versus loving them *propter Deum*. The brotherhood of all believers in baptism, regardless of bodily gender or kinship, supersedes all earthly ties and attachments and reorients the Christian's attention and affections from creation to its Creator. This comes out clearly in a sermon:

> To those set alight by this love, or rather that they may be set alight, this is what he says: 'Whoever loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me' (Mt 10:37-38). He didn't abolish love of parents, wife, children, but put them in their right order. He didn't say "Whoever loves," but 'Whoever loves above me.' That's what the church is saying in the Song of Songs: 'He put charity in order for me' (Sg 2:4). Love your father, but not above your Lord; love the one who begot you, but not above the one who created you… Love your mother, but not above the church, who bore you to eternal life… Love your wife, love your children after God, in such a way that you take care they too worship God with you; when you're joined to him, you will fear no separation. (*s.* 344.2)

It is in this vein that we find in yet another sermon the same exact sentiment we saw above in *On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, this time positively rather than negatively expressed: "Love your wives, but love them chastely" (*s.* 51.25).

Though Augustine rarely says as much explicitly, he really does mean for this focus on ordered love to apply mutually to both men and women as individuals:

> What else can he say to you? He can only repeat what you have just heard. 'Hold out for the Lord, act manfully' (Ps 27(26).14). It implies that whoever has lost the power of endurance has become effeminate and lost strength. Men and women alike must listen to this, because in the one Man are comprised both male and female. When someone is in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal 3.28). (*en. Ps.* 26.23)

And: "Remember that whichever sex you belong to, whether male or female (*sive mares, sive feminae*), you are leading the life of angels on earth" (*s.* 132.3). He refers, of course, not only to the fact that the angels in heaven 'neither marry nor are given in marriage' (Mt 22.30; Mk 12.25), but also to the angelic practice of referring all things in laudatory reference to the Father, the *raison d'être* of all spiritual and bodily continence. Likewise, as the foundation of all creation's well-being when appropriately understood, rightly-ordered love provides the rationale for the friendship found at the center of the ideal Christian household.

In Chapter One we noted that the theme of friendship permeates and conditions the entire thrust of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*.[7] Proclaiming marriage to be the beginning of all human society, the lateral connection shared by Adam and Eve by virtue of her creation from his side implies their posture towards one another their whole lives, a shared life spent walking together side-by-side down the road (*b. conjug.* 1.1). Not yet having engaged in sexual intercourse, they nevertheless enjoyed as a married couple "a certain relationship of friendship and sibling kinship (*amicalis quaedam et germana conjunctio*) where one rules and the other obeys" (*b. conjug.* 1.1), a friendship built around the hierarchical order implied by the diversity of their gender (*b. conjug.* 3.3). We also noted in Chapter One that this friendship between the spouses usually finds its apex when, in their maturity, they reach the point where sexual desire decreases enough to cease being a distraction from a more spiritual union with one another in Christ. "Even though their bodies are feeble and death-like, the chastity of minds properly joined in marriage is so much more honorable for being more genuine, so much more secure for being more fully accepted" (*b. conjug.* 3.3). Clearly Augustine means for this standard to apply universally. The question is not *if* but *how soon* they will be able to abstain: "The better persons they are, the earlier they begin by mutual consent to abstain from carnal union" (*b. conjug.* 3.3). For Augustine true Christian marriage begins to emerge when a married couple's union begins to evolve from unanimity of the flesh to spiritual friendship in Christ.

Augustine's distinction between conjugal friendship and sexual intercourse lives on as his central tenet when he is forced to defend his articulation of marriage against Julian of Eclanum's accusation that he had condemned the institution (*c. Jul. imp.* Pr.1). The paradigm was obviously one which Julian did not appreciate. But Augustine remained consistent throughout his career. Quite simply, "we ought not to condemn marriage on account of the evil of sexual desire, nor ought we to praise sexual desire on account of the good of

[7] The centrality of friendship to *b. conjug.* has long been noticed by several. See van Bavel, "Augustine's View on Women", 47f; Gerald Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'", 272f; Carol Harrison, "Marriage and Monasticism"; and David Hunter, "Introduction", 16f.

marriage" (*nupt. et conc.* I.7.8). Indeed, marriage is good and pure but the would-be spiritual husband would do well to consider the purity which spiritual continence demands of all followers of Christ: "he should know that his own 'vessel' [i.e. his wife, 1 Thess 4.3-5] is not to be possessed in the disease of carnal desire" (*nupt. et conc.* I.8.9).

Likewise, against Julian Augustine expresses straightforwardly his notion that not only does mutually-agreed-upon continence not break the marriage bond, but it strengthens and confirms it; and hopefully, the Christian couple reaches this point sooner than later.

> Heaven forbid that in the case of those who have decided by mutual consent permanently to abstain from the use of carnal concupiscence the marital bond between them is broken. In fact, it will be stronger to the extent that they have entered more deeply into those agreements with each other, which have to be observed in greater love and harmony, not by pleasureful embraces of their bodies, but by willing affections of their hearts. (*nupt. et conc.* I.11.12)

Regardless of how common such relationships were,[8] clearly Augustine believed the marital friendship—again, best exemplified by a mutual commitment to continence—has its foundation in mutual recognition of their shared desire for Christ and recognition of their common sinful state. As Gerald Bonner explains, Augustine's application of the terms *societas* and *amicalis conjunctio* to the ideal marriage relationship in *On the Good of Marriage* expresses the same sort of relationship we see described in *Sermon* 51 as *caritas conjugalis* (*s.* 51.13.21). Following Jean Doignon's analysis of the term *caritas*, Bonner notes that Augustine primarily uses *caritas* to refer to the enjoyment of God, and the love of one's neighbor *propter Deum*.[9] Non-Christian couples may commit themselves to bodily chastity, but appealing to Romans 14.23 ('Everything that does not come from faith is sin') Augustine proclaims that their lack of faith in Christ by definition guarantees a carnal or impious source for their motivations.

> It makes no difference whether they are seeking to please human beings, either themselves or others, or they are avoiding human difficulties in the things they wrongly desire, or they are serving demons. Heaven forbid, then, that persons should be called truly chaste who observe marital fidelity toward their spouses, but do not do this on account of the true God. (*nupt. et conc.* I.3.4)

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[8] Augustine describes chaste marriages as both exceedingly rare (*b. conjug.* 12.14) and numerous (*s.* 51.21), a variation perhaps dependent upon (unconsciously?) perceived rhetorical advantage. Their rarity strikes me as more likely at first blush.

[9] Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'", 273, who talks in greater detail about the implications for Augustine's use of the phrase "*solo piae caritatis adfectu*" to describe the manner of potential prelapserian procreation in *Gn. litt.* III.21.33. He follows Doignon's criticism of Zycha's critical edition, "Une définition oubliée de l'amour conjugal édénique chez Augustin: «*piae caritatis adfectus*» (*Gn. litt.* 3,21,33)." *VetChr* 19 (1982): 25-36.

Rather, the virtue of agreed bodily continence in marriage comes only as a gift from God.

> Blessed Paul shows that marital chastity is a gift of God when, in speaking on this topic, he says, 'I would like all to be like me, but each of us has one's own gift from God, one this gift, the other that' (1 Cor 7.7). You see, he said that marital chastity is a gift from God. Even if it is a lesser gift than the abstinence with which he wanted all to live as he himself lived, it is still a gift from God. From this we realize that, when we are commanded to do these things, we are only being shown that we must also have in ourselves our own will to receive and to hold onto these gifts. But when we are shown that they are gifts of God, we learn from whom we must ask for them, if we do not have them, and to whom we should give thanks, if we do have them. Moreover, we learn that our wills are of little value for asking for them, receiving them, and preserving them, unless our wills are helped by God. (*nupt. et conc.* I.3.3)

Ignoring the seemingly obvious question, "What about those to whom it is *not* given?", Augustine's take-away point is that genuine marital continence, the goal to which all Christian couples ought to aspire, is purely a matter of grace from beginning to end; and one only finds the genuine thing in those who have undertaken this difficult path together for the sake of loving God alone.

Finding negative examples of couples falling short in this ideal is easy, as we shall see, but positive expressions of this ideal are more rare. A prime example is a brief yet revealing portrait of prelapserian Adam and Eve found in *City of God*:

> The love of our first parents for God was perfectly serene and their mutual affection was that of a true and faithful married couple. And their love brought them immense joy since the object of their love [i.e. God] was always theirs to enjoy. There was a calm turning away from sin which, so long as it lasted, kept evil of every other kind from saddening their lives. (*civ.* 14.10)

Another positive example of marriage as a friendship founded on conjoint love of God, albeit in a negative context, expresses the practical outworking of this Divine orientation in married life in his letter to Ecdicia, on the married couples' shared work of almsgiving: "Both of you, then, should have made a plan together about every undertaking; both of you should have regulated together what you should store up in heaven and what you should leave for the needs of this life" (*ep.* 262.8). The mutuality of righteous work undertaken for the sake of benefit in the next life is unmistakable.

Christian *amicitia*

This mutuality is, of course, the foundation of all Christian unity and friendship (*societas* or *amicitia*) in Christ. Though she does not read Augustine as believing friendship

between men and women possible, Carolinne White's revealing study *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* teaches us much about how Augustine would have understood spiritual intimacy founded on a common love for God.[10] Augustine's use of Cicero's maxims on friendship has long-been noted; he was especially fond of Cicero's most religious definition of friendship in *To Laelius on Friendship* (*amicitia*) as "agreement about matters human and divine together with benevolence and affection (*benivolentia et caritate consensio*; *am.* 6.20),"[11] derived from the ancient Pythagorean conception that friendship was "an intimate and mutual relationship of affection between those of like minds, based on a natural and universal harmony."[12] Following the broader classical tradition, Augustine's notion of friendship was even more religious than Cicero's and shared much in common with Plato's, who "posits a being for the sake of which everything else is ultimately loved. This is the *proton philon* or 'thing to which we are in the first instance friends' which is to be loved for its own sake and for the sake of which we will love our friends."[13]

For Augustine true friendship has its source and fulfillment in, of course, the grace of the Holy Spirit, through whom "the love of God is poured forth in our hearts" (Rom 5.5; *conf.* IV.4.7); its surest foundation in the body of Christ (*div. qu.* 71.6-7);[14] and its proper end as the love of one's friend in God, for His sake alone (*ep.* 155).[15] In spite of common criticism of Augustine's treatment of the double-commandment and the relation of love of self and love of one's neighbor to the love of God, he is nonetheless clear that all created things (including other human beings, even dear friends) are to be used towards our mutual enjoyment of God.[16]

I say this in spite of Oliver O'Donovan's analysis. For him, Augustine's proposal that the neighbor be used for the sake of the love of God "was quite simply a mistake, with which Augustine cannot live."[17] Professor O'Donovan's criticism of Augustine's scheme finds its grounding in humanity's incorporation into the double-commandment: "the neighbor does not belong simply among the things of this world; he belongs at the 'end' and 'fulfillment' of the command, beyond the limits of the temporal dispensation." Presumably, the inclusion of humanity in the commandment makes humans an appropriate and proper

[10] Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge, 1992). I rely on her in much of what follows. See 13 for her doubts that Augustine believed friendship between men and women plausible.

[11] Augustine cites this definition in *c. Acad.* III.6.13 and *ep.* 258.

[12] White, *Christian Friendship*, 19.

[13] White, citing Plato's *Lysis* 219C-D; *Christian Friendship*, 23.

[14] See also *ep.* 208 and 142.1.

[15] See also *c. Faust.* 22.78; *conf.* IV.9.14; *s.* 16, 336.2.2; *ep.* 130.7.14, 155.4.15.

[16] The above litany is an adaptation of Carol Harrison's concise compilation, "Marriage and Monasticism," 95.

[17] Oliver O'Donovan, "*Usus* and *Fruitio*," 389-390.

object of human love along with God. Why O'Donovan seems to imply that Augustine believes time and the world, and all hierarchies of love, will cease to exist in the Eschaton is unclear. But Augustine *is* clear, both love of self and love of neighbor are a different sort of love than the love of God, regardless of however 'next world' we might then be.

> Since the divine substance is more excellent than ours and above us, the precept in accordance with which we are to love God is separate from that enjoining love for our neighbor. For he shows us mercy in accordance with his own goodness, while we show mercy for the sake of his goodness rather than for our own; that is, he has mercy on us that we may enjoy him, and we have mercy on our neighbor so that we may enjoy him. (*doc. Chr.* I.30.33)[18]

The answer most likely lies in O'Donovan's conflation of the ontological distinction implied in the scheme of use/enjoyment with a temporal distinction of 'things' of this world/next world.[19] In *On Christian Teaching* Augustine himself does not make a temporal distinction between the 'things' of these two 'worlds', now vs. the Eschaton, but his distinction is simply the classic ontological one between Creation and Creator, which will obviously endure throughout all ages, in any world. This may also explain why O'Donovan seems to lump together God and neighbor/self as 'things of the next world' which will be loved 'eternally', without regard for Augustine's ontological economy of love. The fact that both of these loves are found together in the double-commandment does not mean that 'and the second is like it' justifies erasing the Creation/Creator distinction. In other words, Augustine is not advocating the love of numerous good eschatological 'things', but of one eternal 'thing', properly if hesitantly so-called: the one true God. Indeed, Augustine himself would not have our attention stop at our neighbors or friends—not even the flesh of Christ—but be ever moving toward the Divine (*doc. Chr.* I.34.38).

Returning to Carolinne White on Christian friendship, she notes that Augustine is quite happy to keep on using the classical term *amicitia* to describe the properly-oriented and truly intimate Christian friendship,[20] such as he hoped to find throughout his life. White observes that in seeking to accommodate the double-commandment to friendship, relating love of neighbor (*amor proximi*) to friendship (*amicitia*), Augustine applies *amor proximi* to the love we owe all humanity out of our common kinship as descendants of Adam and Eve.[21] Yet Christian *amicitia* most properly finds itself in a kinship, so to speak, of the mind. "We

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[18] These few sentences sum up his entire discussion on use and enjoyment in relation to other humans in *doc. Chr.* I.30.33-35.39, and relate to his other statements on the nature of true friendship I cited above. For another example in a different context, see *ep.* 130.6.13-7.14.

[19] O'Donovan, "*Usus* and *Fruitio*," 384-385.

[20] White, *Christian Friendship*, 190f.

[21] *Ibid.*, 202; she cites *ep.* 155.4.14, *en. Ps.* 25[2].2 as prime examples, giving also *disc. Chr.* III.3, *cat. rud.* 26.50, *en. Ps.* 14.3, 118[8].2, *s.* 90.7, 359.9, *qu. Lev.* 73 and *s.* 299/D (Denis 16).

are all neighbors by the face of our earthly birth, but in quite another sense we are brothers [and sisters] by the hope of our heavenly inheritance… it is our 'neighbors' who lie hidden in these people who are not yet in the Church" (*en. Ps.* 25[2].2). Thus he speaks to his (female!) friend Proba of Christian *amicitia* existing in varying degrees of strength:

> Friendship (*amicitia*) should not be bounded by narrow limits, for it embraces all to whom we owe affection and love (*amor et dilectio*), though it is inclined more eagerly toward some and more hesitantly toward others. It, however, extends even to enemies, for whom we are also commanded to prayer. Thus there is no one in the human race to whom we do not owe love, even if not out of mutual love, at least on account of our sharing in a common nature. But these persons by whom we are loved in return by a holy and chaste love (*sancte casteque diligimur*) are a great source of delight, and rightly so. (*ep.* 130.6.13)

Thus Augustine can use *amicus* as synonymous with *frater*,[22] with *amicitia* finding its fullest realization among Christian *fratres* living together in intimate community.

Others have noticed the connections between Augustine's various comments on friendship and fellowship at the heart of his various monastic endeavors, especially as found in his *Rule*,[23] and at least a couple have rightly observed the same principles operative in Christian marriage as well.[24] The household of Augustine's Christian monastery shares many of the characteristics we have observed as desirable for the Christian family centered around husband and wife. "The chief motivation for your sharing life together is to live harmoniously in the house and to have one heart and one soul seeking God (Acts 4.32)" (*reg.* 1.2); "Live then, all of you, in harmony and concord; honor God mutually in each other; you have become his temples" (*reg.* 1.8). Augustine continually refers to the ideal of Acts 4 in his injunctions that all property be common to the whole monastery (*reg.* 1.3-8, 5.3), in an all-out assault on the privatizing effects of sin we noted in previous chapters, and the obvious application of dwelling together in *anima una et cor unum in deum* (*reg.* 1.2). The same applies to the *amicalis conjunctio* at the heart of Christian marriage, as we see in the exemplary marriage of Joseph and Mary and in Augustine's advice to his married and newly-continent friends Armentarius and Paulina. We turn now to these examples.

Continent Marriage as Holy Friendship

For Augustine, the miraculous preservation of Mary's virginity (pre- and post-partum) began a new economy of sexual intercourse and reproduction for married

[22] White, *Christian Friendship*, 207; citing *en. Ps.* 122.5.

[23] Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la règle de S. Augustin* (Begrolles-en-Mauges, 1980), 211f; White, *Christian Friendship*, 214.

[24] Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'", 272-273; Harrison, "Marriage and Monasticism", 98-99.

Christians. Recalling our analysis of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*, we noted that the third key to reading the text is recognizing his distinction between continence as habit and as work (*b. conjug.* 21.26), where he contrasted the different works of the Hebrew patriarchs' bodily reproduction then with the Christian calling to bodily continence now, and yet noting that continence as mental habit has always been required of all, at any time. Augustine commonly notes how the patriarchs reproduced out of obedience, so that the population might increase "and in that population the church of the future could be prefigured" (*s.* 51.26). But in *Sermon* 51 we get a fuller explanation of why this is so. With the birth of Christ, the economy of marriage is forever changed.

> When the king of all the nations was born, the special honor of virginity started with the mother of our Lord, who was not only found worthy to have a son, but also found worthy not to lose her virginity. Such then was the style of that marriage, a marriage without any carnal corruption; so why should not the husband in this marriage chastely receive as his own what his wife chastely gave birth to? (*s.* 51.26)

So in this same discussion Augustine quotes Ecclesiastes 3.5 ('There is a time for embracing and a time from holding back from embracing') as indicating the passing of one sexual economy into another. "The former, of course, was the time for embracing; the present the time for holding back from embracing… It is clear that there now exists from all the nations an abundance of children to be spiritually reborn, wherever they were born in the flesh" (*nupt. et conc.* I.12.13). Augustine has decisively spiritualized the marital good of *proles*, whose most proper Christian meaning has switched from bodily to spiritual reproduction.

As the vanguard of this new economy, Joseph and Mary stand as preeminent exemplars of this new ideal for marriage built around mutual affection for Christ rather than in carnal intercourse. Augustine is eager to establish, against Pelagian criticism, that Joseph really was Mary's husband, even though the marriage was never sexually consummated. "After all, the angel did not speak to Joseph words that were false, when he said, 'Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife' (Mt 1.20). She is called 'wife' because of the first pledge of their engagement, though Joseph had not known and would not know her through intercourse" (*nupt. et conc.* I.11.12). Augustine believes that affection, rather than bodily relation, is the true determining factor of human families and meaningful kinship, comprising the essence of the bond of both marriage and parenthood.

Joseph's adoption of Christ gives Augustine another example of affection as the determining factor of genuine human relationships. Anyone who says Joseph

> 'oughtn't be called a father, because he didn't beget his son,' is more interested in satisfying lust in the procreation of children than in repressing

> the sentiment of love. Joseph achieved much more satisfactorily in spirit what another man desires to achieve in the flesh. After all, people who adopt children beget them chastely in the heart, though they cannot do so in the flesh. (*s.* 51.26)

Augustine closes his argument by pointing us to the practice of legitimate children being favored over those born out of wedlock, a favor exclusively due to the man's delight in his wife's fidelity, her respect for their marriage bond, and her chaste love for her husband, as one would expect (*s.* 51.26).

Augustine even goes so far as to proclaim that the (current and future) chastity of Joseph and Mary was a necessary condition of their being chosen as Christ's parents. Discussing yet again the *forma* rule of Christ's divinity and flesh, he explains "since she gave birth without seed from her husband, the two of them would not have been the parents even of the form of the servant, unless they were husband and wife to each other, even without the union of the flesh" (*nupt. et conc.* I.11.12). Thus their mutual chastity in marriage is tied up with the conception of Christ. "Just as she was chastely a wife, so was he chastely a husband; and just as she was chastely a mother, so was he chastely a father" (*s.* 51.26). "So we can't say that Joseph wasn't a father, just because he never slept with the mother of the Lord—as though it were lust that made someone into a wife, and not married love!" (*s.* 51.21). His opinion on the intentional nature of marriage sounds a strongly eschatological note through his use of 1 Corinthians 7.29 ('those who have wives should be as though they had none'), and he seems to believe that carnal desire, as something that clouds and perhaps even chokes out chaste affection, is antithetical to true marital *caritas* built around true love for Christ. "The more the former [concupiscence] is held in check, the stronger grows the latter" (*s.* 51.21). Joseph and Mary stand as preeminent examples of this perfect charity.

> Every good of marriage, then, was realized in those parents of Christ: offspring, fidelity, sacrament. We recognize the offspring in the Lord Jesus, fidelity because there was no adultery, and the sacrament because there was no divorce. Only marital intercourse was not present in that marriage, because it could not occur in sinful flesh without that concupiscence of the flesh which results from sin… Why then should those people not remain husband and wife who by mutual consent cease to have intercourse, if Joseph and Mary remained husband and wife, though they did not begin to have intercourse? (*nupt. et conc.* I.11.13-12.13)

And far from inconsequential, the question of Joseph really being Mary's husband carries with it vitally important ethical implications:

> Otherwise he might for that very reason seem to have been separated from the woman to whom he was united by the love of his heart. And otherwise believers in Christ might think that carnal union with their wives was

> something so important in marriage that they would not believe that they were married without it, whereas instead they should learn that married believers cling to the members of Christ more closely the more closely they imitate the parents of Christ. (*c. Faust.* XXIII.8)

Having made his either/or distinction (sounding more like Jerome than Jovinian in the process), Augustine then claims to know several married couples who live in this manner and socially play out the roles mandated by Scripture. Not demanding from one another the debt of desire (1 Cor 7.1-9), "yet she [Mary] is subject to her husband, as is only proper. And the more truly so, the more chaste she is; and he genuinely loves his wife, as it is written, 'in honor and sanctification' (1 Thess. 4.4), as a fellow heir of grace, 'just as Christ', it says, 'loves the Church' (Eph 5.25)" (*s.* 51.21). After this straining of his theological and exegetical commitments, he shifts to much stronger rhetorical territory and underlines his driving distinction between *societas* and sex by proclaiming that just as nonbelievers who copulate can hardly be said to have contracted a marriage, neither have those who refrain from sexual consummation denied their marriage:

> So if the bond exists, if there is a marriage, if you can't say there isn't a marriage just because that act is not performed which can also be performed, but unlawfully, outside marriage… then these people should not unjoin couples who can so live, and not deny that he is a husband or she is a wife, just because they don't come together in the flesh, but are tied together in their hearts. (*s.* 51.21)

So it is that Joseph really can be called Mary's husband in the proper sense, even (especially!) without bodily consummation. As was the case with Ambrose, the perpetual virginity of Mary became a lynchpin for Augustine in his support of the growing Western effort to make celibacy mainstream; indeed, while the sincerity of Augustine's belief in Mary's perpetual virginity ought not be doubted, he clearly shows an indebtedness to Ambrose in that the two of them were virtually alone at that time in upholding it as a matter of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, expanding his vision of the ideal marriage by stressing the chaste quality of Joseph and Mary's marriage allowed Augustine to combine the 'moderate encratism' of his predecessors and friends with his defense of marriage in a balance that most found greatly satisfying.

Looking more closely at Joseph and Mary as individuals, we see that Joseph's justice is found in both the way in which he planned to put Mary away quietly at first, and then the way he gladly took her as his wife in faith when hearing and believing the angel's testimony to the true nature of her pregnancy. Right to assume that his wife had been unfaithful and

thus rightly angered as a husband, Joseph nevertheless was righteous because he refused to show anger.

> He wished, it says, 'to break off the engagement quietly' (Mt 1:18-19)… Observe how genuine his sense of justice was. The reason he wished to spare her was not that he was eager to have her. After all, many men spare their adulterous wives out of carnal love, wanting to keep them in spite of their adultery, in order to enjoy them in carnal desire. But this just man does not want to keep her, and thus his love for her is not carnal; and yet he doesn't want to punish her either, and thus he is sparing her out of compassion. What a just man indeed he is! …Rightly indeed was he chosen to bear witness to his wife's virginity. (*s.* 51.9)

Joseph distinguishes himself as the exemplary Christian husband through his lack of carnal desire and compassion for his wife, looking out for her good just as the mind looks out for the good of the body (*cont.* 9.23).

We gain even further insight into Augustine's thoughts on the nature of Christian male headship in marriage as exhibited by Joseph when we look at a revealing passage on the exercise of authority in *On the Catholic and the Manichean Ways of Life*. In this broad discussion we see the submission of the woman and the headship of the man as one of several examples of ordered human life, which is consonant with the established order of Providence we noted in Chapters Two and Three. Along with children subjected to their parents in free servitude and parents over them in loving lordship, and slaves clinging to their masters in a delight of duty and masters gentle and caring rather than coercive, Augustine puts the traditional hierarchy of women and men within a broad universal context of order and mutual brotherly affection that ideally unites not just citizens with one another, but even entire nations and all humanity are brought together when mindful of their common ancestry from Adam and Eve as the parents of all. Praising the Church, Augustine exclaims that she carefully teaches us

> to whom we owe honor, to whom we owe love, to whom we owe reverence, to whom we owe fear, whom we should console, whom we should admonish, whom we should exhort, discipline, rebuke, and punish, for you show how we do not owe all things to all persons but owe love to all and injury to none" (*mor.* I.30.63).

In this universal context of ordered love Augustine describes male headship and wifely submission as follows:

> You [the church] make women subject in chaste and faithful obedience (*casta et fideli obedientia subjicis*) to their husbands not for the satisfaction of lust but for the procreation of children and for the establishment of family life. You set husbands over their wives by the laws of sincere love (*sinceri amoris legibus*), not in order to mock the weaker sex" (*mor.* I.30.63).

We find another example in *City of God* in a discussion on the application of the Double Commandment:

> St Paul says: 'But if any does not take care of his own, and especially of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5.8).' From this care arises that peace of the home which lies in the harmonious interplay of authority and obedience among those who live there. For, those who have the care of the others give orders—a man to his wife, parents to their children, masters to their servants. And those who are cared for must obey—wives their husband, children their parents, servants their masters. In the home of a religious man, however, of a man living by faith and as yet a wayfarer from the heavenly City, those who command serve those whom they appear to rule—because, of course, they do not command out of lust to domineer, but out of a sense of duty—not out of princely pride but out of caring provision. (*civ.* 19.14)

This gentle and benevolent headship is clearly not unique to the marriage relationship, but like other just spiritual authorities it reflects and participates in the divinely-ordained natural and volitional structure of all creation, built upon the eternal pattern of Christ united with his church.

Mary's virtue as a wife, beyond the obvious quality of chastity and her faith in God—"superior to [Joseph] because of the child, but like him in faith" (*nupt. et conc.* I.11.12)—was perfected in her deference for her husband, following her son's humility, in that "she took no notice of the dignity of her womb, but she paid attention to the right order of marriage" (*s.* 51.18). On several occasions Augustine turns to Luke 2.48-49, the narrative of Joseph and Mary discovering their missing son Jesus in the temple, where the boy was instructing the elders. Besides noting that Christ remained obedient to his parents, Augustine also closely examines the chosen word-order of Mary's rebuke as evidence of her wifely submission: 'Your father and I have been very worried looking for you!' "She didn't put herself before her husband even in the order she mentioned them in, and say 'I and your father,' but 'your father and I' is what she said" (*s.* 51.18).[25] Finding a firm foothold on this single piece of evidence enables Augustine to counter the Pelagian arguments by portraying Mary as the exemplary submissive wife.

Keeping in mind all that we have seen thus far about the structure of the universe and the divinely-ordained nature of authority, bringing all things under joyous subjection to Christ, it should be abundantly clear by now that Augustine is not interested in any woman's unwilling suppression, or in any man's arrogant exercise of authority. As we saw above in the radical shifts in values he was capable of making due to his faithfulness to Scripture,

[25] See also *s.* 51.30, *nupt. et conc.* I.11.12.

Augustine was more-than willing to turn cultural ideals on their heads when the faith demanded. But his carefully-established opinions on the harmonious structure of the ideal marriage reflect far more his literal interpretation of Scripture and a sophisticated Christian cosmology than they do a naïve application of unexamined, tacit cultural prejudices.[26]

Indeed, looking at other examples it becomes clear that Mary's submission to Joseph exhibits not cultural patriarchy but the scriptural and sacramentally-imaged union of the Church's submission to Christ her head, the image upon which Providence has structured all creation. Looking to *Sermon* 37, where Augustine preaches on Proverbs 31's 'A valiant woman, who can find?', not only he but his audience also immediately assumes the author has a more spiritual meaning in mind when mentioning a woman than the mere finding of a suitable marriage partner: "She must be the Church!" his congregation responds. Augustine agrees, and underlines this interpretive move when he affirms this has been his intent all along, "The woman I want to say something about is the church. After all, it wouldn't be proper, would it, for me to talk about any other woman" (*s.* 37.1). Asking his congregation to "Pay attention to whose members you are; observe carefully whose children you are" (*s.* 37.2), he begins by praising the church as a good Roman wife. "So let her be described, then, let her be praised, let her be commended, to be loved by all of us as our mother, because she is the wife of one man (*univira*)" (*s.* 37.2). Working through Proverbs 31 Augustine applies the virtues of Solomon's woman to the church as the wife of Christ: her husband has perfect confidence in her affection, she brings him riches, she works for her husband's good rather than harm, she works skillfully with her hands, cares for all in her husband's household, etc.[27]

He even goes so far as so describe her in the legal terms of the Roman nuptial contract (*tabulae matrimoniales*), as gladly being her husband's *ancilla*. Having paid a steep price for her dowry (his very life!), Christ was unashamed to take the Church as his bride. "And any good wife calls her husband her lord and master; in fact she doesn't only call him so, she really thinks so, she means it, she accepts it in her heart, she professes it with her lips, she regards her nuptial contract as the deed of her purchase" (*s.* 37.7). Rather than using the example of the union of Christ and the church to set forth a vision of the union of husband and wife, Augustine means here the exact opposite. Taking the Roman ideal, completely unremarkable in his own day, and coloring it in with the praises of Solomon, Augustine

[26] This is almost a universal conclusion; in addition to feminists such as Børresen see Bonner, "Women and 'Amicitia'," 270f; McGowan, "Augustine's Spiritual Equality," esp. 255 and 264; Matter, "Christ, God and Woman," 174. Notable exceptions include Schmitt, *Le mariage chrétien*, 289; and Meconi, "Gender and the Imago Dei in trin. XII," esp. 60f.

[27] Pr 31.11-15; *s.* 37.4-7. The comparison continues, taking up most of the sermon.

baptizes it and portrays it in its best light as analogous to the union of *totus Christus*. The readiness of his congregation to accept that this passage referred most properly to the church suggests that his spiritualizing practice of interpretation, hearing 'woman' and instantly thinking of the church, was both plausible and effective. This conversion of Roman marriage into a Christian sacrament has taken something common and, submitting the image to Scripture, is using it to raise his congregation's attention from earthly to spiritual things.

Resorting yet again to the rhetorical incorporation of his congregation into the Church, Augustine exhorts them to participate with the body of Christ as her members when Proverbs declares, 'She has opened her mouth with care' (Prov 31.26). "May the Lord grant us who are firmly established in her, and are praising her, cleaving to her, with her and in her waiting for her husband, may he grant that we too shall open our mouths with care" (*s.* 37.23). Augustine then gives the second half of the verse to explain that this means joining the Church in confessing the universal ordering of creation, in submissive laudatory reference of all things to God:

> 'She has opened her mouth with care, and imposed order on her tongue' (Prv 31.26), praising creatures as creatures, the creator as creator, angels as angels... earthly things as earthly [etc]… Nothing mixed up, nothing out of order. Not taking the name of the Lord her God in vain, not attributing the nature of a creature to the creator, speaking about everything so methodically that she doesn't put lesser things above the more important, nor subordinate the more important to the lesser…
>
> There is nothing more lovely than this order. That is why she herself says, 'Set love in order toward me' (Sg 2.4). Don't get things back to front, the cart before the horse, don't muddle up and confuse what God has arranged in order… Love me as me, love God as God, and don't offend God on my account and don't offend me on account of anyone else except me. (*s.* 37.23)

For Augustine the call to observe the sacrament of marriage was a call to an ordered life in harmony with the established order of Providence, after the pattern of Christ and the church. And the sacrament of marriage is most clearly observed and thus perfectly modeled in the chaste union of Joseph and Mary, two spiritually continent Christians whose life together exhibits the sacrament of marriage without getting tangled up in the distractions of bodily desire. This is seen especially in Mary's perfect submission to her husband and in her chastity. Given this model, we see that continent marriage was the appropriate way for married individuals to reflect and thus participate in—along with the whole universe— the union of Christ and the church. And perhaps even more significantly, Mary's chastity is the model for all Christians of the human soul clinging "to the Word of God so that they may be two in one flesh, and the apostle commends this great sacrament in Christ and the Church"

(*c. Faust.* 22.38), the individual's nuptial union with Christ which we noted in Chapter Four as the peak of the individual's rightly-ordered interior.[28]

Should there be any doubt on this point, an important paragraph from *On Marriage and Concupiscence* confirms that a mutually-shared yet still individually-ordered love lies at the heart of Augustine's ideal of companionate, continent marriage. Quoting 1 Corinthians 7.29-32 (especially 'those who use this world should be like those who do not use it. For the shape of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from worry'), Augustine's primary concern for the members of his flock in all things, even in relation to their marriages, is typical: "I want you to have your heart lifted up (*sursum cor*) to those things which do not pass away" (*nupt. et conc.* I.13.15). 'Being free from worry' is essential to this Eucharistic orientation of the whole Christian life. 'Weeping' because of the evils of this life and yet 'rejoicing' in Christian hope (1 Cor 7.29), '"those who use this world' (1 Cor 7.30) should bear in mind that they are transient, not permanent residents of it" (*nupt. et conc.* I.13.15).

Augustine reads further in Paul and, like the apostle, subjects marriage to this same scheme of use and enjoyment along with everything else in creation and human society.

> Then he goes on to say, 'He who is without a wife bears in mind the things of the Lord in order to please the Lord, but he who is joined in marriage bears in mind the things of the world in order to please his wife' (1 Cor 7.32-33). In this way he in a sense explains what he said above: 'those who have wives should be like those who do not have wives' (1 Cor 7.29). For those who have their wives in such a way that they bear in mind the things of the Lord in order to please the Lord and who do not bear in mind the things of the world in order to please their wives are like those who do not have wives. (*nupt. et conc.* I.13.15)

Far from abolishing marriage, which a straightforward reading might suggest, Augustine gets to have it both ways when he accommodates Paul's words to his ideal for continent marriage. He believes that, though difficult it may be to accomplish a balance, the two can be held together, even if they coexist somewhat in tension.

> This happens more easily when the wives are also the sort of women who love their husbands, not because they are rich, not because they are in lofty positions, not because they are noble by birth, not because they are physically attractive, but because they are believers, because they are pious, because they are chaste, because they are good men. (*nupt. et conc.* I.13.15)

Paul's androcentric language is determinative for Augustine in these comments, but for Augustine the genders can be reversed; indeed, as we shall see, he in fact seems to believe more often than not that men are the ones keeping their wives from a hassle-free pursuit of

[28] See also *en. Ps.* 35.5 and *ep.* 127.2.

'things above'. The ideal remains a "chaste woman, chaste man" (*s.* 51.26), transient individuals accompanying one another in their sojourn on the journey home.

The spiritual and eschatological nature of Augustine's vision for continent marriage accounts for all his advice to the married couple Armentarius and Paulina, who had recently vowed mutual continence to God. Indeed, Augustine had entertained giving them a broader theological treatise involving, for instance, a discussion on Christian couples who still maintain sexual relations towards procreation; but since Armentarius and Paulina had already made their (now-unbreakable!) vows, he decided to share with them all that they would need to succeed in the life into which they had irreversibly committed themselves. The essential points of his letter are therefore simple: 1) the necessity of keeping one's vows (*ep.* 127.1, 8),[29] 2) becoming a lover of eternal life (*ep.* 127.2-7) and 3) holding the world in contempt (*ep.* 127.6). The second theme, which dominates this short letter, supports our earlier comments about Augustine's rare but important descriptions of the union of the Christian soul and Christ as *duo in carne una*. And it is vital to note, the injunction "Let eternal life, then, have you among her lovers" (*ep.* 127.2) applies to both husband and wife as individuals; but it is only this individualism that provides a foundation strong enough to support a truly spiritual marriage of two hearts and minds united in true devotion to God. The individual's integrity in devotion is the foundation for true friendship, marital or otherwise.

Returning to Augustine's distinction between continence as bodily habit versus continence as spiritual work, obviously applicable to Christians of any gender or marital status, we are suddenly confronted with the striking and very important realization that in continent marriage husband and wife *are* in fact co-laborers, co-workers, each of whom struggles to keep at bay the weeds of rebellion which threaten to crowd out the wheat of righteousness. Both share a common labor; if not in the same field, certainly on neighboring farms. Again: "Remember that whichever sex you belong to, whether male or female, you are leading the life of angels on earth" (*s.* 132.3). Discussing the injustice of having different expectations for men and women in infidelity, a topic to which we shall return, Augustine expresses the shared condition and shared labor of the married couple in reference to their shared hope. Instead of men condemning Christ because he refused to condemn the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8.1-11), because they would refuse to forgive their own wife if found unfaithful,

> Let them recognize their own peril too, and struggling with the same infection let them have recourse with humble devotion to the same savior. When they read what was done for her, let them acknowledge that they need

[29] Quoting Ps 76.12 and Eccl 5.4-6.

> that too; let them take the medicine to cure their adulteries; let them commit adultery no more; let them praise God for his patience with them; let them do penance; let them adopt a forgiving attitude; and let them change their opinion about the punishment due to women and their own immunity from it.
>
> After discussing and considering these points, if in faith and humility thought is given to the condition they share, the peril they share, the injury they share, the salvation they share, reconciliation between husbands and wives, even after adultery has been committed and expiated, will not be degrading or difficult. (*adult. conj.* II.8.7-9.8)

While written for a different situation—the restoration of a marriage after infidelity rather than the perfection of marriage in mutual continence—this appeal to the couple's shared fallen condition and common Christian hope obviously finds its basis in Christian friendship as the essence of their nuptial bond, in this case its restoration.

For those who decide not to commit to continence but to continue bearing and raising children in the acceptable, sober way, Augustine advises them to constantly bear in mind the nature of spiritual parenthood as superseding bodily. Just as Joseph's and Mary's chastity proved the authenticity of their claim to be Christ's parents, so too Christian couples ought to have the spiritual regeneration of their bodily children as a priority of the highest degree. As we have already noted, Augustine advised very early in his episcopal career that we understand Genesis 1.28 ('increase and multiply') in a spiritual sense to refer to the birth of virtues, and only after the Fall were we to take it as referring to children as well (*Gn. adv. Man.* I.19.30). He never left this spiritualizing ideal behind, though it took on a different character after his later admission that Genesis 1.28 did, in fact, mean bodily intercourse and reproduction would have occurred had Adam and Eve not sinned (*Gn. litt.* IX.3.6). Just as in *On the Good of Marriage* where he still recommends not having children after the flesh (*b. conjug.* 24.32) and alludes to the good of *proles* being fulfilled not bodily but spiritually through leading others to conversion (*b. conjug.* 16.18-17.19), near the end of his life he brings together the good of bodily *proles* with the spiritual ideal of bringing more citizens into the City of God in the shared effort of Christian childrearing.[30] He combines the principles by specifying the importance of intention for determining the quality of use.

> It belongs to the nature of marriage that male and female are joined in a society for begetting children and that they avoid being unfaithful to each other, as every society naturally abhors an unfaithful member. When those without the faith have this obvious good [i.e. *fides*], they turn it into an evil and a sin, because they use it without faith. Similarly then, the marriage of believers turns even that desire of the flesh, by which 'the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit' (Gal 5.17), into the practice of righteousness. For they

[30] Without, of course, giving up continence as the *summa* of marriage, *nupt. et conc.* I.13.15.

> have the intention of bringing to birth children to be born again so that those who are born of them as children of the world may be reborn as children of God. (*nupt. et conc.* I.4.5)

Through this harnessing of rebellious concupiscence, mindfulness of parenthood bringing a certain gravity to the sexual encounter (*b. conjug.* 3.3), the couple brings Christ into their marriage bed in their spiritual hope of producing children for him. Couples who fail to embrace this ideal in their intimacy "do not have true marital chastity" (*nupt. et conc.* I.4.5), that is, bodily *proles* oriented to God. Even if the child fails to believe, the couple nevertheless "will have the peace of their good will (*pax… bonae voluntatis*)". Those whose children do receive baptism have not only their chastity but "the reward of a complete happiness" as well (*nupt. et conc.* I.8.9). It is, in fact, only in the intention to produce bodily potential candidates for baptism that the 'work' of intercourse has any legitimate role to play in marriage at all, now that Joseph and Mary's radical sexual revolution has revealed the true sacramental nature of the Hebrew patriarchs' bodily fecundity (*nupt. et conc.* I.12.13, 16.18-17.19).

A LONELY AFFAIR: CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN THE FALLEN WORLD

For all his high talk about the glories and benefits continence can bring to a marriage, Augustine is fully aware that the enterprise has a darker side. Much as 'spirit lusts against flesh' and vice versa, bringing about disharmony and even open warfare within the human individual, so too the conversion of only one spouse, or a one-sided desire for continence, can bring conflict into the home and cause real difficulties for both Christian and unbelieving spouses alike. These tensions reveal that, in spite of his continued orientation towards human relationship, Augustine ultimately believes that the Christian sojourn through this life is at its heart very lonely outside of the companionship provided by Christ. Consoling his friend Italica, a grieving widow fearful of being alone in this life, Augustine explains that she has never had a better friend than the one who was with her all along, and is with her even now: "You ought not to think that you have been abandoned, since in your interior self you have Christ present in your heart through faith" (*ep.* 92.1).

Due to the hiddenness of the human heart, one can never be sure of the sincerity of even one's closest friends and family members, even in the best of circumstances. This single point undergirds Augustine's advice to both Italica and to another widow, Proba, on the quality of character one ought to have in order to pray effectively. The key word given to this rich widow, surrounded by luxury and loving family, is 'desolation'. Having

committed herself to a life of continence and prayer after the death of her husband, Proba wrote to Augustine seeking his advice on how to pray. He bases his response on 1 Timothy 5.5: 'But she who is truly a widow and desolate has placed her hope in the Lord and persists in prayers night and day'. This 'desolation' comes from the fact that, regardless of one's circumstances, "in this world and in this life no soul can be secure" (*ep.* 130.1.1), and thus entails a sober view of the difficulties of the human sojourn.

> What was it in widows that he chose for this sort of task but their abandonment and desolation? Hence, if every soul understands that it is abandoned and desolate in this world as long as it is on a journey away from the Lord, it, of course, commends to God as its protector its widowhood by constant and most fervent prayer. Pray, then, as a widow of Christ who does not yet enjoy the vision of him for whose help you pray, and though you are very wealthy, pray as a poor woman. For you do not yet have the true wealth of the world to come where you will fear no losses. Though you have children and grandchildren and a large family… pray as one who is desolate. For temporal goods are uncertain, even those that will remain for our consolation up to the end of this life. (*ep.* 130.14.30)

In the truest sense, all Christians are widows in this life, to the extent that they refuse to find their consolation and hope in merely earthly goods and relationships.

Fleeing the unsatisfactory consolations this world can provide, one is forced to be skeptical of the true intentions of even the best of friends.

> In no human affairs is anything dear to a human being without a friend. But where is such a friend found about whose heart and character one can in this life have a certain confidence? For no one is known to another as each is known to himself, and yet no one is known to himself so that he can be confident about his own manner of life tomorrow. Hence, though many are known from their fruits and some bring joy to their neighbor by their good lives, while others cause them sorrow by their bad lives, the apostle is, nonetheless, perfectly correct in warning us on account of our ignorance and uncertainty about human minds (1 Cor 2.11) that we should not judge anything before the time when the Lord comes and brings to light things now hidden in darkness and reveals the thoughts of the heart, and then each will have praise from God (1 Cor 4.5). (*ep.* 130.2.4)[31]

Proba's wealth in both relationships and estates hardly prevents her outright from passing through the eye of the needle (Mt 19.24, Mk 10.25, Lk 18.25), for 'with God all things are possible' (Mt 19.26, etc; *ep.* 130.1.2). But her salvation depends on her willingness to place her confidence elsewhere, as the love of God is the only thing of which we can be sure as we fly blind in the midst of life's ambiguities.

[31] The same advice is found in a letter to another widow, Italica, *ep.* 92.2; see also *ench.* 32.121.

Patience with a Less-than Ideal Spouse

It seems more often than not that Augustine's functional skepticism on the reliability of most people hit true to its mark, as many of his comments on the marriages of actual men and women involve Christians being forced to go it alone, so to speak, pressing on in the spiritual continence of the Christian life in spite of a spouse who fails to cooperate. The articulate cry of a hypothetical wife, complaining of her hypocritical husband, sums up the just complaints of a thousand Christian women married to dead-beat Christians: "'If you can't agree (*discordo*) with your own tongue, how can you live in concord (*concorditer*) with me?!?'" (*s.* 9.4). This complaint about a spouse's lack of interior order and lively faith points out just how necessary authentic faith in Christ was to the maintenance of true friendship in Christian marriage. The incongruity of such a situation is frustrating and defeating.

Here is where the personal faith of the suffering spouse comes into play: Augustine calls on him or her not only to bear with the weaker spouse, but to allow love to cover a multitude of wrongs. The best example of how the pious Christian ought to deal with a weaker husband is a negative one; thanks to the poor judgment of the perhaps insufferably pious wife Ecdicia we have clear advice from Augustine on how one ought to act when dealing with a spouse of weaker Christian desire. Essentially, Ecdicia jumps the gun twice with her unnamed husband, pressing ahead whether or not he was ready or willing to go with her. The first occasion was her pledging bodily continence without his agreement. Referring her to 1 Corinthians 7, he accuses her of actually *failing* to uphold marriage through her insubordination (*ep.* 262.1) and chastises her saying, "He should not have been deprived of the debt of your body that you owed him before his desire had also joined yours for that good which surpasses marital chastity" (*ep.* 262.2). Indeed, Augustine explains that this would hardly count against any married Christian, as God credits continence to those who yield to the desire of their spouse for the sake of marital concord and the prevention of adultery (*ep.* 262.2, *nupt. et conc.* I.17.19). Thus Augustine treats intercourse as a form of pastoral care for a weaker spouse, the mercy of the spiritually continent spouse's condescension overwhelming the sinfulness of the weaker partner's concupiscence (*nupt. et conc.* I.14.16, 16.18). Indeed, as he explains to Armentarius and Paulina, sexual condescension to one's spouse is the only valid reason not to fulfill one's vow to continence (*ep.* 127.9)! Ecdicia's failure in this regard was redeemed only by her husband's agreement to play along (*ep.* 262.3), undoubtedly with some resentment.

Her second fault occurred when, without asking her husband's permission, she gave virtually all their worldly assets to two wandering monks of potentially dubious character.

This second offense was too much for her nominally Christian husband to bear, and in his frustration and anger he committed adultery, breaking his oath and harming himself in the process. *So what* if he was a little slow to give alms, Augustine exclaims. "He could have learned to do this as well, if he had not been stung by your unexpected outlays but had been coaxed to do so by the docility expected of you" (*ep.* 262.5). Augustine's repeated charge, that she had scandalized her husband with her discordant actions and was thus in a sense partly responsible for his sin, epitomizes in a negative way the righteous behavior he expects from a truly pious spouse. "You need not repent over having given your property to the poor but over not having wanted to have him as a partner and guide in your good work" (*ep.* 262.11). Throughout Augustine tells Ecdicia what he had expected of her as the supposedly stronger spouse: prudent treatment of her spouse's heart, obedience for the sake of concord, patience in waiting for him to grow in virtue, a love of acting together in all things, and perhaps most damning of all, humility in all things.

In Augustine's mother Monica we find his foremost illustration of how a Christian spouse ought to act towards a weaker or unbelieving partner. Describing her as 'manly' in her widowhood in other contexts (*b. vita* 2.10, *ord.* I.11.31), in his *Confessions* Augustine famously highlights what he sees as the beauty of Monica's submission to her unbelieving and abusive husband when he was alive. Though she had married a man who was unfaithful, exceptionally hot-tempered, and constantly threatening physical abuse, she not only refused to criticize him in public but possessed the wherewithal to gently chide any of her friends who gossiped and complained about their own husbands. Apparently a favorite way for her to break the ice was to joke about how their marriage documents (*tabulae matrimoniales*) declared them to be slaves (*ancillae*), and consequently "they ought to keep their subservient status in mind and not defy their masters" (*conf.* IX.9.20)! As wildly unacceptable as this is by today's standards, Augustine's concluding analysis suggests the unthinkable: those wives who refused to follow Monica's advice only had themselves to blame if they "continued to be bullied and battered… faces badly disfigured by traces of blows" (*conf.* IX.9.19).

While these comments are clearly beyond the pale, leaving things there fails to do justice to both Augustine and Monica—we must ask *why* she was willing to subject herself to such injustices and abuse, and that without complaint. Her patience was not out of a love for her husband's body. "I don't want Christian wives to show that sort of patience; they must definitely be jealous of their husbands; not for their bodies' sake, but for their souls"' (*s.* 392.4). Augustine explains that her motives were clear (at least in her son's eyes!): "She made it her business to win him for You by preaching you to him through her way of life, for

by her conduct you made her beautiful in her husband's eyes, as a person to be respected, loved and admired" (*conf.* IX.9.19). She showed gentle patience with his infidelity; prudently avoided confrontation in his rage, explaining herself after his anger had cooled; and never spoke ill of him in public. "By persevering in devoted service, and by patience and gentleness" (*conf.* IX.9.20) she won over not only her husband to the faith toward the end of his life, but her longsuffering had even persuaded her contentious mother-in-law to become a Christian as well! Whether or not we think her unflagging persistence prudent is a discussion for another thesis. But Monica's suffering at the hands of those she loved (even from her beloved son), bearing up under harsh persecution for the well-being of her persecutors, bears a striking resemblance to the passion of Christ. Indeed, Augustine credits Christ the Interior Teacher for her virtue: "Such was she, because You, her intimate teacher, instructed her in the school of her heart" (*conf.* IX.9.21). Augustine closes the discussion of Monica as exemplary wife with words which very well could have been engraved as a eulogy on her tomb: "She had been married to one man only, had loyally repaid what she owed to her parents, had governed her household in the fear of God, and earned a reputation for good works. She had brought up children, in labor anew with them (Gal 4.19) each time she saw them straying away from You" (*conf.* IX.9.22).

In another context this same principle comes to the fore, the wife enduring suffering at the hands of her spouse for the sake of Christ. If her faithfulness is owed to her husband for his own sake, then surely when he fails she ought to give up and act out as well. "But if she owes to God, if she owes to Christ the faithfulness you [the husband] demand of her, and gives it to you because he commands it, then even if her husband fornicates she offers her chastity to God" (*s.* 9.11). Taking her spiritual independence from her husband a step further, Augustine suggests that every Christian wife has her true head, her unfailing lord, in Christ.

> For Christ speaks in the hearts of good women, he speaks inside where the husband doesn't hear him, because he doesn't deserve to if he is that sort of man. So he speaks inwardly and consoles his daughter with words like this: 'Are you distressed about your husband's wrongful behavior, what he has done to you? Grieve, but don't imitate him and behave badly yourself, but let him imitate you in behaving well. Insofar as he behaves badly, don't regard him as your head, but me.' After all, if he is the head even insofar as he behaves badly, the body is going to follow its head, and both go head over heels to their ruin. To avoid following her bad head, let her hold fast to the head of the Church, Christ. Owing her faithful chastity to him, deferring to him with honor, then husband present or husband absent she does not sin, because the one to whom she is under an obligation not to sin is never absent. (*s.* 9.11)

This radically individualist approach to marriage does not subvert marriage but brings true divine grace to the incongruous relationship and actually preserves it, and best enables the human relationship to display the *magnum sacramentum*. Returning to the example of the rich widow Proba we see the same principle of radical individualism dependent solely on Christ also provides the foundation for the godly community of Proba's own household. Just as a wife's faithfulness to Christ enables her to preserve her marriage with an unfaithful husband, Proba's example of spiritual desolation ironically creates holy community amongst the members of her earthly family: "by your example your most devout daughter-in-law and the other holy widows and virgins placed under your care will, of course, do so with greater security" (*ep.* 130.14.30).

Augustine's examples thus far involve women's reaction to their husbands' infidelity largely because of the sexual double-standards then in play, but the principle applies to both men and women. Augustine's discussion on the Christian spouse's proper attitude to adultery in *On Adulterous Marriages* provides one of the clearest examples of Christ-centered individualism keeping marriages intact.

> You think it is difficult for a husband or wife to be reconciled with the other partner after adultery, but it will not be difficult, if there is faith… is there anyone who does not understand that a husband should forgive what the Lord, the Lord of both of them, has forgiven [in the woman caught in adultery, Jn 8], and a woman one believes has repented and had her crime wiped away should no longer be called an adulteress? (*adult. conj.* II.6.5)

Rather than being bloodthirsty like the Pharisees who longed to stone the woman caught in adultery, "On the contrary, the reason why they ought to show mercy to the sinful women is to obtain mercy themselves for their own sins… So, if they do not delude themselves, and the truth is in them, they will not be harsh and thirsting for blood" (*adult. conj.* II.14.14). This sympathy for a spouse caught in sin finds its most dramatic expression in one of Augustine's definition of Christian marital *fides*:

> Fidelity is not the sort which even unbelievers have toward each other when they ardently love each other's flesh. After all, does any man, regardless of his unbelief, want an adulteress for a wife? Or does any woman, regardless of her unbelief, want an adulterer for a husband? This is a natural good in marriage, but a carnal one. A member of Christ, however, ought to fear the adultery of the spouse, not for oneself, but for one's spouse, and to hope for from Christ the reward of the fidelity that one shows to one's spouse. (*nupt. et conc.* I.17.19)

So it is that individual inner continence forms the bedrock of the Christian marriage, and the individual's inner subordination to Christ adds supernatural strength to the relationship, even

when a Christian is forced by circumstances to remain partnered with a non-Christian, often expressing itself in profound suffering for the sake of his or her well-being in Christ.

Falling Short in the Friendship

In addition to the compromising effects of the ambiguity and uncertainty of the goods of this life Augustine also takes account of the ubiquity of temptation and the toll moral failure exacts from Christian marriages. Indeed, though there are many valuable points of contact between his *Monastic Rule* and the friendship of marriage, its application to earthly nuptials is greatly complicated by the substantial portion of the rule which forbids the male monk even to glance at a woman (*reg.* 4.4-4.11)! Likewise, we must not forget that it was the fact that Augustine and most of his friends had already contracted or intended to contract marriages that broke apart their plans for a contemplative retirement together, as he relates it in *Confessions* IV.14.24. Even though this occurred before his conversion to Christianity, and was more likely a matter of practicality than sexual tension, it surely points to the obstacles married life presents to the spiritual life. But even within Christian married life Augustine knows how difficult continence can be, and is clearly concerned with the clouding effect sexual activity can have on the intellect even within marriage. In *Sermon* 278 he warns against exceeding due limits in the use of bodily things, especially one's wife, reminding his congregation that the *tabulae nuptiales* state that marriage was given 'for the sake of having children'. "So if you can manage it, you shouldn't touch your partner, except for the sake of having children. If you go beyond this limit, you will be acting against that contract and against the covenant. Isn't it obvious?" (*s.* 278.9). Just as Monica joked about the *tabulae nuptiales* with her friends to remind them of their marital obligation to submission, neither was Augustine above waving the marriage contracts in the face of men in order to curb their sensuality even within the bounds of Christian marriage. Fathers everywhere heaved a sigh of relief when they heard the contract read out, 'For the sake of having children', for it was this that assured them they "were fathers-in-law, not whoremongers… the father's brow clears, his face is saved when he hears the words of the contract… The husband too should be ashamed to take her on any other terms, if her father is ashamed to give her away on any other terms" (*s.* 51.22).[32]

We must believe Augustine would have been relatively happy if his biggest pastoral problem had been men enjoying their wives a little too frequently—in fact his flock appears to have been chronically unfaithful. He hardly believed infidelity was restricted to men, but

[32] See also *s.* 9.18.

the sexual double-standards of his day had created a hypocritical environment which considered casual extra-marital intercourse perfectly harmless for them, as we discussed in Chapter One, and caused Augustine the bishop considerable grief on behalf of the men in his congregation. His exasperation can still be felt in his sermons and letters. "If continence is a virtue, as it is, why is the weaker sex more ready for it, though virtue seems rather to have taken its name from 'man' (*vir*), as the likeness of their sounds indicate? As a man, then, do not shrink from a virtue that a woman is ready to practice" (*ep.* 127.9). And another example, addressing those men preparing for baptism:

> You are not allowed to fornicate. You must be satisfied with your wives; you are not allowed to have concubines. May God hear me, if you people are deaf; may his angels hear me, if you people just ignore me. You are not allowed to have concubines, just to send them away later so that you can marry wives. How much greater will your condemnation be, if you want to have both concubines and wives at the same time! (*s.* 392.2)

Elsewhere his frustration boils over: "If she does with one, why must you have two? You're not allowed to, not allowed to, not allowed to!" (*s.* 224.3). Perhaps Augustine's own great struggle with concupiscence gave him a heightened sense of urgency, and he longed to see the men of his congregation free from its grip. Whether this is the case or not, the infidelity of husbands put great strain on the marriage relationship, especially since Augustine had eliminated the double-standard by not only making men and women both accountable for their unfaithfulness, but also by giving women marital rights they had not previously enjoyed on a wide scale.

In *Sermon* 9 the individualistic nature of this problem becomes clear. Again taking up Psalm 144.1 to describe the interior work of spiritual continence, 'Who trains my hands for battle and my fingers for war', Augustine takes aim at the erroneous notions of manliness prevalent in contemporary society. Though public sins such as murder, theft and perjury are rightly objects of disgrace, a man who sexually exploits the female servants and slaves of his own household "is admired, he is given a friendly welcome, the injuries [to his chastity and his maids] are turned into jokes" (*s.* 9.12). In this environment of reveling in sexual exploits, Christian men were afraid to let their chastity be known for fear of public derision and the mocking of their perceived lack of manhood. But in reality, Augustine believed the joke was on them. Likening the contest for manliness to gladiatorial combat, Augustine paints a picture of the irony of their blind confidence. "The winners are celebrating and they are not 'men'; the losers lie flat on their faces, and they are 'men'! If you were a spectator in the amphitheater, would you be the sort of spectator who thought the man cowering before the wild animal was braver than the man who killed the wild animal?" (*s.* 9.12). Likewise, these

fools have turned a blind eye to the inner arena we noted in Chapter Four, the interior war against the unbidden motions of the soul, seeking the mind's capitulation to pleasure.

> Because you turn a blind eye to the interior battle and take pleasure in exterior battles, it means you don't want to belong to the new song, in which it says 'Who trains my hands for battle, and my fingers for war'. There is a war a man wages with himself, engaging evil desires, curbing avarice, crushing pride, stifling ambition, slaughtering lust. (*s.* 9.13).

Confirming the interior nature of continence and the exterior nature of righteousness, the latter depending on victory in the former, Augustine proclaims, "You fight these battles in secret, and you don't lose them in public! It's for this that your hands are trained for battle and your fingers for war" (*s.* 9.13).

It is in the case of men committing deeds they would not tolerate in their wives that Augustine uses some of his richest imagery to illustrate the profound inner capitulation evident in men's debauchery: he points out the perverse condition of their internal hierarchy by remarking on how strange it is that these 'men' are actually led by their wives in righteousness. Appealing to their 'manhood', he mocks their weakness by pointing out the unfavorable comparison between them and their much stronger wives.

> Which of you would ever put up with an adulterous wife? And you bid women put up with adulterous husbands? There's justice for you! Why, I ask you, why? "Because I, of course, am a man." You're a man, are you? Let's prove that you're a man, in the matter of courage and strength. So you are a man, eh? Conquer lust. How are you a man, when your wife is the stronger, the braver of the two? You, man, are the head of the woman, it's true. But only where the household is rightly ordered is the man the head of the woman. If he's the head, he should lead, the wife should follow. If you are the head, take the lead; let her follow her head. But notice where you're going; don't go where you don't want her to follow… You are sick at heart if you both fall into the pit of adultery together. Be equally sick at heart if you fall in alone. You're jealous, you don't want her to tumble into it; be afraid, don't tumble in yourself. (*s.* 392.5)

Even more explicitly we see in another example that the right ordering of each individual's inner head and body is determinative for the quality of the marriage:

> You are demanding self-discipline from the weaker sex; you both have the promptings of the flesh to deal with; let the one who is the stronger be the first to overcome them. And yet the sad fact is that many husbands are overcome in this matter by their wives. Wives preserve their chastity, while husbands are not prepared to do so; and in the very fact of not doing so they like to have the reputation of being real men; as though what makes it the stronger sex is that it is so much more easily conquered by the enemy! It's a struggle, it's a battle, there's fighting to be done. The man is stronger, braver than the woman; the man is the head of the woman. The woman fights and

> wins, and you just give in to the enemy? The body stands up to him, and does the head keel over? (*s.* 132.2.)

It ought to be plain by now that just as Augustine is no respecter of persons, neither does he think much of society's prejudices when it comes to the effect an individual's gender has on his or her quality of Christian life and degree of actual holiness when compared to a Christian of the other sex. Regardless of which part of the creation narrative is applied to the interaction between the sexes today, the end-result is the same. "If the wife beguiles her husband, she plays Eve to him; if the husband beguiles his wife, he plays the devil to her. Either she is Eve to you, or you are the snake to her" (*en. Ps.* 93.20). But this hardly means that Augustine was above rhetorical use of the prejudices of the day in order to achieve the desired result. "Bear in mind that I am saying these things as applying to both sexes, but especially for the sake of men, who consider themselves to be superior to women in not having to maintain the same standards of chastity. They should in fact have higher standards, so that women may follow their lead" (*adult. conj.* II.20.21). Clearly most Christian men lagged behind the women thanks to society's perverse notions of virtue, and Augustine seems to think that an appeal to their manly-pride and the very order of nature might in fact spur them on, or perhaps simply shame them,[33] just enough to match the exemplary righteousness of their much purer wives, and that perhaps even a few might begin to set an example for the women in turn.[34]

A final example ties together the various threads of this thesis, showing the interrelation between the three unions of Christ and church, spirit and flesh, and husband and wife, all resulting in the subjection of the individual believer to Christ as her head. Beginning with language along the lines of what we have just seen, "Be satisfied with your wives, because you want your wives to be satisfied with you;" "It's true, the bishop has put his signature to these matrimonial tablets, your wives are your servants;" and another appeal to the mutual conjugal debt of 1 Corinthians 7.4 ('the wife does not have authority over her body… likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body'), Augustine engages in the familiar word-play on *vir* and *virtus*:

> You're the man; show it… So have you any manliness, any virtue? Conquer lust. 'The head of the woman,' it says, 'is the man' (1 Cor 11.3)… You're the head; lead her where she should follow; and don't go where you wouldn't like

[33] An especially rich example is found in *s.* 9.12: "It's vile, my brothers, it's shameful for a man to say that what a woman can do can't be done."

[34] For much more on Augustine's use of female imagery to exhort his congregation to virtue see my colleague Elena Martin's excellent doctoral thesis, Sanctae Famulae Dei: *Towards a Reading of Augustine's Female Martyrs* (Durham University, 2009).

> her to follow. In order not to tumble over a precipice, take care you walk along the straight path. (*s.* 332.4)

So far such language is relatively unremarkable, given all that we have seen. The passage becomes one of his richest comments on Christian marriage, though, when he continues by describing this exercise of manhood as the means by which the husband becomes the bride of Christ. He begins with the very manly image of the husband going into the nuptial chamber of the church, "to that newly-wed bride, to that beautiful bride adorned for her husband, not with jewels but with virtues (Rev 21.2)" (*s.* 332.4). And yet as he begins to embrace her as his lover, this man finds himself in a different position than Augustine's listeners might have anticipated: "If you enter her, you see, as men who are chaste and holy and good, you too will be members of this same newly-wed bride, of the blessed and glorious heavenly Jerusalem" (*s.* 332.4). By becoming good husbands of their wives through their own devotion to Christ, men begin to embrace the church as well; and when they begin to approach the church in love they find that in fact they *are* her, and wait with her other members upon their couch in anticipation of their nuptial union with the heavenly bridegroom, Christ.

Here we see that the words of Solomon in Proverbs 31 on the virtuous wife apply to all the church's members, with Augustine conflating 'she' and 'you'. Once united with her husband in perfect and blessed submission, the woman's toil ends.

> And what occupation will she have from then on, her labors being ended? 'And her husband will be praised in the gates' (Pr 31.31). That will be the haven of our labors, to see God and praise God. They won't say there, "Get up, toil, clothe the servants, clothe yourself too, put on your best purple, give food to the maids, see the lamp doesn't go out, be painstaking, get up at night [etc]." There won't be any works of necessity, because there won't be any necessity. There won't be any works of mercy, because there won't be any misery… You won't break your bread to the poor… you won't take in the stranger… visit the sick… clothe the naked… bury the dead, because everyone will be living life without end.
>
> You won't, however, be doing nothing, just because you aren't doing any of this. For you will see the one you have desired, and you will praise him without flagging. That is the fruit you will receive. Then will come to pass that one thing you have asked for: 'One thing I have asked from the Lord, this will I seek: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life'—and what will you do there?—'to contemplate the delight of the Lord' (Ps 27.4). And her husband will be praised in the gates. 'Blessed are those who dwell in your house, they will praise you for ever and ever' (Ps 84.4). (*s.* 332.4)

AFTERWARD

Hopefully this thesis has made plain not only Augustine's connection between the sacrament of marriage and asceticism, but also the importance of marriage for his overall theological method and vision. Likewise, I hope this thesis has also demonstrated that Augustine's articulation and application of the interpretive rule of *totus Christus* is a case of serious theological consequence reaching far beyond the *Enarrations on the Psalms*. The twofold structure and operation of the universe and the twofold nature of the human being, ideally ordered by the proper submission of the 'female' to the 'male' and all things subject to Christ, is simply too expansive to ignore. And yet, in spite of the importance of the interpretive rule of *totus Christus* for his understanding of providence, the universe, and humanity, the material presented in this thesis has shown that none of this vision would be possible apart from the mediation of the *magnum sacramentum* of Ephesians 5.32 and Paul's reading of Genesis 2.24, indicating the Christian meaning of the union of husband and wife. If we would understand Augustine's defense of marriage in the debates at the beginning of the Fifth Century, I would argue that only a 'thick' understanding of marriage as it has been presented here can account for Augustine's vigorous advocacy of something he himself had vowed to do without. However tacit and intuitive this understanding may have been for him when composing *On the Good of Marriage*, his later development and application of the sacrament of marriage demonstrates this understanding was operative from relatively early on in his career.

As thorough as it has been, this thesis has left open several questions in the interests of space and immediate relevance to its overall argument. Hopefully, it has pointed out the need for further engagement with *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*. The text was once extremely popular, and deserves to become so again. Such an important source for Augustine's theology should not continue to suffer such neglect. Another area of interest, and a timely one at that, would be an exploration of the extent to which Augustine depended upon earlier interpretations, especially Philo and/or Origen, in his use of the categories 'male' and 'female' in his cosmology and anthropology. This thesis was first proposed as a comparative study of Augustine's theological anthropology with that of Gregory of Nyssa, but my discovery of the ubiquity and centrality of *totus Christus* as revealed in the *magnum sacramentum*—and current scholarly neglect of it—demanded the thesis as it now stands. Now I am even more eager to see such a comparison,

whether of Augustine with Gregory or with some other Greek Father, which incorporates my observations here.

This brings us to a word on the relevance of this thesis. Though I have been critical of feminist readings of Augustine throughout, I have nevertheless been pleasantly surprised at several points along the way how much of what I have seen in Augustine brings to mind the feminism of Sarah Coakley, which is heavily influenced by her readings of several church fathers on the meaning and importance of the 'female' and the image of submission it provides for all Christians in their relationship to God, regardless of bodily gender. In the current heated debates on gender and marriage, such probing thought into their meaning and significance for the Christian community will hopefully be well-served by this thesis. Whether this generation ultimately accepts or rejects Augustine's defense and articulation of marriage as a sacrament of Christ and the Church it at least deserves a hearing.

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