



SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS AS THE FOUNDATION OF AUGUSTINE'S SPIRITUALITY

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As a working definition of "Christian spirituality" let me propose one given by the Dutch Augustinian scholar, Father Tarcisius van Bavel. Speaking to a group of Augustinian friars in 1986, he admitted that the notion of Christian spirituality was broad, and that one rarely found it described in religious literature. It might be conceived, he said, as a "window on the Gospel, an outlook on the Gospel." All authentic Christian spiritualities are responses to the Gospel, but "no two persons can read the Gospel in an entirely identical way." Each one "inevitably listens in a personal way, ...lays stress on different things and has a number of favorite texts."¹

Thus, a window screening in and out of view different concrete features of the Gospel, enables a given spirituality to accent particular evangelical values over others. At the same time, because each Christian spirituality is a "window on the Gospel," when it is properly embraced it leads its adherents into the whole truth of the Gospel. Father van Bavel thus distinguishes Augustinian spirituality from its Benedictine, Cistercian, Franciscan, and Ignatian alternatives by stipulating the distinctive role of love of neighbor and community life which Augustinian spirituality emphasizes. By way of illustrating his point, Fr. van Bavel stated, in an off-the-cuff remark, that in the Benedictine tradition, the monastery church was the center of life; in an Augustinian friary, the center of life is found in the common room.

Prayer, though important for Augustine, is thus not the center of his spirituality. 1

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would agree with Fr. van Bavel about this, and about the importance of love in Augustinian spirituality. But then it has to be said that what is vital for Augustine is love with all of its attendant theological problems.² He puzzled within himself about love, thereby refusing to understand it in simplistic terms, as if the meanings of scripture texts concerning love of God and neighbor yielded easily to interpretation and application. Instead, he considered love to be "sacramental," an activity rooted in Christ which is therefore also a sign pointing to a reality beyond the immediate and the tangible.³

Characterizing Augustine's notion of love as sacramental and setting it at the center of his spirituality strengthens the assessment of that spirituality as being both rigorously biblical and theological. By this I mean that it takes the Word of God as its exclusive starting point and goal. Many Christian spiritualities might wish to make the same claim; however, Augustine is the uncommon Logomaniac within the history of spirituality. One consequence of his concern with the Word is that his spirituality is remarkably social over against tendencies, ancient and modern, to locate the epitome of the spiritual life within the recollected experience of the individual believer or seeker. Even Augustine's celebrated contemplation at Ostia had to be received with Monica, and consisted more in a shared hearing than in a private vision.⁴

In locating *sacramentum* in *caritas*, Augustine also thereby insists upon the essential ambiguity of Christian love. This is due to the fact that, in semantic terms, *sacramentum*, like its synonym *mysterium*, posits a simultaneous disclosure and hiddenness.⁵ Disclosure and hiddenness coincide in the Augustinian notion of sacrament much in the same hypostatic manner that the two natures of Christ coexist in one person without polarity or confusion. Thus, the hiddenness of God, or God's absolute transcendence, is revealed and affirmed, not limited or resolved, by the Incarnation. This is to say that we do not grasp God as a result of the Incarnation; godliness is not domesticated by the Word becoming flesh. This essential hiddenness of God and, therefore, of love is not owing to our sinfulness. Nor is it unraveled by our justification, so that growth in personal holiness somehow results in the mystery of God becoming perspicuous. For Augustine, the Incarnation is a sign of the abiding mystery of God.⁶

In like manner, the sacrament or mystery of love (*sacramentum/mysterium caritatis*) directs our reading of the essential texts and traditions of Christianity toward a deeper opening of the soul to love: *dilige et quod vis fac*.⁷ But like an enigma, the sacramental aspect of love lures us into puzzling out seeming contradictions in the scriptural texts.⁸ The apparent resolution of these difficulties often leaves the Christian unsatisfied, even repulsed. All of the rough spots in Augustinian theology—predestination, religious coercion, unbaptized infants, just war—occur precisely because the Word of God is as jarring and enigmatic as it is lucid and alluring.⁹ *Terribilis est iste locus*.¹⁰ For Augustine, some questions in Christian life and doctrine simply refuse to yield totally congenial answers. Sometimes God's love is tough love. But in Augustine's view, we experience it as such only because we perceive it, as St. Paul tells us, *ex parte* and *in aenigmate per speculum*.¹¹ The sacrament or mystery of love discloses that the love which we love and by which we love is known only partially and enigmatically. To love fully means to know God fully, but "who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor?"¹² The error, according to Augustine, is to think that one has finally resolved all of the biblical or theological conundrums in favor of a definitive, enlightened

Christian spirituality. It is against precisely this sort of closure that Augustine believes the sacramental aspect of love to be directed.

But if the inherent ambiguity implied in Augustine's notion of sacrament or mystery as an heuristic of love led him into a few conclusions which seem to us at least problematic, it also enabled him more often to arrive peerless at intellectually and morally daring, progressive stances. For Augustine, the true referent of *sacramentum caritatis* is Christ and, by extension, the Church. The deeds and words of Christ recorded in the scriptures and celebrated in ecclesiastical rites (preeminently in baptism and eucharist) convey the tension between disclosure and hiddenness in terms of God and in terms of love. In Augustinian spirituality we love God and neighbor by entering into the divine mystery of love. This means, in part, that we anticipate being caught off-guard, taken by surprise by God's love expressed—sacramentally—by God's Word. This attitude toward love, governed by sacrament or mystery as it pertains to interpreting the scriptures, is, however, also the hermeneutical principle which guides Augustine's approach to the scriptures. Augustine's reasoning is intentionally circular. We understand the scriptures, especially difficult passages, because we approach them out of a reverence for the sacramental character of love which we have come to perceive, in part, because we have encountered it beforehand in the scriptures. Many will recognize in Augustine's approach the basis for a later monastic spirituality of *lectio divina*.

In terms of hearing the scriptural word, *sacramentum* is what Augustine refers to as the event in which Christ wrests control of the text away from the auditor, who, in this case, resembles Baudelaire's *hypocrite lecteur*.¹³ From Augustine's point of view, the auditor¹⁴ is always too prepared to assign ready-made meanings to scripture texts. Take Augustine's interpretation of John 8:3-11, the pericope of the woman caught in adultery. The pharisees and scribes who presented the woman to Jesus knew that in Deut. 22:22-24 and Lev. 20:10 God commanded death by stoning as a punishment for adultery. But "who among you is without sin? Let him cast the first stone" (John 8:7). Augustine referred to Christ's words in this context as the *responsio sapientiae*, the reply of wisdom which subverts the pharisees' and scribes' all-too-literal attachment to these texts.¹⁵ Note, too, the enigmatic character of the counter-dilemma which Jesus posed to the woman's judges. In Christ, the divine Word was enfleshed, but Augustine understood this *sacramentum* not only in terms of the "real presence," but in terms of its essential ambiguity as far as what is communicated is concerned. Christ did not condemn capital punishment *a priori*, but he made it seem ludicrous that anyone except himself could justly apply that penalty.

I think that Augustine's commentary on this pericope conveys all the essential tensions of his spirituality in the terms in which I am trying to set it out: what I have referred to as *sacramentum caritatis*. It begins, as I said, with the Word of God as it is presented to us in the scriptures. The sacramental character of love introduces a certain ambiguity into our reading of the texts. The pharisees and scribes, who, after all, were not wrong about the prescriptions of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, discovered in their intimate contact with the Word that the biblical text was more ambiguous than they thought. If we can imagine how Augustine thought they must have felt after hearing Christ tell them "let the one without sin cast the first stone," we come close to understanding the effect or phenomenon conveyed by the technical term *sacramentum*. They are suddenly surprised at being

caught off-guard by the Word of God, of having the text (which they thought they had mastered) wrenched out of their specialist control.

Moreover, thrust into examining their own consciences as a result of Christ's words, they are thus prompted into recognizing themselves in the woman whom they condemn. This is the point in Augustine's interpretation in which his famed predilection for interiority reveals itself as effectively social, as a turn toward love of God and neighbor conceived essentially as conversion. This view of interiority stands over against a certain neo-Platonist introversion toward flight or escape from the moral consequences or responsibilities of one's history. Here, too, we can detect the influence of Augustine's thinking about creation of the human being in the trinitarian image of God, its deformation in the Fall, and the reformation of that image through conversion and repentance.¹⁶

If we read closely Augustine's commentary on this text, we discover that the motive behind the Pharisees' and Scribes' change of heart toward the woman is not simply mercy or pity, but justice. The confrontation of the self with itself, personal conversion, means, in part, for Augustine recognizing oneself morally imaged in the other. This is the burden of Christ's words to the Pharisees and Scribes: "let the one without sin cast the first stone." Justice, personal and social, emerges from the reconciliation stimulated by the recognition of the similarities between oneself and the other (as sinner, guilty party, enemy, etc.). The role of memory within Augustine's triadic structure of the trinitarian image of God, which is analogously discovered in the human soul, is, in part, that of keeping alive our "dangerous memories." These recollections of our personal guilt, when held up to our gaze, remind us of our fallibilities, and serve as a check against spiritual or moral pride. Compassion toward enemies is thus born in the recognition of an *infirmetas communis*, a sense of shared guilt and responsibility. Augustine interpreted the departure of the Pharisees and Scribes from the scene as a frank admission of their guilt.

Much of the theory behind this approach to the scriptural Word as *sacramentum caritatis* is found at the end of Book Two of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine's biblical hermeneutics. Text interpretation, such as that exhibited in Augustine's Commentary on the pseudo-Johannine text, would thus be glossed by Augustine with 1 Cor. 8:1: *scientia inflat, caritas autem aedificat*, knowledge puffs up, but charity builds up. The knowledge signified by *scientia* is a reference to technical know-how, whether in the philological manipulation of texts or in the application of logic to moral theory or to some other branch of sacred sciences. In the text found in *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine parallels love with humility, which sufficiently decenters the hearer of the Word as to permit the hidden *sacramenta* to incline the auditor toward the "love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).¹⁷

Knowing properly the mind of God thus involves an *unknowing* which is governed by the sacramental dimension of love. This unknowing, which is a product of the enigmatic nature of divine mystery, clearly consists in a letting go of the pretentious grasping or closure of the meanings of sacred scripture, so that God's will is not so clearly and ultimately perceived.¹⁸ Indeed, in spite of his personal opposition to the use of the death penalty and of his frequent use in letters and sermons of the text of the woman caught in adultery in order to urge public magistrates and civic officials of his day to practice clemency toward convicted capital criminals,¹⁹ Augustine seems not to have deduced from the text an

absolute, universal divine prohibition of the death penalty.²⁰ I would argue that this is not a weakness in his thinking, but a strength. It witnesses once again to the intellectually frustrating, but salutary hesitation definitively to seize upon one possible, legitimate moral reading of the scriptures when the unknowing implied in the admonition *scientia inflat, caritas autem aedificat*, the *sacramentum caritatis* alerts him to another, seemingly contradictory sense or senses.

But it is not Augustine's position for or against the death penalty that is the most compelling element for spirituality within his interpretation of this text. Rather, as a result of Augustine's reasoning about the text, the topic of *infirmis communis*, understood as the shared moral weakness between accuser and accused, emerges as a novel and radical theme in Christian spirituality.²¹ Augustine insisted that magistrates who were prepared to condemn convicted criminals to death should examine their own moral histories to see whether they had not committed sins or crimes which, though deserving of severe penalties, had gone unpunished either through mercy or by virtue of having been undetected. Entering into their own moral depravity furnished judges with the ground from which their judgments about others ought to be made.²²

Closely allied with this theme in those Augustinian texts in which the pericope of the woman caught in adultery is utilized, is that of open confession of wrongdoing. Augustine saw that confession of sins counteracts the strong tendency in the personality toward a self-glorification rooted in the denial of moral failures. He explored the personal consequences of human glory and its antidote in his *Confessions*; while in *City of God*²³ he extended this analysis to the political sphere. For Michel Despland, Augustine, by confessing his sins publicly, gives language in Christian spirituality a continuity with the therapeutic role which Plato's myths held in Greek philosophy. Liberation, both personal and social, is promoted once confession frees up the linguistic behavior essential for common life which is frozen by neurosis and ideology.²⁴ In communities, religious and civic, public language structures and embodies the desires of groups, "keeping open the negotiation with other publicly constituted groups." Despland holds that "there is no such thing as common life without ideology or neurosis," and that "the best that can be done is to relativize the ideologies and neuroses, to keep individuals and groups in touch with each other." That project is threatened when language itself breaks down or, in Despland's words, freezes up.

The best way to keep alert to the dangers of ideology and neurosis may well be to keep in mind what Walter Benjamin has so aptly called dangerous memories; namely remembrance of the dead, those who suffered and were defeated. (Ideologies and neuroses have the obsessive outlook of those determined to be winners.) Most dangerous are the memories of the evils we have committed or the costs we did not or could not correct. Although committed to the urban lifestyle, Plato remembers that his city killed Socrates. In contrast, philosophy of history since Hegel offers a repulsive spectacle: excuses (evils for a greater good) or self-exculpation. The attempt to think teleologically of the historical whole may attribute guilt to others but never to the writer and his spiritual fathers. Augustine in contrast knew that the unveiling of the course of one's life, confession, included confessions of guilt before God and human beings. He was not so neurotic as to have covered up

all his dangerous memories.²⁵

Augustine's propensity to situate confession at the heart of common life is apparent in his monastic rule as well as in his political theology. References to sin, pardon, confession, repentance, examination of conscience, and prayer for pardon are found in the fourth, sixth, and eighth chapters of the *Rule*.²⁶ The strongest statements are clearly found in the sixth chapter, with its climactic admonition: "An individual who absolutely refuses to ask pardon (*ueniam petere*), or does so without meaning it, is entirely out of place in the monastery, even if he is not dismissed."²⁷ In the *City of God*, he includes confession of wrongdoing and prayer for pardon within his portrait of the ideal Christian emperor, and singles out the public penance performed by Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395 A.D.) after he had ordered a massacre at Thessalonica (390 A.D.) as the "most remarkable" (*mirabilis*) among the ruler's many noteworthy deeds.

Augustine's treatment of Theodosius aligns the emperor with the Apostle Paul, Augustine's countertype to the entire caste of classical Roman political leaders. Principal among the reasons supporting this countertype was the fact that Paul's life of public ministry, although expressive of virtue, demonstrated the additional and fundamental quality of self-criticism, an awareness and public admission of spiritual and moral incompleteness. In highlighting Paul's boast that his weakness is his strength (2 Cor. 12:5 and 9-10), Augustine proposes an alternative public discourse to the straightforward Stoic rhetoric of self-glorification which constituted the ideology of the *uiri optimi*.²⁸

The importance which Augustine attaches to the frank admission of wrongdoing in his own life, as well as in monastic and political communities, thus finds a contemporary echo in Despland's conviction that dangerous memories, when held up to our gaze, help us to keep alert to the dangers of ideology and neurosis which threaten common life. If, as Despland suggests, this emphasis represents a major contribution of Augustine to the history of Christianity, it also illustrates the importance to Augustine of the proper place of language in what he took to be the central task of Christians: love of God and neighbor. We have not spent much time discussing Augustine's views regarding the general unreliability of human speech, the insistence with which he understands the scriptural assertion *omnis homo mendax*.²⁹ However, it is clear in his writings that he regarded confession of sins as the only occasion in which human speech might stand outside the veiled confines of deception and, in particular, of self-deception.³⁰ Understood in this way, confession represents the fundamental spiritual discourse, the *oratio iusti*,³¹ because it discloses the contours of the soul to itself. As such it is the paradigmatic dialogue between the soul and God.³²

The conversion of heart which is key to penetrating the *sacramentum caritatis* and which inclines *scientia* toward *sapientia*³³ requires just such open confession of one's sins. The enigmatic, sacramental aspect of love which Augustine encountered in his own study of the scriptures taught him that we love God and neighbor as genuinely as we can only when our decision about what to do proceeds from as honest a self-disclosure of our moral failure as we can muster. This Augustinian position has never been accorded a prominent place in Christian spirituality. Yet I think that it could be sustained as a core statement of Augustinian spirituality by a careful reading of each of Augustine's major writings: *Confessiones*, *De Doctrina Christiana*, *De Civitate Dei*, and *De Trinitate*, as well as of

the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.

It is not Augustine's fault that this particular emphasis on an open confession of sins as the gateway to self-knowledge and, hence, as the starting point for a proper, graced love of God and neighbor, has been lost on his posterity. It would be enlightening to know what impeded the reception in the Middle Ages of the central element of public penance in Augustine's portrait of the emperor in *City of God*; or why, indeed, the role of memory, intellect, and will in fostering conversion through confession has been historically omitted from discussions of his theory of the triadic structure of the image of God within the human soul. Equally curious and regrettable is the cumulative, negative effect of centuries of interpretations of Augustine in reading him as a pessimist. Clearly, more research is needed on the history of the reception of Augustine within later periods of history.

I should like to close this talk by reading a passage on Augustine's spirituality from a book by Rowan Williams.

To be human is to desire, to be drawn and moulded by extra-rational, even extra-mental, attractive forces. Augustine's greatest legacy to Christian spirituality is the affirmation that the life of grace can include not only moral struggle and spiritual darkness, but also an awareness of the radically *conditioned* character of human behaviour—marked as we are in ways unknown to us by childhood experience, historical and social structures, and many more facts of which Augustine himself could not have been consciously aware, but to which our own age is especially sensitive. If human behaviour is such, the 'creation' of a life realizing the purposes of God, the transformation of image into likeness, is not impossible, but does take on a different quality. The emphasis must be not upon achievement but upon attitude. What holds a life together is simply the trust—or faith—that the eyes and the heart are turned towards truth, and that God accepts such a life without condition, looking on the will rather than *merely* the deed. God asks not for heroes but for lovers; not for moral athletes but for men and women aware of their need for acceptance, ready to find their selfhood in the longing for communion with an eternal "other."¹⁴

NOTES

1. Tarcisus van Bavel, "Augustinian Spirituality," Karl Gersbach, ed., *The Augustinian Newsletter* (Olympia Fields, Ill.: Augustinians of the Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, October 1986), p. 1.

2. The number of studies from this century concerning this central concern of Augustine's theology is vast; however, major contributions to the discussion of the place of love in his thought include the following: Hannah Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin. Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation*, Philosophische Forschungen 9 (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1929); Anders Nygren, *Eros und Agape. Gestaltwandlungen der christlichen Liebe* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1954 [1930, 1936]) [= *Agape and Eros, Part I: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love, Part II: The History of the Christian Idea of Love*, P. Watson, trans. (London: SPCK, 1953)]; John Burnaby, *Amor Dei. A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938); Rudolph Lorenz, "Fructio Dei bei Augustin," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 63 (1950-51), pp. 73-132; *Ibid.*, "Die Herkunft des augustinischen Frui Deo," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 64 (1952-53): 34-60; Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1980 [with bibliography]); Tarcisus van Bavel, "The Double Face of Love in Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986): 169-

- 81; *Ibid.*, "The Double Face of Love in St. Augustine. The Daring Inversion: Love is God," *Atti del Congresso internazionale su S. Agostino nel XVI Centenario della Conversione, Roma 15-20 settembre 1986*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 24-26 (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1987), 3:69-80. But *confer* William Schoedel, "Augustine on Love: a Response," *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986):183-85. See also Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993).
3. *Sacramentum* is defined at *ciu.* 10, 5 as *signum sacrum*. Abbreviations for Augustine's works are those indicated by the *Augustinus-Lexikon*, C. Mayer, ed., vol. 1:1/2, Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1986, xxvi-xl.
4. See the foundational study of Paul Henry, *La vision d'Ostie. Sa place dans la vie et l'oeuvre de saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1938), especially pp. 45-48 [= *The Path to Transcendence: From Philosophy to Mysticism in Saint Augustine*, Francis Burch, trans., Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 37 (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1981)]. André Mandouze, "L'extase d'Ostie," *Augustinus Magister. Congrès international augustinien, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1954* (Paris: Études augustinienes, 1954), 1:67-84, at 83, notes the primarily auditory character of Augustine's *extase*. James O'Donnell, *Augustine, Confessions III, Commentary on Books 8-13* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 133-34, argues convincingly that "what is described should properly be called not the *vision* but the *audition* at Ostia." Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 136-41, stresses the social aspects of the contemplation at Ostia, without excluding the personal.
5. See especially Charles Couturier, "Sacramentum et Mysterium dans l'oeuvre de S. Augustin," in *Études augustinienes*, H. Rondet, et. al., co-authors (Paris: Aubier, 1953), pp. 162-332, in particular 256-74. Couturier's assertion (pp. 257-59) that for Augustine, *sacramentum* could never be entirely divorced from *mysterium* has never been contested. See also H.M. Féret, "Sacramentum-Res dans la langue théologique de saint Augustin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 29 (1940):218-43; Christine Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens," *Harvard Theological Review* 47 (1954):141-52; André Mandouze, "A propos de *sacramentum* chez saint Augustin. Polyvalence lexicologique et foisonnement théologique," *Mélanges C. Mohrmann*, L. Engles, H. Hoppenbrouwers, and A. Vermeulen, eds. (Utrecht-Anvers: Spectrum, 1963), pp. 222-32; and Basil Studer, "Sacramentum et exemplum chez saint Augustin," *Recherches augustinienes* 10 (1975):87-141. A helpful explanation is also provided by Trevor Rowe, *St Augustine, Pastoral Theologian* (London: Epworth Press, 1974), pp. 57-75: "On Sacraments."
6. See the discussion of the *sacramentum incarnationis* by Cornelius Mayer, *Die Zeichen in der geistigen Entwicklung und in der Theologie Augustins II: Die antimanichäische Epoche*, Cassiciacum 24/2 (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1974), pp. 261-67; as well as my remarks in "Sacramentum Christi: Augustine on the Christology of Pelagius," *Studia Patristica*. Papers presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991, E. Livingstone, ed., vol. 27, Leuven: Peeters, 1993, pp. 274-80. For a similar approach to the role of mystery in religious experience, see Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary. Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (London: SCM Press, 1988), pp. 219-53.
7. See Augustine, *ep. lo. tr.* 7, 2. At *doctr. chr.* 3, 12, 20, he stipulates that figurative language in the scriptures is to be interpreted "*usque in finem illum caritatis, sive Dei, sive proximi, sive utriusque*." See also *doctr. chr.* 3, 15, 23.
8. See Augustine, *conf.* 13, 18. The Word of God is mediated in the holy scriptures "*in aenigmate nubium et per speculum caeli*." For the fundamental text in Augustine, see *Gr. adu. Man.* 2, 4, 5-5, 6 (PL 34, 198-99). See also *util. cred.* 3, 9; 17, 35; *doctr. chr.* 3, 12, 20; 3, 15, 23-18, 26. A concise, thorough exposition of Augustine's theory (along with references to other studies) is offered by Graziano Ripanti, *Agostino teorico dell'interpretazione*, *Filosofia della religione, Testi e studi* 3 (Brescia: Paideia, 1980), pp. 51-72.

9. On the attractiveness of enigma in the scripture text, see Augustine, *c. Faust.* 12, 7; *cat. rud.* 13; *cath. fr.* 8; and *doctr. chr.* 2, 6, 7-8. For explanation of the theory, see Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 145 (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 4/1958 [1938]), pp. 478-84; and Jean Pépin, "Saint Augustin et la fonction protreptique de l'allégorie," *Recherches augustiniennes* I (1958):243-86, especially pp. 250-57 and 262-67. See also Basil Studer, "Delectare et prodere, ein exegetisch-homiletisches Prinzip bei Augustinus," *Signum Pietatis, Festgabe C. Mayer, A. Zumkeller*, ed. (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), pp. 497-513. I regret that I have not yet seen G.H. Allard, "L'énigme et la culture littéraire d'Augustin," *Philosophiques* I (1974):61-78.
10. *Gn* 28:17. See Augustine, *conf.* 12, 14, 17: '*Mira profunditas eloquiorum tuorum, quorum ecce ante nos superficies blandiens paruulis: sed mira profunditas, Deus meus, mira profunditas! Horror est intendere in eam, horror honoris et tremor amoris...*' in the context of his discussion of the multiple possible interpretations of the creation account at *Gen* 1:3-21.
11. See 1 Cor. 13:12, and the discussion by Cornelius Mayer, "Aenigma," *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 1:1/2 (Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1986), pp. 140-41, who points out that of the nearly 179 uses of aenigma in Augustine's work, about 70 are found within a citation of the Pauline text. *Aenigma* is defined by Augustine as "*obscura quaedam figura rerum*" (*en. Pss.* 138, 8); and as "*obscura parabola quae difficile intellegitur*" (*en. Pss.* 48, 15). See also the definition given by Quintilian, *inst.* 8, 6, 52. For further discussion, see also Mayer, *Die Zeichen*, pp. 463-64.
12. *Rom.* 11:34. See Augustine's use of this text and of 1 Cor. 13:12 at *gr. t. nou.* [= *ep.* 140] 25, 62, in the context of his discussion of the difficulties we encounter in trying to determine the ethical demands of *sacramentum caritatis*. Note that the discussion is framed by references to *sacramentum* (24, 61) and *mysterium* (26, 64), and that both terms refer to *caritas*. I have discussed this text and its principle ethical and hermeneutical issues somewhat in my article "Sacramentum Christi," and more completely in *Language and Justice: Political Anthropology in Augustine's De Civitate Dei* (Diss. Oxford University, 1992), pp. 118-68. Augustine explains elsewhere that we come to know God enigmatically: "proficere per speculum in aenigmate" (*trin.* 14, 25; cf. *ep.* 187, 29). The reference is given by Mayer, "Aenigma," p. 141. See the recent study by Tarcisius van Bavel, "God in between Affirmation and Negation According to Augustine," *Collectanea Augustiniana*, vol. II: *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, eds. J. Lienhard, E. Muller, and R. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 73-97.
13. The epithet is taken from the last line of the opening poem of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Marshall McLuhan thought it expressed what he was trying to get at when he wrote, "If the medium is the message, the user is the content." See Letter of M. McLuhan to *The Listener*, 11 August 1971, in *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, M. Molinaro, C. McLuhan, W. Toye, eds. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 436.
14. Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word. Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1967]), pp. 277-83, is right to insist that the notion of sacrament at the time of Augustine be considered in terms of oral-aural culture, and not the typographic cultures which postdate the advent of the printing press.
15. I discuss in greater detail the relationship between *sacramentum* and John 8:3-11 in "Eloquent Lies, Just Wars and the Politics of Persuasion: Reading Augustine's *City of God* in a 'Postmodern' World," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994):77-137. See also R. Dodaro and J.P. Szura, "Augustine on John 8:3-11 and the Recourse to Violence," *Augustinian Heritage* 34:1 (1988), pp. 35-62.
16. See Marie-Anne Vannier, *'Creatio,' 'conversio,' 'formatio' chez s. Augustin*, Paradosis 31, Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1991; and now Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of St. Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 140-91 (where other significant studies are signposted in the notes).
17. *Eph.* 3:19, cited at *doctr. chr.* 2, 41, 62.
18. See Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 3, 28, 38, where he argues for the possibility of plural valid readings

of one scripture text.

19. See Augustine, *en. Ps.* 50:8-9 (along with the study by Suzanne Poque, "L'écho des événements de l'été 413 à Carthage dans la prédication de saint Augustin," *Homo spiritualis. Festgabe L. Verheijen*, ed. C. Mayer, [Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1987], pp. 391-99); *ep.* 153, 3, 8-4, 10; *serm.* 13, 7. See also Dodaro/Szura, "Augustine."
20. See especially Augustine, *ep.* 153, 6, 16.
21. The motif is found in Ambrose, *De fuga saeculi* 1, 1, 2, as Augustine notes at *c. lul.* 2, 8, 23. It is explicitly mentioned by Augustine at *ep.* 153, 4, 10 in connection with Jn 8:3-11. See also Augustine, *s. dom. m.* 2, 64; *an. et or.* 4, 11; *serm.* 293, 12; 264, 3; 362, 5.
22. See Augustine, *serm.* 13, 7.
23. Especially, *ciu.* 5, 12-26.
24. See Michel Despland, *The Education of Desire. Plato and the Philosophy of Religion* (Toronto: Toronto University Press), pp. 240-97, esp. 273-95.
25. Despland, *Education*, pp. 294-95.
26. See also Augustine, *ep.* 211, especially 3-4 (known in the manuscript tradition as the *Reprimand to Quarrelling Nuns*). The attribution of *Letter* 211, 1-4 to Augustine was questioned by Winfried Hümpfner, first in "Die Regeln des heiligen Augustinus," in *Die grossen Ordensregeln*, ed. H.U. von Balhasar, (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1961 [1948]), pp. 135-71, especially 145-50, and later in other writings. For discussion and counter-arguments, see Luc Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin, II. Recherches historiques* (Paris: Études augustinienes, 1967), pp. 203-4; *ibid.*, "La Règle de saint Augustin: L'état actuel des questions (début 1975)" *Augustiniana* 35 (1985):245-47. Both Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life*, trans. E. College (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986 [1968, 1949]), p. 286; and now George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 123 n. 3, follow Verheijen's cautious attribution of *ep.* 211, 1-4 to Augustine.
27. *Regula* 6, 2. English trans. Lawless, *Augustine* 99. Luc Verheijen, "Les Sermons de saint Augustin pour le Carême (205-211) et sa motivation de la vie 'ascétique,'" *Augustiniana* 21 (1971):357-404, at 382-93 [= *ibid.*, *Nouvelle Approche de la Règle de saint Augustin*, Collection vie monastique 8, Bégrolles en Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1980, 153-200, at 178-89], minutely examines affinities between Augustine on pardon in the sixth chapter of the Rule and various of his Lenten sermons, in particular *Sermon* 211 (ed. Susanne Poque, *Augustin d'Hippone. Sermons pour la Pâque*, Sources Chrétiennes 116, Paris: Cerf, 1966, 154-73; cf. PL 38, 1039-58). Commenting upon the above-cited text from *Regula* 6, 2, Verheijen, "Les Sermons" 389 = *Nouvelle Approche* 185, observes a parallel in Augustine's *Sermon* 210, 10, 12 (PL 38, 1053-4), in which Augustine queries whether those who are unwilling to put an end to animosities at least during Lent ought really to be called Christians. Most commentators on the *Rule* also note an allusion to the Lord's Prayer at this point in chapter six. See also Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 25 (PL 32, 54-5).
28. See Augustine, *ciu.* 14, 9, 2.
29. Ps. 115(116):11. See, for example, Augustine, *serm.* 110, 2; 131, 4; 131, 8; 147, 1; 166 (this sermon was preached on the text of Ps. 115:11); 328, 1, 2; 335E, 3; 335M, 2; *en. Ps.* 36 s. 2, 9; 52 4; 91 6; 115 3; *c. ep. Parm.* 2, 2, 5; *perf. iust.* 12, 19. The text also occurs at *serm.* 132A, 2 [= *s. Mai* 129] the authenticity of which has been questioned by a few scholars, but sustained by the majority. See P.P. Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, *Instrumenta Patristica* 12, (Steenbrugge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 178. Augustine also cites the text within a quotation of Ambrose's *exp. Is. at nupt. et conc.* 1, 35, 40 and 2, 5, 15, as well as at *c. lul. imp.* 4, 120.
30. See *en. Ps.* 84:14 where Augustine comments upon Ps. 85:12 *Veritas de terra orta est: quomodo a te oritur veritas, cum tu peccator sis, cum tu iniquus sis? confitere peccata tua, et oriatur de te veritas. si enim cum sis iniquus, dicis te iustum, quomodo a te veritas oriatur [PL orietur]? si autem cum sis iniquus, dicis te iniquum.'*

31. See Augustine, *en. Ps.* 84: 14-5, especially 15: "*a domino deo data est iustificatio confitentis, ut ipse agnoscat impius pius se fieri non posse, nisi ille fecerit cui confitetur, credendo in eum qui iustificat impium.*"

32. See Augustine, *en. Ps.* 103:4, 18: "*quae est disputatio hominis ad deum, nisi confessio peccatorum? confitete deo quod es, et disputasti cum illo. disputa cum illo, fac bona opera, et disputa. [...] quid est disputare cum deo? te illi indica scienti, ut indicet se tibi nescienti.*" Note, too, the subordination of good works to confession, which provides a check against pride.

33. See Augustine, *trin.* 12, 11, 16-18; *doctr. chr.* 2, 7, 10-11.

34. Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge. Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990 [1979]), pp. 88-89.

