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JOVINIAN, JEROME AND AUGUSTINE. THE BIBLE IN THE SERVICE OF ARGUMENTS

Somewhere around the year 391 the work of *quidam monachus* was started in Rome. He promoted some theses about virginity, marriage and asceticism in general which the Church elites of that time found somewhat controversial.¹ His name was Jovinian and he became the symbol of one of the most ardent moral controversies entangling Western Christianity in the late 4th century when it forged its ideological stance. Owing to the testimony of his polemicists, we know that in the so-called *commentarioli*, written down in approximately 392, he claimed that the services of all classes among Christians – virgins, devout wives, and widows – should be treated equally. Secondly, he is also said to have claimed that Satan could not deceive and cause the downfall of those who were born anew from the waters of Holy Baptism. Thirdly, he allegedly believed that as far as the future life is concerned there is no difference between fasting and eating, on the condition, however, that the latter is done with appreciation and thanksgiving. Finally, he is also believed to have propagated the idea that in the Kingdom of Heaven there is one and the same reward awaiting all the baptized.² According to the unanimous opinion of Ambrose and Augustine, he also became involved in the fourth-century Mariological dispute by questioning Mary's virginity *in partu*.³ Jovinian, as we learn from the sources left by Jerome, but also by Ambrose, Siricius, and finally by Augustine, invoked arguments in his teachings that were substantial

¹ The chronology of events related to the Jovinian controversy is taken from Y.-M. Duval, *L'affaire Jovinien. D'une crise de la société romaine à une crise de la pensée chrétienne à la fin du IV^e et au début du V^e siècle* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 83), Roma 2003, 11–21.

² Hier. *Adv. Iov.* I 3,224.

³ Ambr. *Ep. extra coll.* 15,4; Aug. *De nupt.* 2,2,15.

and powerful from the Christian point of view, since they were mainly and primarily based on the words of Holy Scripture. Taking those as the basis of his disquisition, he tried to prove that marriage was not only distinguished by absolute good, but that its virtue is equal to that of consecrated chastity. However, it needs to be stressed that he did not challenge the value of virginity as such, but only tried to assert the value that he believed marriage deserved but was then denied. There is much that suggests that the point of his speeches was aimed directly at those who under the influence of Manichean ideas or various beliefs with an Encratite tinge, which were strong at that time in Rome, in fact openly questioned the good of marriage and procreation.⁴

Already in spring 393 Jovinian was officially condemned in Rome by Pope Siricius. He then went to Milan where the judgement was confirmed by the bishops who gathered for the synod convened by Ambrose. More or less at that time his writings reached Bethlehem, where until autumn 393 Jerome worked on his pamphlet which today is known as *Adversus Iovinianum*.⁵ The work reached Rome before winter. Unfortunately for the author, his sharp argumentation against Jovinian, where a considerable role was played by explicit antitheses, appeared to be an attempt to deny marriage its value.⁶ The extreme language used by Jerome in the fervour of a rhetorical dispute to completely defeat his adversary could in fact give the impression that the 'good of marriage' was not an obvious value for him. His later endeavours to defend his stand in the apologetic letters sent to his friends, who were worried by the uproar he had caused in Rome, were to no avail. Jerome would forever be remembered as the one who tried to defend the value of virginity, but destroyed the value of marriage.

It was only 7 or 10 years later that another great Church authority of that time – Augustine – would comment on the controversy in his *Retractationes*.⁷ By publishing at relatively short intervals two treatises *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta*

⁴ D. G. Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth – Century Rome: the Case of Jovinian', *ThS* 48 (1987), 45–64.

⁵ *PL* 23, col. 221–352.

⁶ For the scandal which Jerome's argumentation provoked in Rome see his apologetic letters: *Ep.* 48; 49; 50.

⁷ *Aug. Retr.* II 22–23: *Ioviniani haeresis sacrarum virginum meritum aequando pudicitiae coniugali tantum valuit in urbe Roma, ut nonnullas etiam sanctimoniales, de quarum pudicitia suspicio nulla praecesserat, deiecit in nuptias diceretur, hoc maxime argumento cum eas urgeret dicens: tu ergo melior quam Sarra, melior quam Susanna sive Anna?(...) maxime quoniam iactabatur Ioviniano responderi non potuisse cum laude sed cum vituperatione nuptiarum. propter hoc librum edidi, cuius inscriptio est de bono coniugali.(..) Posteaquam scripsi de bono coniugali, expectabatur ut scriberem de sancta virginitate; nec distuli atque id Dei munus et quam magnum et quanta humilitate custodiendum esset uno sicut potui volumine ostendi.*

virginitate, Augustine joined in the debate on the value of virginity and marriage in the early years of the 5th century.⁸ By doing so he probably intended to give voice to his sense of responsibility for the entire Church,⁹ but only did so later, because it was only then that he was faced with the same problem in North Africa which a decade earlier had constituted the ideological background for Jovinian's opinions and the ensuing attack against him by Jerome. The two treatises which are of interest to us were written more or less at the same time as *De opere monachorum*, in which Augustine admonished the monks who were at the outset of their monastic lives in Carthage. The monks took the Parable of the Birds of Heaven (Matt 6:25–34) literally and refused to work to support themselves. To make things worse, they decided to wear long hair as a symbol of their monastic state. Later the Bishop of Hippo wrote in *Retractationes* that the treatise was written when the monasteries in Carthage had just begun to be established and disputes on the principles of ascetic life were occurring frequently, even among the laity.¹⁰ This must have given an opportunity for debates about the good of marriage and the perfection of celibacy. Accordingly, Augustine must have wanted to face those attitudes of the North African Christians which had already developed there or could have easily developed to reflect the ideological positions of Jovinian and Jerome.¹¹

The Bishop of Hippo was well aware that the extreme views by Jovinian and Jerome on the relative value of virginity and marriage were forged in the course of sharp polemic. The atmosphere that accompanies such situations, namely the zeal of both parties of the dispute to completely refute the opinions of the opponent, resulted in a radicalization of the attitudes of the main protagonists, who failed to rely in their argumentation on the "moderation typical of truth".¹² In his twin treatises *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*, knowingly he

⁸ According to the traditional dating, the treatises were written between 401–402; recently, however, a date of 403–404 is more and more frequently preferred, see P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustiniennne*, Paris 2000, 105–108.

⁹ W. Otten, 'Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism, and the Community of the Church', *ThS* 59 (1998), 385–405, esp. 394.

¹⁰ Aug. *Retr.* II 21: *ut de opere monachorum librum scriberem, illa necessitas compulit quod, cum apud Carthaginem monasteria esse coepissent, alii se suis manibus transigebant obtemperantes apostolo, alii vero ita ex oblationibus religiosorum vivere volebant, ut nihil operantes, unde necessaria vel haberent vel supplerent, se potius implere praeceptum evangelicum existimarent atque iactarent, ubi dominus ait: respicite volatilia caeli et lilia agri. unde etiam inter laicos inferioris propositi sed tamen studio ferventes existere coeperant tumultuosa certamina, quibus ecclesia turbaretur, aliis hoc aliis aliud defendentibus.*

¹¹ D.G. Hunter, 'Augustine, Sermo 354A: Its Place in His Thought on Marriage and Sexuality', *AugStud* 33,1 (2002), 39–60, esp. 59.

¹² Aug. *De sancta virg.* 19,19: *nam cum error uterque sit, vel aequare sanctae virginitati nuptias vel damnare, nimis invicem fugiendo duo isti errores adversa fronte confligunt, quia veritatis medium tenere noluerunt*, see *ibid.* 21,21.

embarked on a hard rhetoric task. By manoeuvring between the Scylla of the heretical theses of Jovinian and the Charybdis of the radicalism of Jerome, he wanted to assure his readers of the absolute good of marriage, while being careful not to undermine the opinion that virginity was superior to marriage, as was commonly accepted by the Church elites of that time. The risk Augustine was taking was considerable. On the one hand, writing about the absolute good of marriage, he in fact was criticizing the supporters of the very same views against which Jovinian incited a revolt. On the other hand, being a former Manichean, he had to act with due caution so that his clear declaration of the superiority of virginity over marriage could not be used by his adversaries as an excuse to accuse him of persisting in old erroneous beliefs. Consequently, he was not in a position to start an open polemic with the proponents of the views from which he tried to distance himself, because he was perfectly aware that he could not come out of such fierce rhetorical fight unharmed. Thus, his persuasive strategy was not to overcome Jovinian or Jerome. He did not even use their names and expected that his two treatises would have another effect. Namely, he wanted to convince the audience that the only right path to follow is to 'choose the greater gifts without condemning the smaller ones at the same time'.¹³

However, this does not mean that he completely refrained from a discussion with the main adversaries of the dispute which had flared up in Rome in the late 4th century. There are certain passages in both works in which the Bishop of Hippo deals with the theses they propagated and refutes the essence of their arguments primarily based on the premises of biblical provenance. Yet, he was always careful not to let the polemic become an open debate with either party. Relying on the same biblical quotations used by Jerome and Jovinian, he searched for 'third way' between their interpretations.

It is worth examining an example of Augustine's approach.¹⁴

Marriage as a good in itself (*De bono coniugali* 8)

a) evidence of exegesis

According to Jerome, the testimony of 1 Cor 7 showed that marriage has only the value of a relative good, since we can only compare it to the unambiguously

¹³ Aug. *De sancta virg.* 18,18: *haec dominica, haec apostolica, haec vera, haec sana doctrina est, sic eligere dona maiora, ne minora damnentur.*

¹⁴ I present a detailed analysis of the rhetorical discussion started by Augustine with numerous specific arguments raised by Jovinian and Jerome in my Polish book: P. Nehring, *Dlaczego dziewictwo jest lepsze niż małżeństwo? Spór o ideał w chrześcijaństwie zachodnim końca IV wieku w relacji Ambrożego, Hieronima i Augustyna* [Why Is Virginity Better Than Marriage? A Dispute over the Ideal in Western Christianity of the late 4th century AD as related by Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine], Toruń 2005, 192–219.

negative situation when we ‘burn with passion’ (1 Cor 7:9)¹⁵ or simply to ‘immoralities’ (1 Cor 7:2).¹⁶ Augustine reduced this line of thought to the absurd. He began from Heb 13:4: *Honorabiles ergo nuptiae in omnibus et torus immaculatus* (‘Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled’). Jerome quoted the same verse at the beginning of *Adversus Iovinianum* when he tried to reject beforehand any accusations of depreciation of marriage or supporting the doctrine of Manicheans.¹⁷ But he cited it in a peculiarly abbreviated form, *Honorabiles nuptias, et torum immaculatum*. Knowing the content of his future argumentation in the pamphlet, we cannot accept the abbreviation as a chance omission.¹⁸ His omission of the phrase *in omnibus*, a simple translation of the original Greek *en pasin* present in the Jerome’s own Vulgate and in previous Latin versions deprived the words of St. Paul of their argumentative power which could have easily been used to prove the absolute character of the value of marriage. Augustine, on the other hand, did not even carry out a detailed exegesis of the words but used them directly as an irrefutable biblical confirmation of the rightness of the view he advocated.

b) evidence of consistency

Augustine also challenged the logical consistency of Jerome’s argumentation, which was supposed to prove that, even though there was a good of marriage, it was only relative and as such was of doubtful quality. For if we took as the premise the conclusion that St. Paul speaks of the value of marriage in comparison with immorality and if we at the same time tried to sustain the classification of good in judging the situation as was declared by Jerome, THIS IS A BLOATED AND UNCLEAR CLAUSE– I DON’T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT then, Augustine believed, we would have the following alternative: either both compared objects should be considered as evil, with one being worse than the other or both should be seen as good, with one of them being better than the other.¹⁹ The

¹⁵ *Adv. Iov.* I 9,232–233: *Si per se nuptiae sunt bonae, noli illas incendio comparare. Suspecta est mihi bonitas eius rei, quam magnitudo alterius mali malum esse coepit inferius (...). Ego autem non levius malum sed simpliciter per se bonum volo.*

¹⁶ *Adv. Iov.* I 7,229: *Nihil enim bono contrarium est nisi malum (...). Bonum est illud naturaliter, quod comparationem non habet mali, quod praelatione alterius non obumbratur.*

¹⁷ *Adv. Iov.* I 3,223.

¹⁸ For information about such an instrumental approach to interpreting biblical quotations in which Jerome actually made some intentional changes so as to make the passages more suitable to use with his argumentative objectives, see B. Clausi, ‘La Parola stravolta. Polemica ed esegesi pubblica nell’ *Adversus Iovinianum* di Gerolamo’, *VetChr* 32 (1995), 21–60.

¹⁹ *Aug. De bono coniugali VIII 8: Quod non sic dicimus bonum, ut in fornicationis comparatione sit bonum; alioquin duo mala erunt, quorum alterum peius; aut bonum erit et fornicatio, quia est peius adulterium – peius est enim alienum matrimonium violare quam meretrici adhaerere – et bonum adulterium, quia est peior incestus – peius est enim cum matre quam cum aliena uxore concumbere – et donec ad ea perveniatur, quae, sicut ait Apostolus, turpe est etiam dicere, omnia bona erunt in comparatione peiorum.*

Christian reader, who wanted to remain faithful to the doctrine of the Church and be reasonable at the same time, would clearly object to both claims. Not only did Augustine ridicule Jerome's reasoning by pointing out that it would have to lead either to heresy or to nonsense, but most importantly, he demonstrated that the premise of the conclusion, that is interpreting St. Paul's words in 1 Cor 7:1–2 as a comparison open to rhetorical analysis, is devoid of sense. Furthermore, in case the reader was still in doubt whether St. Paul compared marriage and immorality or not, Augustine opened the 11th paragraph of his letter with a syllogistic argument in which he showed that taking the assumption would lead to yet another conclusion which this time would stand in contradiction to another of St. Paul's statements from 1 Cor 7. If the decision about marriage would be made in view of its comparison with immorality, then it would have to be considered as choosing the lesser of the two evils, and marriage is not evil at all, as the Apostle explicitly said in 1 Cor 7:28 and 7:36.²⁰ AGAIN, I DON'T QUITE FOLLOW THIS SENTENCE.

The reward virgins will be given in the Kingdom of Heaven

As we recall, one of Jovinian's theses said that there was one and the same reward awaiting all the baptized after they die, irrespective of the class they belonged to or the sins they committed and were forgiven through baptism. Jerome only marginally challenged the validity of this view in book I of his pamphlet, when he referred to the different merits of virgins and spouses, which in his opinion necessitated different rewards awaiting them after their death. Instead of a serious counter-argument based on the Holy Scriptures, he resorted to rhetorical tricks. In particular, he claimed that Jovinian's thesis implied that it was not only virgins who could expect the same reward as respectable wives, but that the same credit should be given to those who lived in a single marriage and those who got married two or three times and finally that the latter were not much better than various harlots and lechers who, having done penance for their sins, would have the same place in the Kingdom of Heaven as those who remarried or even as virgins.²¹ What Jerome used here is a rhetorical *gradatio*,²² which connects under

²⁰ Ibid. X 11: *Nec ipsis tamen peccatum sunt nuptiae, quae, si in comparatione fornicationis eligerentur, minus peccatum essent quam fornicatio, sed tamen peccatum essent. Nunc autem quid dicturi sumus adversus evidentissimam vocem Apostoli dicentis: quod vult faciat; non peccat, nubat, et: si acceperis uxorem, non peccasti; et si nupserit virgo, non peccat.*

²¹ Ibid.: *Nam qui aequalia omnium asserit merita, tam virginitati facit iniuriam, dum eam nuptiis comparat, quam et nuptiis, sic eas licitas asserens, ut secunda et tertia matrimonia. Sed et digamis et trigamis adversarius est, ibi ponens scortatores quondam et libidinosissimos post poenitentiam, ubi duplicata et triplicata matrimonia: nisi quod in eo digami et trigami dolere non debent, quia idem scortator et poenitens in regno coelorum etiam virginibus adaequatur.*

²² See H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, Wiesbaden 1990, § 623.

the same criterion various groups, commonly perceived as unequal, here, virginity, marriage and remarriage, and fornication. The conclusion, equating the merits of virgins to the merits of repenting harlots, absurd as it was to Christians living in the 4th century, must have been paradoxically effective in influencing the imagination of readers and biasing their attitude against Jovinian's views, which, according to the author of the pamphlet, made such assertions possible. He dealt with Jovinian's thesis in greater detail in book II of his pamphlet but did not link it directly with the issue of a particular value to be attributed to virginity, which constituted the main subject of his deliberations in the first part of the treatise. Augustine, on the other hand, who in *De sancta virginitate* made the eschatological motivation, understood as an aspiration to attain in the Kingdom of Heaven the glory reserved only for the few, the *raison d'être* for consecrated chastity, was very scrupulous in analyzing this particular view of Jovinian and undermined its legitimacy by focusing exclusively on proving that in fact it was virginity that merited such a special accolade.

Augustine also reinterpreted the same passages from the Bible which had earlier been used by Jovinian in support of a quite another thesis as well as those used by Jerome in his polemic with Jovinian. The passages are two: Matt 19:10–12, where Jesus Christ speaks about the 'eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven', which Augustine related directly to consecrated virgins,²³ and Isaiah 56:5, which speaks of God's reward for eunuch: to them He 'give in His house and within His walls a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters'.²⁴ Obviously, the application of these two passages to Christians practicing permanent restraint was not Augustine's original idea. In order to prove that virginity was a virtue backed with the authority of God and that virgins could hope for a special place in Heaven, the very same quotations were used as reference by, for example, Ambrose in *Exhortatio virginitatis* 3,17, but more importantly also by Jerome in *Adversus Iovinianum* I 12,239. The form of the Isaiah passage used by the latter is worthy of note here, as it seems to differ intentionally from the lesson we know from the Septuagint, from the so-called *Vetus Latina*, and finally from Jerome's own Vulgate Bible. In each of those versions we read of a 'and a name better than that of sons and daughters'. In paragraph 12 of his pamphlet, however, Jerome gives the verse the following form: *Hi sunt eunuchi, qui (...) audiunt per Isaiam, quod pro filiis et filiabus locum in coelis habeant paratum*. Thus there is no gradation which would suggest that the place awaiting eunuchs in Heaven is better than the one for daughters and sons. Instead, according to Jerome's source, the prophet speaks of one place prepared in Heaven for sons and daughters, which virgins can also

²³ Aug. *De sancta virg.* XXIII 23.

²⁴ Ibid. XXIV 24 – XXV 25.

count on. Such a perspective obviously radicalizes the overtones meaning? of Isaiah's words, as it does not give the slightest chance for a place due to children WIEM, ZE DOKŁADNIE TLUMACZY ALE ZLE BRZMI in God's home for those who did not take the oath of permanent restraint. If we add to this the following conclusion he reached in the same paragraph of his treatise while interpreting the words of Christ from Matt 19:10–12: *Si castrati mercedem habent regni coelorum, ergo qui se non castraverunt, locum non possunt accipere castratorum*, then we will clearly understand the idea motivating him to quote as he did from the Book of Isaiah.²⁵

Although Jerome's exegesis challenged Jovinian's thesis about the same award awaiting all the baptized after death, Augustine could not accept that exegesis as such because it also led to some conclusions which definitely depreciated the value of marriage. He therefore focused in his reasoning on the part of Isaiah's verse which was completely omitted in Jerome's version. Thus he interpreted the prophet's words about the 'and a name better than that of sons and daughters', against Jovinian's position, as an indication of a better award which would be given to virgins and at the same time, against Jerome's interpretation, as a promise of a splendid award in the form of 'a and a name due to sons and daughter' which would be available to those who have not chosen to follow the path of 'sacred virginity'.²⁶

Jovinian's opponents might have been perplexed by his argument, which relied on a simple interpretation of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, each of whom was given equal reward irrespective of the work done (Matt 20:1–16).²⁷ Denying the legitimacy of that argument, Jerome tried to prove that the parable should be approached from a historical perspective. Accordingly, every hour when the owner of the vineyard hired workers should be related to the history of salvation in which God first called Abel, then the patriarchs and prophets, and finally at 'the last hour' He summoned the pagans. In the frame of such an interpretation, undoubtedly taken from Origen,²⁸ Jerome assumed that the denarius,

²⁵ Already a few years before, in his *Letter to Eustochium*, Jerome cited Is 56:5 as *locum pro filiis et filiabus sempiternum*, giving those words a similar argumentative function, that is, considering them as a signal of the reward awaiting virgins in the Kingdom of Heaven, see *Ep.* 22,21. However, when, many years later, he was writing a commentary on the Book of Isaiah, he quoted the version from the Vulgate Bible, see *Hier. Comm. in Isaiam* XV 56,4: (...) *locum nominatum, meliorem filiis et filiabus* (...).

²⁶ Aug. *De sancta virg.* XXIV 24: *Neque enim spadones istos eis qui in domo eius non habent locum praeuultit Deus, sed eis utique qui in filiis generandis coniugalitatis vitae meritum seruant. nam cum dicit: dabo eis locum multo meliorem, ostendit et coniugatis dari, sed multo inferiorem.*

²⁷ *Hier. Adv. Iov.* II 20,3.

²⁸ See *Orig. Comm. in euangelium Mathaei* 15:21.

which was the same for everyone, did not stand for the same reward awaiting in the Kingdom of Heaven, but rather for the same 'eternal life'.²⁹

Obviously, Augustine could not ignore the issue. However, in his writing he did not enter into a discussion with Jovinian's concept of one and the same reward awaiting all the pious people after death. Certainly, he also believed that, once they die, both virgins and married people would be given the same reward in the form of salvation. Nevertheless, referring to St. Paul's words that 'star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead' (1 Cor 15:41–42) and the sentence from the Gospel According to St. John saying that in 'My father's house are many dwelling places' (John 14:2), he tried to argue that all the dwelling places in the Kingdom of Heaven would be qualitatively equal. Augustine considered the above New Testament quotations to constitute indisputable proof of the legitimacy of his view and did not even commit himself to a detailed exegesis of the passages. Jovinian himself, on the other hand, was well aware that the passages might be used to challenge his thesis and tried to anticipate any arguments based on those in his *commentarioli*. In particular, he tried to prove that 'many dwelling places' denotes 'many Churches in the earthly world', whereas the sentence about stars differing in glory indeed referred to the categories of *spirituales* and *carnales*, but there was no way it could be understood as referring to the quality of the reward waiting in the Kingdom of Heaven for all the redeemed.³⁰ While Jerome ridiculed those interpretative ideas in his pamphlet, taking the reasoning behind them to absurd levels, Augustine did not even bother to make a reference to them and used the persuasive power of those quotations in such a way as if their meaning could raise no doubts. He did likewise with the testimony from the Book of Revelation, in which the Apostle describes chaste saints who 'follow the Lamb wherever He goes' (Rev 14:2–4). He used this verse to show that virgins would find a place in the Kingdom of Heaven closer to Jesus Christ than all others³¹ and that it was they who would be singing this new song before the 'throne'.³² Jerome had already interpreted the sentence in much the same way in the conclusion of his *Letter to Eustochium*,³³ but used it also in book I of *Adversus Iovinianum*.³⁴ Jovinian knew very

²⁹ Hier. *Adv. Iov.* II 32,344: *Unius autem denarius non unum est praemium, sed una vita, et una de gehenna liberatio*. Here Jerome repeated the same interpretation of the parable which he used about 10 years earlier in the long letter to Damasus, see *Ep* 21,40, and to which he remained faithful a few years later in his commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, see *Comm. in Matt.* 3:20,1–2. The understanding of 'denarius' as a symbol of eternal life he most probably took from Tertullian, who made the suggestion in his treatise *De monogamia* 10,40, which Jerome was well familiar with.

³⁰ Hier. *Adv. Iov.* II 19–20,327–328.

³¹ Aug. *De sancta virg.* XXVII 26 – XXVIII 27.

³² Aug. *De sancta virg.* XXVII 26 – XXVIII 27.

³³ Hier. *Ep.* 22,41.

³⁴ Hier. *Adv. Iov.* I 40,281.

well that this quotation from the Book of Revelation had a persuasive potential which could easily be used against his thesis and,³⁵ as we know thanks to Jerome's words, in his *commentarioli* he interpreted the sentence about the virgins following the Lamb as an allegorical reference to the Church – a virgin to whom belonged all believers, irrespective of the condition they lived in, and who could not be blemished by anything.³⁶ Jerome entered into a sharp discussion with this part of Jovinian's argumentation, in which he claimed that the adherents of the Church differ only at the level of name and in fact they constitute its homogeneous and unwavering congregation. 'UNWAVERING CONGREGATION'? Finding a large number of biblical passages in support of a completely different stance, he objected strongly against such an idea.³⁷ However, neither Augustine nor he mentioned directly that of the exegetical ideas of Jovinian according to which those virgins following the Lamb in the Book of Revelation should be perceived as an allegory of the Church in general. SOMETHING IS MISSING HERE; MOZE 'neither Augustine nor he mentioned directed Jovinian's exegesis of the virgins following the Lamb in the Book of Revelation as an allegory for the Church in general.' Both understood the sentence of St. John as an obvious indication of the fact that in the Kingdom of Heaven virgins would hold a privileged position and they would not admit that another interpretation of the words was possible. Even though the two agreed on the main argumentative function which could be attributed to the quotation, Augustine was able to present the vision of St. John as optimistic also for those who were not following the path of sacred chastity, whereas Jerome showed no trace of that idea. In order to do that, the probably clean-shaven son of Mon(n)ica availed himself of an argument based on the use of *imitari* ('imitate') instead of the verb *sequi* from the Latin text of the Book of Revelation he was familiar with.³⁸ Such a rhetorical trick, which in the books of rhetoric is known as an argument *a multiplici appellatione*,³⁹ made it possible for him, first of all, to use St. John's words with reference to all Christians, who not only could, but more importantly should, imitate Christ, which for his readers constituted an incontrovertible article of faith, and then to simultaneously single out virgins, who could go one step further in their imitation than others and thus be closer to Him.

³⁵ See. Hier. *Ep.* 22,41; *Adv. Iov.* I 40,281.

³⁶ Hier. *Adv. Iov.* II 19,328: *Sponsa, soror, mater, et quaecunque alia putaveris vocabula, unius Ecclesiae congregatio est, quae nunquam sine sponso, fratre, filio. Unam habet fidem, nec constupratur dogmatum varietate, nec haeresibus scinditur. Virgo permanet. Quocunque vadit Agnus, sequitur illum: sola novit Canticum Christi.* The idea here, according to which nothing can spoil the chastity of the Church, recalls the ecclesiological concepts of Cyprian, see *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* 6, but in Cyprian there is no parallel for the allegorical interpretation of the sentence from Rev 14:4 presented here.

³⁷ Hier. *Adv. Iov.* II 30,341–342.

³⁸ Aug. *De sancta virg.* XXVII 27: *Quid est enim sequi nisi imitari?*

³⁹ Fort. 2,23 (Halm), 115; see Lausberg, *Handbuch*, § 377, 2.

Conclusion

In *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*, Augustine used all of his rhetorical artistry in order to prove that both Jovinian and Jerome were wrong. His argumentation was well thought out and his hope was that his voice in the discussion would be heard as a voice of reason between Jovinian's heresy and Jerome's radicalism. Unfortunately, his success in this sphere was not complete. A dozen or so years later, under the accusations made by Julian of Eclanum that he supported the Manicheans, he was forced to resume the debate on the value of Christian marriage and human sexuality in general. He was deeply hurt by the charge⁴⁰ and wrote a number of texts as a retort in which he openly defended the good of marriage and acknowledged the yearning for procreation as a natural characteristic instilled in man by God. Generally, Augustine had started to shape his balanced opinions on that issue much earlier, before he was faced with Pelagianism, in his twin texts from the early years of the 5th century, which were created in consequence of the Jovinian controversy. Undoubtedly, as rightly noted by R.A. Markus, one of Augustine's achievements was nevertheless the fact that after him it was no longer possible to write about marriage as Jerome did. On the other hand, it was equally difficult to write about virginity in the manner common before the dispute about the ideal that flared up at the end of the 4th century.⁴¹

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⁴⁰ Aug. *De nupt.* I 1,1.

⁴¹ R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge 1990, 62: 'Never again would it be possible, after Augustine's rebuttal of the charge of Manicheism, to write of marriage in the manner of Jerome. Equally, however, it would be harder to write of virginity in the manner of Ambrose or Gregory of Nyssa.'