

## SAINT AUGUSTINE LECTURE University of Malta – 1994

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The Maltese Augustinian Province, in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology of the University of Malta and the Foundation for Theological Studies of the Archdiocese of Malta, has recently held the third annual Saint Augustine lecture at the University of Malta. The lecture was set up in 1994 with the aim of bringing to the fore the latest developments and studies on Saint Augustine of Hippo's (354–430) thought and vast literary production. Up to now, it has also been possible to invite young scholars from Europe who have only recently finished their doctoral dissertation, and have, as a result, been able to bring to the lecture some modern and original elucidations on the topics they dealt with.

In 1994, Prof. Robert Dodaro OSA,<sup>1</sup> was invited to deliver the inaugural Annual Saint Augustine Lecture the political anthropology of *The City of God*. The occasion of the writing of *The City of God* was the sack of Rome by Alaric and his Goths in 410AD. The ravages perpetrated during this sack impressed the imagination of the age profoundly. News of the fall of Rome, the Eternal city, had spread over the seas to Carthage; the fugitives from Rome had come flying in the wake of the news. Here was a great question for Christian apologetics. Were the barbaric invasions and the decline of the empire, which had just culminated in the resounding crash of the 'eternal city,' the result of abandoning the old civic gods and the old civic faith? If they were not, what was the meaning, and what "philosophy of history" could Christians produce to explain and justify the march of events? These were

1. An Augustinian Monk of Villanova Province United States of America. Prof. Dodaro graduated D.Phil at Oxford in 1992, with a thesis entitled *Language and Justice: Political Anthropology in Augustine's City of God*. Prof. R. Dodaro had worked his thesis under the supervision of a renowned patristic, scholar of the works of Saint Augustine, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth, Wales. Prof. Dodaro is also an STD graduate from the Augustinian Patristic University AUGUSTINIANUM in Rome with a doctoral dissertation on *Ethics and Rhetoric in Augustine*. He is now Vice-President of the Patristic Institute, AUGUSTINIANUM, in Rome.

some of the questions to which Augustine turned, and which formed the original inspiration behind the writing of *The City of God* between 413 and 416<sup>2</sup>.

In a real sense, the entire discussion of Augustine's *City of God* centres around the question of the meaning of justice. In this especially, it stands in continuity with Plato's *Republic* and Cicero's *De republica*. One gets a clear sense of the importance of this question already in *City of God* 2,21 where Augustine challenges Cicero's assertion in *rep.* that Rome ever was a *respublica*. Augustine's well-known retort that it could never have been one since it never possessed true justice (*vera iustitia*) opens an argument which he promises to return to at a later, appropriate point in the work. That point turns out to be sixteen books later at 19,21–27. There Augustine explains that Rome lacked true justice because justice classically means giving each his due (*suum cuique reddere*), and Rome failed to give to God the true worship that is due to Him. It therefore failed to practise justice and, failing this, it fails the test which Cicero himself established for the *res publica*.

This is all argued clearly enough, but the reader of the *City of God* may wonder, as has many a scholar, why Augustine had to wait until Book 19 to say what could have been said in Book 2. Why do we have to wait 16 books (Augustine's readers waited about seven years between Book 2 and Book 19) for Augustine to complete his syllogism?

The answer has much to do with the fact that the notion of 'justice' has to be understood in Augustine against the backdrop of his theological concerns in connection with the controversy which was just then (413 AD) opening up for him with Pelagius, Celestius, and other 'Pelagians'. Justice as an idea (*forma*) could not be known or possessed, that is acted upon either individually or socially, without the kind of revelation *to* and, for want of a better word, actualisation *within* the human being through the grace of Christ which overcomes *ignorantia* and *infirmis*, the twin consequences of original sin which endure even after baptism. In Books

2. It is also with great pleasure that the Maltese Augustinian Province announces that in the meantime it has published this renowned masterpiece of Saint Augustine in a two-volume Maltese translation by Valentin V. Barbara of New South Wales in Australia. Fr. Salvino Caruana OSA, Lecturer in Patristics at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Malta, and coordinator of the *Saint Augustine Lecture*, has attempted, in a 272-page introduction to Saint Augustine's *The City of God*, to supply Maltese readership with all the necessary information and background to approach this monumental and encyclopedic Augustinian work (*Il-Belt ta' Alla*, Provincija Agostinjana Maltija, Malta 1996 (volume I – cclxxii=590, vol. II – 871 pp.)).

2–19, Augustine explains how this grace is mediated to human beings so that they can really know what justice means and really act justly. Having concluded his explanation in Book 19, he can then expect his readers to understand just why the incarnation was necessary in order for any society of human beings to live justly. This is the essence of Augustine's response to Plato and Cicero.

Crucial to Augustine's lengthy and complex argument from Books 2,21 to 19,21–27, is a discussion of language which lies beneath the surface of much of the text. This is to say that Augustine never quite says in *City of God*, that the problem with conventional notions of justice is linguistic. But there are strong indications throughout that he does think so. In Book 4 at the opening of his criticism of Roman imperialism, Augustine pleads with his readers not to be taken in (*vanescere*) by conventional political language and code words. He then tells the famous tale of Alexander the Great and the captured pirate. In Book 5, panegyrists (*laudatores*) come in for criticism because they exaggerate (or lie about) the virtues and accomplishments (*res gestae*) of emperors and other leading imperial figures. In Books 6–8, Augustine chides the framers of Roman ideology (Cicero, Sallust and Varro) for inventing Roman religion based upon falsehood. In Book 14, Augustine confronts the primordial political lie, that of Satan to Eve and Adam: you shall be like gods' (Gen 3,5), and places it at the centre of a diabolical society which poisons the political language of all earthly cities.

Alternatively, Christ, his apostles and martyrs tell the truth even if to do so they have to make use of unseemly and inelegant expressions which defy Ciceronian rhetorical canons for convincing argumentation. The rhetoric of the City of God is confessional in nature. It thus offsets or subverts the primary political discourse of earthly empire which is concerned with enhancing human glory. What Augustine suggests is that human beings (he means Christians) get insights into justice by coming into contact with their own moral fallibility and by expressing that fallibility in their language. Conversion is therefore the language of justice. This Augustinian position is codified in the so-called 'mirror of princes' (*City of God* 5,24) and exemplified in the public confession of the emperor Theodosius the Great (*City of God* 5,28). Its model in the City of God is the Apostle Paul who, as *vir optimus et fortissimus* (*City of God* 14,9,2) counters the rhetoric of glory with the rhetoric of confession of moral failure. Thus, for Augustine political heroes in the City of God mirror not Christ, but the martyrs whose death were not moments of Stoic courage but of the fullness of conversion realized in the confession of dependence upon God's grace and prayer for pardon.

In 1995, another young scholar of Saint Augustine's works, Dr. Lewis Ayres<sup>3</sup> lectured on Augustine's *De Trinitate*. Augustine himself informs us that he began his classical work on the *Trinity* in his youthful days, namely, around the year 399 when he was already priest for eight years and three years bishop of Hippo. The work he then finished up editing in his later years with many delays along the way: "*libros iuvenis inchoavi, senex edidi ...*" (Letter 174). He became worried too because some had circulated the early parts of his thesis before it was ready for publication. However, as he would be the first to admit, our search to fathom this august mystery is never finished until the final vision.

Dr. Ayres argued that whatever faults one finds theologically with Saint Augustine's thought, it really is time that ascribing such a simplistic style of doctrine to Augustine ceased. His main purpose in writing is pastoral rather than polemic, trying to make sense of this fundamental truth for his flock at Hippo Regius. Augustine's understanding of the Trinity had been misunderstood in contemporary theology, and that a key part of the Western tradition is thus increasingly maligned. Taking first his trinitarian theology, Augustine's use of terminology of *essentia* and *substantia* is a complicated affair. Broadly speaking, one has to answer two basic questions in order to see what Augustine intends (two questions that have not received much rigorous discussion in recent Augustinian scholarship): 1) what is the categorical background to Augustine's use of the terminology: that is, is Augustine using the terminology with reference to logical themes, or to material conceptions of substance, conceptions which play off substance and energy, to cite just a few examples; 2) what is the relationship between the terminology of substance and the theological terminology which is used to elucidate: how does Augustine understand that *process* of "elucidation"?

Dr. Ayres' lecture centred around the interaction of philosophy and theology in Saint Augustine's work, especially how he adapts existing models of God and of

3 Dr. Lewis Ayres graduated D.Phil. from Oxford only in 1993. Prof. Ayres lectures at the School of Hebrew, Biblical and Theological Studies at Trinity College Dublin 2, Ireland. Dr. Ayres too worked at Oxford under the supervision of Rowan Williams. Among other publications, Dr. Ayres has recently edited a work, the first in its scope of being a reader devoted exclusively to the theology of the Trinity, entitled *The Trinity. Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Blackwell, May 1997 (400pp). A reworked version of the papers delivered by Dr. Lewis Ayres during the Second Annual Saint Augustine Lecture to the University of Malta, have been now published in an article entitled: *The Education of desire: the fundamental dynamics of Augustine's Trinitarian theology as a resource for modern theology*: Augustinian Studies 28/1 (1997).

the human person in the light of his theological concerns. Augustine's insistence that knowing God and knowing the mind is not something which can easily be compared with knowing an object separate from us in space. Human beings always try to picture the things of which they wish to be aware as objects, as things separate from themselves. This procedure will not work in the case of the mind because it is all continually present to us and so we need to find a way of thought that will enable us to see how we may know our minds. Similarly if we want to know God we must find a way of knowing which does not involve thinking of a separate object.

This problem is eventually addressed later in his work 'On the Trinity' by comparing a picture of the human being with a picture of Christ. The human being is described as possessing a "lower" and a "higher" reason, the former concerned with the active life, the latter with the contemplative life. Human beings only live as God originally created them to live when these levels are appropriately in accord, the lower being guided by the higher. Augustine also speaks of the 'inner' and the 'outer' person, a terminology used in two ways. At one level the 'outer' person is simply the body and that in the mind which guides it, while the inner person is that in us which is able to contemplate truth and guide the outer person. At another level the outer person is the person who must pass away through redemption, while the inner is the new person renewed through Christ. When using this division Augustine speaks of us living 'according to' the outer person, thinking that everything can be described according to the rules of objective perception, never rising beyond the material. In order to live according to the inner person we should not abandon the body or the outer person (and this is why the two ways in which the inner/outer terminology are used are separate) but learn to order the whole of our existence according to the inner person. How do we do this? Augustine's answer is a description of the salvific function of Christ.

For Augustine Christ's two natures, one human, one divine exist in perfect accord. As human Christ offers himself continually to the Father and does only the will of the one who sent him. As divine Christ manifests God the creator in the world. Christ's human nature offers a series of words and deeds which are in terms that we may understand but which draw us in to the mystery of God. We can only understand Christ's divinity through his humanity, we cannot reach a point at which that human nature becomes irrelevant. Similarly we never reach a point at which our bodies or our 'outer' person is irrelevant; on the contrary we can only learn about God and about the presence of God to our inner selves through learning to

act and live correctly in the created world. Once we understand this life and the process of learning love and humility in Christian life as the only way of understanding the continual presence of God to the human mind then we begin to find a way beyond thinking of God as another object for our investigation. Thus Augustine's description of Christ provides the basis for his description of the human person: we discover our true nature by following Christ.

The main themes of Augustine's Trinitarian theology draw the attention to the importance of the Holy Spirit as that which incorporates us into the relationship of Father and Son in the Trinity, a relationship seen in Christ. The Spirit is love and is the gift of God, and the Spirit as love needs to be understood as a dynamic passing on of the love received from the Father, returning what is given, never retaining anything for himself. The Spirit thus enables us to share in the life of the Trinity making us share in the life of Christ himself.

This vision of our incorporation into the life of the Trinity means that Augustine has a very strong vision of the Church as community. In this community we learn to pass on the love given to us, which is a share in the life of God. Imitating Christ's two natures we follow his example in order to 'see' God allowing his human example of humility and love to lead us towards God's mysterious presence.

The 1997 Saint Augustine lecture was delivered by Dr. Carol Harrison<sup>4</sup> author of a recently published work on *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of St. Augustine*. In the review of Dr. Harrison's work, according to Prof. R. Dodaro, in the course of her thesis, Dr. Harrison locates the centre of Augustine's aesthetics in the incarnation and argues for a more positive reception of his aesthetical theory. She also attempts at rescuing Augustine from the dual charges of a spiritualized, rationalistic aesthetics launched by Karen Svoboda<sup>5</sup>, and of an ascensional, art-annihilating spirit which, according to Robert O'Connell<sup>6</sup>, pervades all of Saint

4. Dr. Carol Harrison holds a D.Phil. from Oxford University which she read under the supervision of two famous scholars of Augustinian thought and writings, namely, Prof. E. Yarnold, and Prof. Dr. Robert A. Markus, of Nottingham University. Dr. Harrison now lectures in the Theology of the Latin West in the Department of Theology at Durham University. Dr. Harrison is married to another patristic scholar, Prof. Andrew Louth. In 1992, Dr. Harrison published a revision of her doctoral dissertation in a book on *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*, (Oxford Theological Monograph, Clarendon Press; Oxford: 1992, xi+289 pages. The work was reviewed by Prof. R. Dodaro OSA in *Augustinian Studies* 26/2 (1995) 135-141.

5. *L'Esthétique de saint Augustin et ses Sources*, (Brno 1933).

6. *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Oxford 1978).

Augustine's aesthetics. O'Connell, according to Harrison, posited Augustine's discarnate view of man (p. 61) which she sees as limiting his interpretation of Augustine's texts on art and beauty (p. 274).

Dr. Harrison's alternative is a "theological aesthetics" in Augustine, the case for which in general terms 'is seen to lie ... in an exposition of the beauty of God's revelation to the world' (p. 96), and pre-eminently in the Incarnation. In choosing this approach, Dr. Harrison readily acknowledges inspiration by Hans Urs von Balthasar<sup>7</sup>.

In her lecture on *Marriage and Monasticism according to Saint Augustine*, delivered to the Philosophy Society of the University of Malta, Dr. Harrison argued that in his *City of God* book XIX, Augustine describes the ideal form of human society as, "a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God and mutual fellowship in God." The idea of order is one which is carried over from his early thought; the concept of harmonious, mutual fellowship in God as characteristic of this order is one which gradually evolved as his thought became more immersed in Scripture, especially St. Paul, and as his life and experience in the world led him to reflect on the nature of human society, its foundation, characteristics and goals.

In order to trace this evolution we might begin with Augustine in 386, at the moment of his conversion. In *Confessions* VIII he presents his conversion to us in uncompromising terms as a choice between two different social identities: either celibacy or marriage. At this stage nothing less than celibacy would do – only one distinctive form of life would meet the high calling of Christianity – he must renounce his arranged marriage, his temporary mistress, and henceforth embrace celibacy as a life-long companion.

Why are marriage and celibacy so sharply contrasted here? Is it simply a question of philosophical influence (continence had traditionally been the ideal of the true philosopher)? Is it a last vestige of Manichaeism – that the highest religious life was reserved for the continent elect? Is it symptomatic of the strong emphasis on asceticism prevalent in Church circles in the fourth century, especially at Rome? Is

7. *The Glory of the Lord, A theological Aesthetics*, especially volume two *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical styles*, (Ignatius Press; San Francisco, 1989).

it inspired by Augustine's first encounter with the monastic life – with the *Life on Antony*? Is it indicative of the rather low esteem in which marriage was held – a relationship which was generally thought, like the sexual relationship which defined it, to be a direct result of the fall, fraught with temptations and difficulties, to be entered into only as a last resort – better to marry than to burn?

These, and perhaps other reasons too, were probably in Augustine's mind in 386, but viewed retrospectively, in the light of his later theology, the picture is a rather different one: though the celibate life will always be given a higher place by Augustine, the contrast with the married life will become less antithetic, to the point where the two can be seen as two different social identities which are yet characterised by the same ideals, the same goals and the same temporal ambiguities.

Augustine's first discussion of the marriage relationship is a rather odd one. It appears in his first attempt at interpreting Genesis, *On Genesis against the Manichees* (389). But whereas one would therefore expect him to defend the goodness of the body and sexual reproduction against Manichaean denigration of them, he continues the allegorical approach of the commentary and offers a spiritual interpretation of the command to "increase and multiply": Adam and Eve, he suggests, would have brought forth "spiritual offspring" of "intelligible and immortal joys" rather than children.<sup>8</sup>

His defence of marriage comes only twelve years later in one of a pair of treatises attempting to steer a middle way amidst the storms created by Jerome and his outright denigration of marriage on the one side, and Jovinian, the Roman monk, who had dared to interpret the Song of Songs in relation to Christian marriage and to put marriage on a par with virginity, on the other. For Jerome a first marriage is a regrettable weakness – its only purpose being the conversion of other members of the household, the education of a new christian generation and the production of Christian ascetics<sup>9</sup>; second marriage is only one step from the brothel, like a dog returning to its vomit. Jerome's views were obviously felt to be extreme by his contemporaries. Most fathers, including Augustine, would, at the very least, add procreation and the controlling of lust to the purposes of marriage: it "*makes us*

8. *Gn. adu. Man.* I,19,30.

9. *ep.*107,1 (cited by A. Yarbrough 'Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Woman', *Church History* 1945 (76) p.162.



*chaste and makes us parents*”, as Chrysostom puts it.<sup>10</sup> But then they usually add that procreation, which, in the beginning, necessitated the creation of Eve<sup>11</sup> and justified the Patriarchs’ taking of a number of wives,<sup>12</sup> is now no longer necessary. This was either because, like Tertullian, they thought the end to be near – Christians, “*for whom there is no tomorrow*”, need no longer be concerned about posterity<sup>13</sup> he observes – or because hope in the resurrection makes the desire for children superfluous. Now that, as Augustine comments, “*there is a vast crowd from all nations to fill up the number of the saints*”, what was at first a duty for man – the begetting of children – is no longer necessary and is at best a healing remedy for those who are sick<sup>14</sup> – in other words to control lust.

It is in this context that Augustine steers a middle way between Jerome and Jovinian in *On the Good of Marriage* (401), by maintaining that marriage is good but virginity is better. The three ‘goods’ of marriage he enumerates as progeny (*proles*), fidelity (*fides*), and the sacrament (*sacramentum*).<sup>15</sup> In this treatise he is still uncertain concerning the exact nature of procreation before the fall and simply admits that there are a number of different views. But he has more to say about the last two goods.

First, fidelity (*fides*): for Roman citizens, the ideal of *concordia* represented the highest expectation and greatest achievement of marriage – that the partners should live in harmony and unity, holding all things in common. *Concordia* in the family constituted the basis for harmony and unity in the city and in the state.<sup>16</sup> As Cicero writes, “*The origin of society is in the joining (coniugium) of man and woman, next in children, then in the household (una domus), all things held in common; this is the foundation (principium) of the city and, so to speak, the seed-bed of the state (seminarium rei publicae)*”.<sup>17</sup> In *On the Good of Marriage* Augustine takes

10. *Sermon on Marriage* Roth p.85.

11. Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 9,3,5; 9,5,9.

12. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* 19;21.

13. Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity*, 12. Cf Augustine *On the Good of Marriage* 32.

14. *Literal commentary on Genesis*, 9,7,12; *On the Good of Marriage* 5–6. Cf. Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, 19,1–2.

15. *coniug.* 4,3; 4,4; 7,6.

16. There is much artistic evidence for the ideal of *concordia* on, for example, marriage belts and rings – See G. Vikan ‘Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium’ in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers No. 44* (Dumbarton Oaks 1990), p.145–163 – and also on sarcophagi where Adam and Eve are depicted adopting the formal roman figure of the married couple with clasped right hands – the *dextrarum iunctio*.

17. Cicero, *On Duties* 1,17,54. Quoted by B.D. Shaw ‘The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine’ *Past and Present* 115 p.11, who notes that these ideas are heavily Stoic in tone.

over, and christianises these ideas, describing a *concordia religiosa*.<sup>18</sup> Referring to Acts 4,32 – a text which will also be determinative of his description of the common monastic life – he suggests that the union of man and wife in marriage, with one heart and one mind towards God, signifies the unity of the heavenly city.<sup>19</sup> Augustine makes clear at the very beginning of the treatise that the married relationship is above all one of reciprocal friendship, fellowship and love: “*Since every person is part of the human race and human nature is something social and has in itself the power of friendship as a great good, God willed for this reason to create all humans from one person, so that they might be held fast in their society not only by likeness of descent, but also by the bond of relationship. Thus the first tie of natural human society (or fellowship – societas) is husband and wife*”. (He goes on to describe the married couple as those who are) ‘*joined one to another side by side, who walk together, and look together where they walk*’.<sup>20</sup>

It has justly been observed that Augustine never seems to be alone; he is always in the company of family, friends or a community. His character was a gregarious one and he evidently needed someone to share his thoughts, with whom he could discuss and debate.<sup>21</sup> That he valued these friendships highly is more than evident,<sup>22</sup> and that he reflected upon the familiar classical ideals of friendship to reshape them in a Christian mould is unsurprising but also revealing of his thought on life in society – both married and celibate. He finds nothing to disagree with in Cicero who can in fact be seen as the source of many of his descriptions of the married or monastic life: friendship is, “*an agreement on all things human and divine with goodwill and love*” (*Laelius* 6,20); Cicero comments in the *Laelius de amicitia*, “*so that many should, as it were, become one soul*” (*Laelius* 25,92).<sup>23</sup> But Augustine adds that the source of such friendship lies in God’s grace,<sup>24</sup> that unity in the body

18. *b. conuig.* 13,15.

19. *b. conuig.* 18,21.

20. *b. conuig.* 1,1 There are numerous passages in Augustine which refer to the mutual affection between the two partners – see E. Schmidt *Le mariage chrétien selon saint Augustin* (Paris 1983) 280–281. He observes that “L’amour dont augustin se fait ici l’avocat est une intimité profonde entre deux âmes, pure de toute recherche égoïste et passionnelle, une sort de chasteté amoureuse du coeur, condition même de toute véritable chasteté du corps”, p.181.

21. Cf. *conf.* 4,18,13; *ep.* 130,4, to Proba; *ep.* 258.

22. Cf. his account of the death of his friends in *conf.* 4,6,11.

23. Friends who share the same interests and wishes love each other as much as they love themselves (*De officiis* 1,17,56).

24. *comb.* 4,4,7.

of Christ provides the solidest base for friendship,<sup>25</sup> and love of God in one's friend is the best way to love him properly<sup>26</sup> – this is the meaning of the double commandment to love God and neighbour: God is to be loved above all else; one's neighbour is to be loved in and for him.<sup>27</sup> He describes such friendship as a natural good, like health, which is essential to human existence and any form of human relationship.<sup>28</sup> It was through friendship, or friendly benevolence (*amicalis benevolentia*), that Adam fell in not abandoning Eve.<sup>29</sup>

It is in the context of friendship, significantly, that in *On the Good of Marriage*, Augustine places the sexual aspect of marriage – not as a result of the fall, but as part of the “friendly fellowship” of marriage.<sup>30</sup> When he speaks about *fides* he includes sexual relations which are not motivated by the desire for procreation but which are simply part of the duty which spouses owe to one another,<sup>31</sup> in other words he entertains the idea of the marriage as a sexual relationship, but at the same time, one which exists independently of any desire for procreation. Rather it is a social bond (*societas*) which serves to order, or ‘socialise’ the otherwise disordered and anti-social movements of concupiscence.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, his understanding of *fides* foreshadows Augustine's later treatment of the question of intercourse in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* of 410. In book III he again opts for a spiritual interpretation and emphasises the marital love and accord of will between Adam and Eve, which would give birth to children without any concupiscence – *piae caritatis adfectu* – an idea which should be seen in the context of classical ideas of friendship to be rightly understood.<sup>33</sup> But in book IX, Augustine finally decides in favour of the presence of sexual intercourse

25. *div. qu.* 71.6–7; *ep.* 208; 142,1.

26. *s.* 336,2,2; *conf.* 4,9,14.

27. See the rather convoluted and ultimately rather inconclusive discussion of this in *doctr. chr.* I.

28. *s.* *Denis* 16,1; *f. inuis.* 2,4 – cited by T.J. Van Bavel ‘Augustine's view on women’ *Augustiniana* 39(1989) 48.

29. *Gn. litt.* XI.42,59.

30. 9. Cf *s.* 9,6,7 – babies are born in marriage “from the parent's friendship”.

31. *bon. coniug.* 4,4. I owe this insight to D.G. Hunter, ‘Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look At Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy’ *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994) 153–177.

32. *bon. coniug.* 5,5 – quoted by Hunter, *Ibid.* p. 162.

33. See J. Doignon ‘Une définition oubliée de l'amour conjugal édenique chez Augustin: *piae caritatis adfectus* (*gen. ad litt.* 3,21,33), *Vetera Christianorum* 19, (1982) 25–36, esp. p. 161–162.

before the fall. As is often the case, it is in reaction to various extreme forms of asceticism that the fathers can be seen defending marriage and the married life. In the early centuries it fell to the theologians such as Clement of Alexandria to defend the goodness of marriage, the married life and procreation against the Gnostics. Their hostility to creation, which they regarded as the work of an alien, evil, creator God, and their consequent extreme asceticism, distancing themselves from the body and matter as much as possible, and especially from intercourse which would only serve to propagate evil matter, undermined the Christian notion of a Creator God responsible for a fundamentally good creation. Augustine, in turn, gives marriage perhaps its most positive evaluation among the Fathers, against the Gnostic's fourth century successors, the Manichees, whose ideas were very similar. In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, he maintains that Adam and Eve were a married couple and would have had children by sexual intercourse *before the fall*. Others, with the sole exception of Ambrosiaster, held that Adam and Eve were either a virginal couple<sup>34</sup> or sexless<sup>35</sup> and that there was no marriage, no intercourse, no children in Paradise – these are all a result of the fall and symptomatic of man's fallenness: "*where there is death, there is marriage*" Chrysostom observes in an admittedly uncharacteristically sombre mood.<sup>36</sup>

But for Augustine, from this point onwards, intercourse, like marriage, is part of man's original and intended state; he is intended to live in fellowship, to found a society. Woman was created for this purpose and when God blessed them he said "*Increase and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it*". So, although Scripture says that it was after their expulsion from Paradise that sexual intercourse and children happened (Gen. 4:1), Augustine writes, "*I do not see what could have prohibited them from honourable nuptial union and the bed undefiled even in Paradise ... so that without the tumultuous ardour of passion and without any labour and pain of childbirth, offspring would be born from their seed.*"<sup>37</sup> If this had happened, he comments, there would be no death, rather, all the inhabitants of paradise would have remained in the prime of life until the determined number was complete, when they would be transformed into spiritual bodies. Offspring would

34. eg. Jerome *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.16.

35. Gregory of Nyssa *De Opificio Hominis* 12,9 (quoted by Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, p.294.)

36. *De Virginitate* 14, 6.

37. *Gen. litt.* 9,3,6. Cf *City of God*. 14, 26.

have been desired, not as remedy against death, but as companions for life.<sup>38</sup>

Having thus established the place of sexual relations in the context of fides and proles – of marriage as a relation of friendship and fellowship in society which includes procreation but is not defined by it, we might now turn to consider the third ‘good’ of marriage – the sacramental aspect.<sup>39</sup> The Fathers held that marriage was sacramental in the broadest sense – as a human institution which disclosed profound truths about the Christian faith. (Although Augustine’s use of the word *sacramentum* is extraordinarily wide, ranging from ‘sacred sign’ to ‘rite’, he never uses it in the latter sense in relation to a nuptial liturgy). It is on such texts as *Ephesians 5* and *Genesis 2*; the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib while he slept, likened to the blood and water which issued from Christ’s pierced side at his death, that their teaching hinges.<sup>40</sup> Augustine maintains that there is an enduring “*quiddam coniugale*”, an enduring marital ‘thing’ which survives the breakdown of marital relations, just as the “*sacramentum fidei*” of baptism survives apostasy.<sup>41</sup> Marriage is a smaller but identical sacrament to the great sacrament of union which is between Christ and his Church.<sup>42</sup> So, even in a case of sterility, the marriage cannot, as in Roman law, be dissolved.<sup>43</sup> The doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage which emerged in the West in the fourth century, and especially with Augustine, sharply distinguished the Church’s teaching from Roman divorce law – where the dissolving of the marriage bond was quite straightforward and simply required notification of intent – and was the key to the Church’s ‘Christianisation’ of marriage in contradistinction to Roman, pagan and Jewish customs.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Western Church’s teaching on indissolubility is the reconfirmation of the essence of marriage as a mysterious bonding of two individuals, a holy, sanctifying union of mutual love, friendship and fellowship irrespective of the sexual relations or procreation which were

38. Ibid 9,9,14.

39. For Augustine’s understanding of the sacramental aspect of marriage see P.L. Reynolds *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden 1994), ch. 13 – to whom I am indebted in the following section.

40. *nupt. et conc.* I,10,11; b. *coniug.* 17; 21.

41. *nupt. et conc.* I,11.

42. Ibid. I,23; 31–32.

43. b. *coniug.* 7,7; 21.

elsewhere definitive of it. There is a “*natural society itself in a difference of sex*”<sup>44</sup> Augustine observes, which is independent of procreation, or the age of the partners. Against Julian, who argued that there can be no marriage without intercourse, Augustine cites the example of the old and infirm, observing that one becomes the friend and companion of one’s spouse to the extent that sexual desire no longer intrudes:<sup>45</sup> they are bound not “*by the voluptuous ties of their bodies but by the voluntary affection of their minds.*”<sup>46</sup> He develops these views most especially in relation to Mary and Joseph, who were married even though there was no sexual relation between the partners. They are called husband and wife because, as he puts it, “*intercourse of the mind is more intimate than that of the body.*”<sup>47</sup>

However, as we have seen, Augustine himself chose not to pursue this ideal of marriage, in friendly fellowship and oneness of mind and heart either in his writings or in his own life, but rather regarded celibacy – later monasticism – as the only possible form his conversion to Christianity could take. In order to appreciate his choice, which was by no means an obligatory one in order to embrace Christianity, elements of Augustine’s philosophical, religious and social background need to be considered.

Augustine would have been long-acquainted with classical, philosophical notions of withdrawal (*otium*) from the world, of the ‘inclination to retirement’,<sup>48</sup> asceticism and celibacy as intrinsic to the true philosopher’s search for truth. They seem to lie behind the account in *Confessions* 6, 14, 24, of his first attempt to set up a community in 386, in Milan, with a group of friends, “*remoti a turbis otiose vivere*” – to live a life of contemplation apart from the crowds. They planned to hold everything in common, to live in one household, as friends, and to appoint two men, chosen like magistrates for one year, to undertake practical, administrative responsibilities. The plan fell at the first hurdle, with the problem of wives and fiancées, but the passage is important as providing a first sounding of ideals – common life, friendship – which never disappear in Augustine’s work and find their fullest outworking in the

44. *Ibid.*, 3,3.

45. *c. Jul.* 5, 12.

46. *nupt. et conc.* 1.12.

47. *c. Faust.* 23, 8 – quoted by E.A. Clark in “Adam’s Only Companion. Augustine and the Early Christian debate on Marriage” in *Recherches Augustiennes* 1986 p 139–162, who also refers to *cons.eu.* 2, 1, 2–3; s. 51, 13, 21.

48. Analysed by A.J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (California 1954) lecture 4.

communities at Hippo. Meanwhile, the philosophical ideals we have mentioned would have been brought to sharp focus for Augustine by his reading of the 'books of the Neoplatonists', and especially Plotinus, which were so instrumental in his conversion in 386.

More important still is the significant role Augustine assigns in his conversion to what he surprisingly acknowledges was his first encounter with Christian monasticism in his conversion with Ponticianus in Book 8 of the *Confessions*. Augustine took Ponticianus' words to heart; they gave him an appalling vision of his own vileness from which he could not escape except by heeding them and suffering their judgement upon his own situation. The subsequent passages of the *Confessions* recount Augustine's attempt to embrace the celibate, ascetic life, and are followed by the famous conversion scene.

Augustine was to learn much more of Christian monasticism in the following year. He had planned to return to Thagaste with his mother and friends to carry out their 'holy enterprise' (*placitum sanctum*)<sup>49</sup> – and was able to visit a number of monasteries<sup>50</sup> and learn more about Eastern asceticism.

Augustine was able to return to North Africa, to his native town of Thagaste, in 388, to the family house and land he had inherited there. Here, he established the community of *servi dei*, or servants of God, which he had intended to set up the year before and it was from here that Augustine went on his fateful journey to Hippo in 391 to see someone who he thought might be persuaded to join the community at Thagaste and to examine possibilities for the site of a new monastery.<sup>51</sup> Instead, although he reports that he had been careful to avoid places which had a vacant episcopal see, for fear of being commandeered into the post (which was not at all unusual), he was seized by the congregation in the Basilica at Hippo and immediately ordained priest and successor to the ageing bishop Valerius of Hippo. Augustine's response was to ask for time to study the Scriptures and to be allowed

49. *conf.* IX, 9, 2.

50. See A. Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life* (New York 1986) p 22 note 109 for bibliography on Roman monasteries at this time, especially r. Lorenz, "Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtumes im 4 Jahrhundert", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 77 (1966) 1–61.

51. s. 355, 2.

to continue his monastic life as a priest. Valerius granted both of these requests and provided a plot of land in the garden of the basilica where the monastery could be built. Thus, Augustine began the life in community at Hippo and adopted the way of life in which he was to remain until his death.

Possidius, Augustine's biographer, strikes a new note in describing the Garden monastery at Hippo, when he alludes to Acts 4,32,35, "*all things must be held in common, and there was given to everyone as he had need.*"<sup>52</sup> Augustine explicitly confirms this modelling of the monastic life at Hippo on the first Christian communities of Acts at the beginning of the *Rule*, when he writes, "The first object of our common life is to live together in unity and to have 'one heart and soul' directed towards God."<sup>53</sup> The use of this text is not at all uncommon in other monastic writings before Augustine;<sup>54</sup> most monastic communities would base themselves on it in some form or another,<sup>55</sup> but for Augustine, as is evident in his use of it throughout his works, it becomes central and informs every other aspect of the monastic life in a way which is absolutely distinctive and which makes the monastic community intrinsic to the unity of the Church as a whole.<sup>56</sup> It is present in his famous definition of the monk in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (132,6),<sup>57</sup> "*Those who live in unity in such a way that they form but one person are rightly called 'monos', one single person. They make true to life what is written, 'of one mind and one heart' (Acts 4,32), that is, many bodies but not many minds, many bodies but not many hearts.*" The emphasis upon one-ness through charity informs all the precepts for communal living in the *Rule* and in the closing prayer is explicitly given as the spirit in which the precepts are to be carried out. Indeed, as many scholars have noted, the Augustinian *Rule* is characterised by its emphasis upon

52. *vita*, 5.

53. *reg.* 1.2.

54. see Zumkeller, . 36 and notes 106–109 for references and L. Verheijen's discussion of this text in *Saint Augustine's Monasticism in the light of Acts 4,32–35* (Villanova 1975) where he traces possible sources for its use in Jerome *Ep.* 22,35 (albeit by oral account) and Paulinus of Nola *Ep.* 30,3 (which he believes brought the community implications of the text to Augustine's attention).

55. T.J. Van Bavel, "The Evangelical Inspiration of the Rule of Saint Augustine," *Downside Review* 1975 p. 87.

56. See L. Verheijen *op. cit.* for Augustine's use of Acts 4,32–35 throughout his works, where he traces a gradual use of the whole text, concluding, "one can read the whole monastic history of Saint Augustine and of those around him in this gradual increase of the use of the Acts and the Apostles" (p. 80).

57. Cf. *En. ps.* 131, 4; 132, 10.



the motivation for an action – why something is done, what is going on within – rather than on laying down regulations to be observed. Augustine's main aim is embodied in his quotation of 1 Cor 13,5, in Chapter 5 of the *Rule* which says of love that “*it is not self-seeking*”. It is love which puts the interests of the community before personal interests which is to be the goal of the individual monk – “*The degree to which you are concerned for the interests of the community, rather than your own, is the criterion by which you can judge how much progress you have made*” (5.2). This is, of course, a classical idea which Augustine first mentions in *On Free Will* (1,6,14) using classical terminology (*publicus, privatus*). Here the same ideas are expressed with a more markedly Christian colouring derived from their use in Acts 4,32–35, which speaks of that which is one's own (*proprius*) and that which is in common (*communis*).<sup>58</sup> Putting the good of others before oneself means, on a practical level, the acknowledgement that community does not mean uniformity: concessions must be made to individuals within the community in view of their social background and respective needs. Relations within the community were likewise to be characterised by selfless mutual service and regard. The superior, or *praepositus*, is not, for Augustine, the same figure as the Eastern *abba*, placed above the community and concerned with spiritual direction, rather, he is, literally, one put forward from within the community, who does not stand above it, but remains part of it, to serve it in everyday administration. He is superior because of the esteem in which he is held, but the least of all the brethren because of his responsibility to God (7,3). Much space is given to dealing with an erring brother on the principle that one must act ‘always with love for the offender but with aversion for their faults’ (4,10). In the same spirit, the monks must render each other mutual service without grumbling or delay (5.9), refrain from quarreling (6,1) and be ready to apologise and forgive (6.2).

When he was ordained bishop in 396 Augustine felt it necessary to establish another monastery, specifically for clergy in the Bishop's House. The only precedent for such an arrangement in the West is the clerical community established by Bishop Eusebius of Vercelli following his return from exile in the East in c. 363, for his

58. L. Verheijen “Éléments d'un commentaire de la Règle de saint Augustin. IX. Le Praeceptum et l'éthique classique,” *Augustiniana* XXIV (1974) 5–9 (and esp. 8–9). See also L. Verheijen, “Éléments d'un commentaire de la Règle de saint Augustin. XX. La charité ne cherche pas ses propres intérêts,” *Augustiniana* XXXIV 1984 p. 97–100; G. Madec *Petites Etudes Augustiniennes* (Paris 1994) 13: ‘Le communisme spirituel’.

Cathedral Church, a fact Ambrose mentions,<sup>59</sup> but Augustine may have been ignorant of. Indeed, it is difficult to know exactly which models, if any, Augustine would have in mind in establishing and organising the lay and clerical monasteries at Hippo. Throughout the Empire, and especially when persecution came to an end with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, asceticism christian was linked with, and often expressed in terms of, or held to replace, martyrdom – the martyrs had been the Christian élite, those who had denied the world and battled with the forces of evil. Celibacy, asceticism and the common life were later viewed within the same frame and motivated by the same ideals.<sup>60</sup> African theologians, such as Tertullian and Cyprian, foreshadow Augustine's emphasis on Acts 4,32–35 and the one-ness of charity expressed in the holding of goods in common in a life in community, when they speak of Christian perfection.<sup>61</sup> They, and numerous witnesses before them, provide evidence for the longstanding practice of chastity in the African Church, by women (*virgines*) and men (*spadones, continentes*), and also clergy.<sup>62</sup> We learn more about this from Acts of the Councils of Carthage and Hippo, and the Theodosian Code, where we find, for example, regulations for the age of admission to the ranks of consecrated virgins,<sup>63</sup> regulations for house asceticism<sup>64</sup> and laws against the cohabitation of continents and virgins.<sup>65</sup> There is, however, no early evidence for communities of men, or *continentes*, though Folliet does not wish to rule out the possibility.<sup>66</sup> We have seen that Western monasticism, in terms of communities of monks, was a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back only to last third of the fourth century.

Indeed, the elevation of individuals like Martin, Augustine and Paulinus, who had previously been monks, to the status of Bishop, and their subsequent founding

59. J. T. Lienhard *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism* (Cologne-Bonn) 1977, p. 90 cites Ambrose's *ep.* 63, where Ambrose observes that Eusebius was the first bishop in the West to join 'monasterii continentia' with 'ecclesiae disciplina'.

60. See E. A. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr* (Catholic University of America Press, Studies in Christian Antiquity, 12 Washington, 1950) referred to by R. A. Markus, *End of ...* Ch. 4 which is itself very interesting on this subject.

61. Tertullian *Apologeticum* 39; Cyprian *De opere et elemosynis* 7; 25 – both cited by G. Folliet, art. cit., p. 26.

62. Folliet art. cit., p. 27f.

63. Council of Hippo 393, Mansi 3 p. 919 – Folliet art. cit., p. 32 note 36.

64. *ibid.*

65. *Cod. Theod.* 370, Folliet art. cit., p. 32 note 33.

66. art. cit., p. 34.

of a clerical monastery to enable them to continue their monastic life, is a notable feature of Western monasticism during this period and explains some of its distinctive characteristics – the ‘monasticization of the clergy’, its orientation towards the city,<sup>67</sup> involvement in public affairs, and emphasis on study and writing rather than manual labour.<sup>68</sup> The figure of the monk-Bishop had, of course, a forerunner in the East, in the figure of Basil of Caesarea, and although his *Rules* were probably not known to his Western counterparts,<sup>69</sup> the similarities, especially in respect of Basil’s primary emphasis upon common life and charity, rather than asceticism, are striking.

Augustine’s founding of a clerical monastery in effect reversed the process of making monks priests, but rather made priests monks, thereby ensuring that clerical celibacy was indeed a life-long vocation. But it is important to examine Augustine’s understanding of exactly what celibacy or virginity entails. He is far from assuming that it is simply a matter of an uncorrupt body. As one might expect it is much more a matter of an uncorrupt mind, a heart single-mindedly devoted to God and undistracted by any worldly attachments,<sup>70</sup> which might apply to all Christians who have an integrity of faith, hope and love (*virginitas fidei*).<sup>71</sup> Nor is it something which the individual attains, rather, it is a grace which he receives.<sup>72</sup>

67. Note C. Leyser’s work here and Markus, *End of*, p. 160.

68. For parallel movements in the East see P. Rousseau “The spiritual Authority of the ‘Monk-Bishop’: Eastern elements in some Western Hagiography of the Fourth and fifth centuries” *J.T.S.* 22 (1971) 380–419 (though I am inclined to disagree with his analysis of the concept of ‘authority’ in the West.)

69. Lawless (op. cit., p. 42), following Kelly, *Jerome*, 228. 280–1, assigns the Latin adaptation of Basil’s *Rule* by Rufinus of Aquileia to the years 397–400.

70. *Virg.* 2,2; 11, 11. Augustine distinguishes between *virginitas carnis*, *virginitas in carne*, *virginitas corporis* and *virginitas cordis*, *virginitas in corde*, *virginitas mentis*.

71. *en. Ps.* 90.2.0; *s.* 93,3,4; 213, 7 – cited by Zumkeller, op. cit., p. 241. This is also present in the Eastern tradition, in eg. Gregory of Nyssa (*On virginity*) who also describes virginity as singleness of mind and heart, and in Chrysostom who, as so often, resembles Augustine when he writes, “... virginity does not simply mean sexual abstinence. She who is anxious about worldly affairs is not really a virgin. In fact, he [that is, Christ] says that this is the chief difference between a wife and a virgin. He does not mention marriage or abstinence, but attachment as opposed to detachment from worldly cares” (*Homily 19 on 1 cor.* 7 – Roth, op. cit., p. 41).

72. See eg. his letter to Juliana, Demetrias’ mother, criticising the letter which he later learned was by Pelagius, to her daughter, in which the author had suggested that “justice, continence, piety and chastity we have of ourselves”. Augustine replies, “*These are God’s gifts, and they are yours, but they are not from you*” *ep.* 188, 2, 6.

What is revealing in Augustine's understanding of the celibate life, or virginity, is that it evidently evolved along much the same lines as his reflection on marriage: from the proposed, but never realised community of friends at Thagaste (386 – *Conf.* 6, 14, 24), to the Christian reading party-cum-philosophical retreat of Cassiciacum (386), through the common life of the lay *servi Dei* at Thagaste (388) to the lay and then clerical monastery at Hippo (391; 395/6), his idea of the celibate life was invariably of one lived in *community*, with friends, or later, with individuals who sought a common life: to be, again in the words of Acts 4, 32, “of one heart and mind” in loving fellowship and by sharing of goods. It is as if he sought a temporal alternative to the post-lapsarian, vitiated ideal of the married, social life of paradise, in monastic life in the world, which he saw as the closest approximation to it man could now hope to achieve. This was not simply because the monastic life was distinguished by celibacy and therefore avoided sexual concupiscence and the perpetuation of original sin through procreation. concupiscence had a much wider range of reference in Augustine's thought than the purely sexual, and was, as we shall see later on, just as likely to be at work in monastery as in the home. Rather, Augustine saw in the attempt of the monks to “*live a harmonious common-life,*” “*intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart*”, the true antidote to fallen man's self-referential pride, and his best chance of retrieving what was destroyed in the married relationship of Adam and Eve after the fall, that is, the centring of the relationship upon God rather than upon themselves. This suggestion is borne out in reading Augustine's *Rule*. Its primary concern, as we have seen, is not so much with asceticism, the attainment of holiness or perfection, as in the East, or, indeed, with celibacy, its main concern is with the social aspect of life lived in common and the moral, ethical aspects of such a life. His ideal of the monastic life, like that of marriage, is of one characterised by unity and *concordia or harmony*, which, like the harmony between a married couple, makes it the basis of harmonious life in the Church, the city – God's heavenly city (*en. Ps.* 105, 34), and thereby of the state – God's *res publica* (*op. mon.* 25, 32).

These ideals underline Augustine's thought from soon after his conversion and at least from 400 onwards when, as R. A. Markus has made clear,<sup>73</sup> he began to

73. *Sacred and Secular* (Variorum; Aldershot 1994), “*De ciuitate dei: Pride and the common good*”, III.

define sin not so much in terms of a breach of right order as in social categories, in terms of sin against the community in self-referential pride and self-seeking, turning away from the common good to one's own private good.<sup>74</sup> This is made explicit in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (11, 15, 20), where Augustine speaks of “*These two loves – of which the one is holy, the other subordinating the common good to self-interest for the sake of a proud lust for power ... the one given to friendship, the other to envy; the one wishing its neighbours what it would wish for itself, the other wishing to subject its neighbours what it would wish for itself, the other wishing to subject its neighbour; the one ruling its fellows for the good, the other for its own ...*”. Sin is henceforth understood as a failure of the love, fellowship and friendship which lies at the heart of human society and which defines it in relation to God – hence the pivotal emphasis we have noted upon oneness, harmony and love in his treatment of married life and of monastic life in the *Rule*.

For the monastic life, in Augustine's experience, often fell far short of the ideal of unity and harmony to which it aspired, and failures of love, in instances of proud, selfish actions, seemed to be inherent in any attempt to live community. It is telling that even Augustine's work *On Virginit*y is more occupied with the problem of pride and the virtue of humility than with the nature of virginity as such: “*It is much better to be married and humble than celibate and proud*” (*virg.* 51,52). This seems to represent a rethinking of the virtue of virginity in the light of his theology of the fall and grace similar to his rethinking of the married relationship, rather than a reordering of it on the scale of the virtues. It will always be a greater good than marriage, but it is just as susceptible, indeed, more susceptible, given its higher place, to the sin of pride – of self-reliance and self-congratulation and failure to acknowledge that all is of grace. The subject matter of *On virginity* is perhaps also symptomatic of the absence of any real emphasis on asceticism in Augustine's thought either here, or in the *Rule*: it was obviously of little importance to him either in a lay, monastic or clerical context, again, presumably, because whatever the individual achieves is a gift of God and ascetic striving so easily lends itself to self-referential pride. Similarly, the monastic life, into which his celibate vocation inevitably developed was not, as it often seems in Patristic writings, that of an elite,

74. *Gn.litt.* 11,15,20 quoted by Markus, *ibid.*, p. 256.

of holy men, who consequently possessed immense authority and stood in sharp contrast to the silent majority of married couples. (This is something Augustine had wanted to avoid from as early as *On the good of Marriage*, and makes him very similar, in many respects to Jovinian while moving him further away from Jerome).<sup>75</sup> Both modes of living in society were, for Augustine, characterised by the unavoidable ambiguity of Christian life in the world inherent in man's fallenness. The monk, Augustine observes, is like Daniel in the lions' den – dwelling in the face of the Lord, in the middle of wild beasts, yet seated in deep peace. Daniel's decidedly ambiguous position is brought home in another image Augustine uses to describe life in the monastery: "*Far from the roar of the people, from the noise of the great crowds, from the stormy waves, they are in a harbour, as it were.... Then is the promised rejoicing already there? Not yet. There are still laments and worry over temptations ... even a harbour has an entrance somewhere ... sometimes the wind rushes in from that open side. And even where there are no roads, the ships are dashed against each other and are shattered,*"<sup>76</sup> The context of this passage is a sermon which appears to be directed against those who enter a monastery, expecting it to be a perfect haven, only to leave it disillusioned, and full of criticism and slander, on finding that life 'inside' is very much the same as life 'outside': there are still objectionable and sinful brothers to tolerate within the confines of the monastery, just as there are in the outside world: "... lilies must grow among thorns and wheat will be hidden in the chaff". There are numerous instances in Augustine's works where we find him dealing with specific problems within the monastery: vicious accusations;<sup>77</sup> quarrelling brothers;<sup>78</sup> quarrelling nuns;<sup>79</sup> a monk who died leaving a will;<sup>80</sup> backsliders and grumblers;<sup>81</sup> those who had to be expelled from the monastery.<sup>82</sup> So, just as there was no room for spiritual elitism in the Church, so

75. D. G. Hunter "Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994) 153–177.

76. *en Psa.* 99, 10.

77. *ep.* 6 and 8.

78. *ep.* 78.

79. *ep.* 210; 211.

80. *s.* 355; 356.

81. *en. Ps.* 132,12; *op. mon.*

82. *perseu.* 15,38.

also in the monastery and in the home – both are states of friendship, fellowship and love striving for unity and concord, but cannot, in this life, be immune from the failures of love, the self-interest and concupiscence symptomatic of man's fallenness. Both, to various extents, anticipate the perfect community of unity, mutual love and friendship which will be the heavenly city, but neither can realise it in its fullness here.<sup>83</sup>

We are perhaps in a better position now to answer the question as to why Augustine chose celibacy, which for him was to mean monasticism, rather than marriage, as his preferred way of living a christian life in society. The choice seems clearer in the light of Augustine's developed theology but would have presented itself to Augustine rather differently in 386 before he had immersed himself in reading St. Paul, especially Romans, and worked out a theory of the fall which reflected the vitiated nature of man's willing. The far-reaching repercussions of the fall would later echo hauntingly through every aspect of human society, but in 386 the choice would have been rather less ambiguous and more clear-cut, determined more by philosophical ideas of perfection and the attainment of truth by freely willed ascetic renunciation,<sup>84</sup> than Pauline ideas of human weakness and divine grace.

But, having traced the development of Augustine's thought on the fall and its effects on life in society, as well as the various influences which moulded the final form of his monastic life, we can now appreciate, as Augustine would have done, retrospectively, that the choice which faced him at conversion between marriage and celibacy was by no means one between perfection and compromise, as he had

83. See R. A. Markus *End of*, Chapter 11, where these ideas are considered and Augustine is contrasted with Cassian in this respect. See also Verheijen, Villanova lecture, 1975, p. 95–97 on this. Caroline White, *op. cit.*, (p. 200) notes here that Augustine's view of friendship – that human relationships can only be perfect eschatologically – diverged from the classical view.

84. See e.g. Solil. 1.10.17 "*I feel that there is nothing which can do undermine the defenses of a many spirit as the blandishments of women and that contact with their bodies without which no wife can be contented. For this reason I fully believe it proper and useful for the freedom of my soul that I have commanded myself not to wish for, not to look for, not to marry, a wife*"; *De Vera Relig.* 3,3 – cited by Zumkeller *op. cit.*, p. 240.

once seen it, rather it was, as he later puts it, one between that which is good and that which is better.

We have noted the very positive approach to marriage which characterises his work when he considers the relationship in a theological context as the original and intended destiny of human society, in Paradise and in the life to come. It is a relationship of unity, harmony, fellowship, friendship and love, which is in essence sacramental, defined by its indissolubility, but which includes a sexual relationship, on a secondary level, in order that human society might indeed *be* social, that is, made up of a community of beings. The sexual aspect might be secondary but it is undeniably constitutive of marriage, and although Augustine, almost alone among the Fathers, theoretically avoids a theology of marriage and sex which makes them a *result* of the fall and allows for sex for its own sake as part of *fides*, his lamentably close association of sex with concupiscence as one of the main effects and prime examples of man's fallen nature, cannot but have a damaging effect on one's final evaluation of the relationship in his thought. This too, then, is a factor in explaining, at least retrospectively, why, despite his extremely positive treatment of marriage, his choice of celibacy would later be confirmed in his adoption of the monastic life.

The positive attraction of the monastic life is, of course, significant: community, friendship, intellectual companionship, order – all things which the early works and the *Confessions* make clear Augustine was seeking from the beginning. The ascetic environment in North Africa, fostered by Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose, the martyr ideal and the classical, contemplative, philosophical mould into which the Christian monastic ideal so easily fitted, together with Augustine's own profound personal inclination towards the values the monastic life – Lawless develops the thesis, *anima augustiniana naturaliter monastica*<sup>85</sup> create a context in which Augustine's choice would appear to be a natural and inevitable one, irrespective of his attitude to marriage, women, or indeed the fall. The latter, of course, would, as we have seen, profoundly alter his understanding of any form of life in society, making both marriage and the celibate life wholly dependent on God's grace, and only fully realizable in their perfection in the life to come.

85. G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, (Oxford 1987) 36.