



ETIAM

Revista Agustiniana
de Pensamiento

ISSN 2781-6296

{ Volumen XV
Número 16
2021 }



ETIAM

Resvista Agustiniana de Pensamiento

ISSN: 2781-6296

{ Volumen XV }
{ Número 16 }
2021

ETIAM

Revista Agustiniana de Pensamiento

ISSN 2781-6296

Volumen XV | Número 16 | 2021

Staff

Dirección

Fr. Juan Antonio Buere, OSA

Secretaría de Redacción / Supervisión

D. Pablo Guzman, AIEP/SAEMED/IGTM.

Consejo de Redacción / Colaboradores

Fr. Pablo Hernando Moreno, OSA.

Fr. Santiago Alcalde de Arriba, OSA.

Fr. José Guillermo Medina, OSA

Fr. Javier Otaka Higa, OSA.

Fr. Emiliano Sánchez Pérez, OSA.

Consejo Científico

Dr. Julián Barenstein, UNSAM-USAL-UBA-CONICET

Fr. Aldo Marcelo Cáceres, OSA / Centro Teológico San Agustín, Madrid-Univ. Pontificia de Salamanca / Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Dra. Pamela Lucia Chávez Aguilar, Universidad de Chile

Dra. Silvia A. Magnavacca, Universidad de Buenos Aires-CONICET

Dr. Michael Vlad Nicolescu, Universidad de Bradley-AIEP

Dr. Mariano Splendido, UNLP-CONICET

Mg. María Eugenia Varela, UCA-Université Jean Moulin (Lyon III)

Dra. Laela Zwollo, Tilburg University, School of Theology

ETIAM Revista Agustiniana de Pensamiento (ISSN 2781-6296) es una publicación online de acceso gratuito. Su único fin es la difusión de trabajos y publicaciones independientes, personales, grupales y/o institucionales. Ni la Orden de San Agustín ni *ETIAM*, se hacen responsables por el contenido de los artículos publicados. Los autores son los únicos responsables frente a terceros por reclamos derivados de los trabajos publicados.

Publicación fundada por Mons. Jose Demetrio Jiménez Mariscal, OSA, 1963-2019.

La revista ETIAM es indexada desde sus inicios en IMB (International Medieval Bibliography (University of Leeds)), en BINPAR (Bibliografía Nacional de Publicaciones Periódicas Argentinas Registradas del Caycit (CONICET)), en DIALNET (La Rioja, España), en BIBP (Base d'Information Bibliographique en Patristique, Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses Université Laval-Québec.) The Ancient World Online AWOL / University of Michigan USA, Centro Studi Antoniani Italia, Inter-Classica - Universidad de Murcia, LatinRev - FLACSO, Historical Bibliography of The Augustinian Order – Utrecht. LATINDEX.

La totalidad de los números está disponible en:

<https://www.bibcisao.com/etiam>

Para más información, envío de colaboraciones o publicaciones para ser comentadas, dirigirse a:

Secretaría y Redacción

Biblioteca Agustiniana de Buenos Aires

Av. Nazca 3909 C1419DFC

Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires

República Argentina

Tel. 54 011 4572-2728

bibliothecaugustiniana@gmail.com

Maquetación / Diagramación

Biblioteca Agustiniana de Buenos Aires-OSA

Imagen de portada

Anónimo., *San Agustín con el ángel niño*. Siglo XVII. Óleo sobre lienzo, 176 x 147 cm.

No expuesto . Museo del Prado.

<https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/san-agustin-con-el-angel>

Mother Wisdom and Maria. Two Ways of Salvation in Augustine

Madre Sabiduría y María. Dos Caminos de Salvación en Agustín

Dr. Kitty Bouwman¹

Fecha de recepción: 28/06/2021

Fecha de aceptación: 16/09/2021

Abstract

In the works of Augustine many references to motherhood can be found. He ascribes aspects of spiritual motherhood to Jesus' mother Maria. Aspects of divine motherhood become visible with regard to the personification of Wisdom. Following the textual findings and their theological patterns, my research shows two notions of salvation, both referring to motherly figures, which are at work simultaneously in Augustine's texts: one belonging to an early Christian wisdom tradition that centre stages Mother Wisdom and sees Jesus as her envoy, and the other to the more mainstream Christian tradition in which Mary's performance is emphasized in her role of giving birth to God's Son. In both cases salvation consists of being guided by the Church, and finding fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. In my article the focus is on both ways of salvation.

Keywords: Divine Wisdom, Maria, Way of Salvation

Resumen

En las obras de Agustín se pueden encontrar muchas referencias a la maternidad. Él atribuye aspectos de la maternidad espiritual a la madre de Jesús, María. Aspectos de la maternidad divina se hacen visibles con respecto a la personificación de la Sabiduría. Siguiendo los hallazgos textuales y sus patrones teológicos, mi investigación muestra dos nociones de salvación, ambas referidas a figuras maternas, que operan simultáneamente en los textos de Agustín: una perteneciente a una tradición de sabiduría cristiana primitiva que pone en el

¹ Dr. Kitty Bouwman, studied theology and spirituality in Amsterdam and Nijmegen. She obtained her PhD at the University of Utrecht for the research on the Mystagogical Function of Divine Motherhood and Spiritual Motherhood in Augustine (2015). She works as pastoral caretaker and spiritual counsellor, and is a teacher in the study of spirituality. She is also an associated researcher at the Titus Brandsma Institute (Nijmegen), studying Divine Motherhood and Spiritual Motherhood in Hildegard of Bingen. Bouwman is editor-in-chief of *Herademing*, a magazine for mysticism and spirituality.

Email address: chmbouwman@gmail.com; website: www.matersapientia.nl

centro a la Madre Sabiduría y ve a Jesús como su enviado, y el otro a la tradición cristiana más dominante en la que se enfatiza la actuación de María en su papel de dar a luz al Hijo de Dios. En ambos casos la salvación consiste en dejarse guiar por la Iglesia, y encontrar plenitud en la Jerusalén celestial. En mi artículo, el enfoque está en ambos caminos de salvación.

Palabras clave: Sabiduría divina, María, Camino de Salvación.

Introduction

Motherhood is as old as mankind. Mothers play an important role at the beginning of life and are necessary to be able to live. Early Christian writers used experiences from the mother-child relationship to articulate their relationship with God. They wrote of a pregnant God who bears them, or a God who gives them birth again, and of a God who feeds and weans them. One of these early Christian writers who featured maternal images in his works is Augustine (354-430). He attributes maternal aspects to divine persons such as Wisdom, Christ, Holy Spirit, to earthly persons such as Mary, Paul and the other proclaimers of Christian faith, and to separate entities such as the Church, the Holy Scriptures and the heavenly Jerusalem. On the basis of these maternal images, Augustine describes two ways of salvation. One way of salvation is linked to Mother Wisdom, which Augustine describes as an eternal nourishing mother. The other way of salvation is related to Mary who gave birth to God's Son. In this contribution I will look for both ways of salvation in the works of Augustine.²

² This article is based on my dissertation: Bouwman, K., *Mater Sapientia, De mystagogische functie van het moederschap van God en het geestelijke moederschap bij Augustinus*, Vught, Skandalon, 2015.

Motherhood of Wisdom and Maria

The Christian tradition emphasizes Mary's performance in her role of mother in giving birth to God's Son. She had an important function in the Incarnation of the Word. In the early Christian statements of faith promulgated by the Ecumenical Councils, we see a shift from Mary as mother of Jesus to her being the mother of God (*theotokos*): she who gave birth to God (Council of Ephesus, 431). This title was attributed to her in order that the divinity of Jesus Christ would be established. Augustine does not describe Mary as the mother of God (*mater Dei*).³ To him, Mary was an earthly mother and not a heavenly mother.

In the works of Augustine, we find an heavenly mother: Wisdom. Wisdom has a prominent place as a woman and as a mother in Biblical wisdom literature. In Biblical wisdom literature, Wisdom is personified as woman and as mother. In Hebrew she is *Chokmah* [חָכְמָה], in Greek: *Sophia* (σοφία), in Latin: *Sapientia*. Wisdom teaches us the way to become wise. Wisdom is also a hostess who invites us to her meals. She comes to the fore in *Proverbs* 8:1 - 9, 9:1 - 12; *Job* 28, *Baruch* 3:9 - 4:4; in *Wisdom of Solomon* 6:12 - 10:21 and *Wisdom of Jesus Sirach* 24. This wisdom tradition was still current in the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Traces of this wisdom tradition can be found in texts of the First Testament and the Second Testament.

In the book of Ben Sira Wisdom is a mother for her children:

“I am the mother of awe and true love of knowledge and holy hope. I was given forever to all my children, to all who have chosen the Lord” (Sir. 24:18).

³ Dodaro, R., “Maria virgo et mater.” *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Vol. 3, Basel, Schwabe, 2004, pp. 1171-1179.

The Greek text of Ben Sira text was translated into Latin, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian, Armenian and Arabic. As a result, it was circulated in the early Christian church. Several Greek authors (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, John Chrysostomus, Cyril of Jerusalem) and Latin authors (Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine) have quoted from this book.⁴

The popularity of the book in the early Christian Church which was reflected in its nickname: *ecclesiasticus* (Church book). The book *Ecclesiasticus* was used in the early Christian church to teach catechumens.⁵ It is possible that Augustine came into contact with this book in this way, because he was being a catechumen himself for many years. And later on, as a bishop, responsible for teaching catechumens, he might have become even more acquainted with this book.

Two ways of salvation in Augustine

Augustine describes two ways of salvation. One way belongs to the early Christian wisdom tradition that centre stages Mother Wisdom and sees Christ on earth as her envoy. The other way points to the established tradition in which the emphasis is on Mary who received God's Word. The way of salvation of Mother Wisdom has completely vanished in the course of the history of Christian spirituality.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza distinguishes two levels of theological reflection in this early Christian wisdom tradition. The first level

⁴ Beentjes, P., *De Wijsheid van Jesus Sirach*, Budel, Damon, 2006, pp. 124.

⁵ Beentjes, P., *De Wijsheid van Jesus Sirach...*, pp. 59-50.

understands Jesus as messenger and prophet of Wisdom. The second level identifies Jesus with Divine Wisdom.⁶ An example of the first level is found in the Gospel of Luke: 'But wisdom is justified of all her children' (Luke 7:35).⁷ An example of the second level, we can be found in Paul who calls Christ God's power and wisdom (1 Kor. 1:24).

Tarcisius van Bavel has pointed to a wisdom Christology in the works of Augustine.⁸ Van Bavel associates wisdom Christology with the theology of the Incarnation.⁹ In this Christology divine Wisdom is seen as Jesus Christ. Although Van Bavel is aware of the similarity between divine Wisdom and Jesus Christ, he doesn't amplify this notion of Christ. He simply continues with the other strand in which Christ is the carrier of the person of Wisdom but also the Word of God. In doing so, Van Bavel points to the second level of the early Christian wisdom tradition, and takes no notice of the relationship between mother Wisdom and Jesus, who is her envoy. In this contribution I will look for the first level of the wisdom tradition in which the relationship between Mother Wisdom and Jesus comes to the fore.

From a historical biblical and theological perspective, the wisdom tradition of early Christianity is at the beginning of a development in which Wisdom is gradually being replaced by Jesus Christ. On the basis of expressions of divine and spiritual motherhood I will examine to what

⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, E., *Jesus, Miriam's Child Sophia's Prophet, Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*, New York, Continuum, 1994, 139.

⁷ Lc 7, 35: *et iustificata est sapientia ab omnibus filiis suis* (and wisdom is justified by all her children).

⁸ Bavel, T. van, "Maternal Aspects in Salvation History According to Augustine", en *Augustiniana* 47 (1997), pp. 250-290.

⁹ Bavel, T. van, "L'humanité du Christ comme *lac parvulorum* et comme *via* dans la spiritualité de Saint Augustin" en *Augustiniana* 7 (1957), pp. 245-281.

extent Augustine describes this development. Van Bavel describes this development in Augustine as an evolution,¹⁰ with the undertone that it leads to something better. But is this evolutionary development really only an improvement? To ask this question is to answer it: I maintain that with the disappearance of this wisdom tradition something essential has been lost, and it is on the basis of that thought that I have done my research. In this contribution, I will describe and analyse both ways of salvation based on expressions of the heavenly motherhood of Wisdom and the motherhood of Mary.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Augustine links expressions of mother Wisdom and Mary to the revelations of salvation in the history of Christian spirituality: Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the Church and the Eschaton. On the basis of these theological core themes, I will analyse the two ways of Salvation.

I will highlight the two ways of salvation from the viewpoint of the academic discipline of spirituality studies. Based on the definitions of Waaijman,¹¹ and Dreyer and Burrows,¹² I identify four aspects of

¹⁰ Van Bavel describes about a development that relates to the person of Jesus Christ, which will culminate in the formulation of Chalcedon (451), forty years after Augustine's death. Bavel, T. van, "God absorbeert niet: de christologie van Schoonenberg", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 11, 1971, 382-412, 402.

¹¹ Waaijman defines spirituality as 'divine-human relational process'. Waaijman, K., *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, Leuven, Peeters, 2002, 427.

¹² Dreyer and Burrows describe Christian spirituality: 'A particular Christian spirituality is one that involves conscious discipleship, opening oneself to the grace in the generosity of the Creator, through the love of God, by the grace of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Spirit.' Dreyer, Elizabeth A., and Burrows, Mark. S., *Minding the Spirit, The Study of Christian Spirituality*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, xv.

spirituality: (1) the divine reality: the triune God; (2) the human reality; (3) the human and divine realities as related reciprocally: discipleship; and the relation as dynamic, as a process (4). The relation between the divine reality and the human reality can be mediated by a person or a 'form' of spiritual motherhood. In this research mother Wisdom as divine mother belongs to the divine reality. Mary, Jesus mother, gives shape to spiritual motherhood, because she belongs to the earth and not to heaven.

My research questions are focused on the following: In what way does mother Wisdom reveal herself? What experience does her revelation bring to the disciple? What function did mother Wisdom have? Which way unfolds at the revelation of Mother Wisdom? In what way is God revealed to Mary? What experience does this revelation bring to her? In what way did Augustine express her mediation in his writings. What function have Mary's mediation to human beings? What way unfolds because of the fact that Mary did give birth to God's Son?

This study follows an hermeneutic approach, because it is based on texts of Augustine; this research is also systematic for its analysis of the indications of divine motherhood of Wisdom and of the indications of spiritual motherhood of Mary. I will follow the textual findings and their theological patterns to explore these two ways of Salvation.

Structure of this Article

This contribution consists of two main parts. In the first part the salvation path of Mother Wisdom is central (1) and in the second part

the salvation path of Mary (2). In view of the obscurity of Mother Wisdom's way of salvation, I pay more attention to that than to Mary's. I complete my contribution with the conclusions (3).

1. The Way of Salvation of Mother Wisdom

This section starts with texts in which the maternal nurturing of Wisdom comes to the fore in the incarnation (1.2) and in the church (1.3). I close this section with the heavenly Jerusalem that Augustine identifies with Mother Wisdom (1.4).

1.1. Mother Wisdom at the Incarnation

Introduction

Augustine associates Wisdom with a mother who converts food into milk at the incarnation (*Conf.* 7.18.24). In a tractate, he personifies Wisdom as a mother (*Io.eu.tr.* 98, 6).

1.1.1. Wisdom becomes milk

In book seven of the *Confessions*, Augustine describes a fundamental change in his life. He had distanced himself from Manichaeism; he was orienting himself towards the Catholic faith and was going under the audience of Ambrose, bishop of Milan (386). He tells us that the Neoplatonic writings brought him into contact with philosophical wisdom. This wisdom stand in line with God's Word (*Conf.* 7.9.14). These writings opened to him a way of thinking that taught him to ascend to divine reality, coming to an understanding of the truth.

However, this experience also led to a self-confrontation in which God held up a mirror to him (Conf. 7.10.16). He desired to have the strength to enjoy God, but he was too weak for that. With the elements of weakness and strength he creates a contradiction, from which he could not free himself. In this field of tension he describes ‘Wisdom that becomes milk for our childhood’. This nourishment of Wisdom refers to the grace made available through the incarnation of Christ.

Fragment of Augustine’s text from *Conf.* 7.18.24

“Accordingly I looked for a way to gain the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who is also God, supreme over all things and blessed for ever. Not yet had I embraced him, though he called out, proclaiming, I am the Way and Truth and the Life (John 14:6), nor had I known him as the food which, though I was not yet strong enough to eat it, he had mingled with our flesh; for the Word became flesh so that your Wisdom, through whom you created all things, might become for us the milk adapted to our infancy. Not yet was I humble enough to grasp the humble Jesus as my God, nor did I know what his weakness had to teach.”¹³

Augustine would find the way to enjoy God if he embraced Jesus Christ while on earth. He associates this way not only with truth and life (John 14:6), but also with food for which he was too weak. This nourishment comes from Wisdom, who is different from the philosophical wisdom. But who is Wisdom? Augustine speaks about *your wisdom*, and thus he

¹³ St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (Boulding), p. 178.

indicates that she belongs to God. On the one hand, wisdom points to the creative power of the Word (John 1:3), on the other hand, wisdom becomes milk. Both functions of wisdom relate to the Incarnation: the Word becomes flesh (1), and the food is mingled with flesh and becomes milk (2). To understand these two functions, we have to read book twelve of the *Confessions* in which Augustine makes a difference between the coeternal Wisdom and the created Wisdom (Conf. 12.15.20).¹⁴ The one Wisdom is coeternal and is equal to God; through that Wisdom all things were created. The other Wisdom was created at the beginning of creation. Created wisdom describes Augustine as mother. Her origin is divine; she lives in the contemplation of God; her residence is in heaven.

Augustine associates her motherhood with ‘becoming milk’. But what does he mean by that? He uses the Latin *lactescere* for this, which means ‘to convert into milk’. According to Van Bavel Mother Wisdom has herself changed into milk (*lactescere*) for the children, so that we see at our feet a weak Godhead. That Godhead is the humble Christ.¹⁵ His interpretation of this verb does not fit well with the meaning of *lactescere*. In my opinion points that which is converted in the direction of food, which is mingled with the flesh so that it becomes milk. In a tractate on the Gospel of John (Io.eu.tr. 98, 6), he expresses this activity in the symbolism of a nursing mother: the nourishment that a mother

¹⁴ In the English translation of Maria Boulding, the difference between the coeternal wisdom and the created wisdom is indicated by a capital letter and a small letter. For my research into the personification of Wisdom as a mother, I chose to designate her with a capital letter.

¹⁵ Bavel, T. van, “Maternal Aspects in Salvation History”, pp. 257-258. Bavel, T. van, “L’humanité du Christ comme lac parvulorum”, pp. 255-256.

takes into her body (flesh) is converted into breast-feeding, with which she can feed her baby (see: 1.2.2).¹⁶

Augustine adds to the Incarnation of the Word an element pertaining to the transformed nourishment of Wisdom: 'milk'. Milk symbolizes grace in Augustine, which is intended for the believers at their level of understanding.¹⁷ These were the candidates for Baptism in the early Christian church who were working with Christian initiation. They could not yet comprehend the eternal nourishment of Wisdom because of its divine nature. Thanks to the transformation of this nourishment, they were able to receive her grace, which is bestowed in an encounter with the humble Jesus.

Function of Wisdom

The function of God's Wisdom points to her ability, which Augustine symbolically formulated as the transformation of her eternal nourishment ('food') into grace ('milk'). In this way Wisdom makes her nourishment available at the incarnation of the Word through Jesus Christ while on earth. These gifts are intended for the faithful, who are called children of God. When Augustine should embrace the humble Jesus, he would receive the grace that nourishes his faith and gain the strength to enjoy God. But as a Neoplatonic thinker, he was not yet ready for that.

¹⁶ Augustine attributes this motherly symbolism to Wisdom (Io.eu.tr. 98, 6; en.Ps. 33, s. 1, 6), and in line with her: to Christ (en.Ps. 30, 2, s. 1, 9; en.Ps. 119, 2; s. 117, 16; s. 335K, 4).

¹⁷ *Quid tam significans gratiam quam lactis copia?* (sermo 32, 7); *Lac significant gratiam, quia gratis datur* (sermo 335K, 4); *significatur autem gratia lacte* (en.Ps. 143, 2).

The way of Salvation of Wisdom

Wisdom is related to the infancy. Does the humble Jesus mediate the grace ('milk') which Wisdom has adapted to our infancy? Are we dealing here with a wisdom tradition from early Christianity in which Jesus was seen as the messenger of Wisdom? I cannot give a proper answer to these questions until we have discussed another text in which Augustine speaks about the nourishing aspect of Wisdom and the transformation of 'food' into "milk".

1.1.2. *Mater Sapientia*

Augustine was responsible for the formation of the faith of baptism candidates (*competentes*). In a tractate on the Gospel of John (Io.eu.tr. 98, 6), which he wrote between 418-420, Augustine places Mother Wisdom in the forefront. In this tractate, Augustine explains a Paraclete text in which Jesus while on earth makes known to his disciples that he still has much to say, but that they cannot bear it yet (John 16:12-13).¹⁸ When Jesus is gone, Jesus will send the Spirit of truth to his disciples, who will instruct them.

Augustine used mother Wisdom to distinguish Catholic Christianity from the Manichaeans with their different attitude towards mystery as being reserved for the initiated. According to Augustine, the mysteries

¹⁸ Io 16:12-13 (Vg): *adhuc multa habeo vobis dicere sed non potestis portare modo, cum autem venerit ille Spiritus veritatis docebit vos in omnem veritatem non enim loquetur a semet ipso sed quaecumque audiet loquetur et quae ventura sunt adnuntiabit vobis* (I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself: but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak. And the things that are to come, he shall shew you).

of the Christian faith did not have to be made known to the initiated believers in isolation, as was the case with the Gnostics. He wanted to protect his *competentes* from these – in his eyes – heretical views. For Augustine, the *competentes* have access to the mysteries of faith. Therefore, he did not place the images ‘milk’ and ‘solid food’ opposite each other, but in line with each other.

Augustine places the ‘milk’ in the context of Christian initiation. The “milk” is intended for the *competentes* who were working toward the initiation into the Christian faith. They received catechesis, which Augustine completes with the transmission of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer (Io.eu.tr. 98, 5). He regarded these as sacraments because they could achieve an encounter with Jesus Christ. The *competentes* were expected to memorize the words by heart. By appropriating these words, they connect them with their own experience, so that they enter their heart. The love of these words was experienced as grace which Augustine calls: *lactis ubertas* (Io.eu.tr. 98, 5), the richness of milk (Hebr. 5, 12).¹⁹ Unlike Paul, Augustine adds richness (*ubertas*) to the ‘milk’. This ‘milk’ familiarizes the *competentes* with Jesus while on earth.

Fragment of Augustine’s text from *Io.eu.tr.* 98, 6

“But far be it that incompatible with this milk is the food of spiritual things, which must be grasped with firm understanding, which was lacking to the

¹⁹ Reference to Hebraeos 5, 12: *etenim cum deberetis magistri esse propter tempus rursum indigetis ut vos doceamini quae sint elementa exordii sermonum Dei et facti estis quibus lacte opus sit non solido cibo* (For whereas for the time you ought to be masters, you have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God: and you are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat).

Colossians and the Thessalonians and had to be supplied. For when what was lacking is supplied, what was there is not rejected. For even in the nutriments that we take, solid food is not incompatible with milk, even so much so that [solid food] itself turns into milk whereby it can be suitable for infants to whom it comes through the flesh of a mother or a nurse; so also did Mother Wisdom herself, who, although on high she is solid food of the angels, deigned, in a manner of speaking, to turn into milk for the little ones, when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' But this very man Christ who, in his true flesh, true cross, true death, true Resurrection, is called the pure milk of little ones, when he is correctly apprehended by spiritual human beings, is found to be the Lord of the angels."²⁰

Analysis of mother Wisdom in Augustine's text

At the beginning of this fragment, Augustine speaks about a supply in faith, based on the letters of Paul (Col. 2:5,²¹ and 1 Tess. 3:10).²² Augustine adapts these texts so that he can speak about enhancement of faith in Jesus Christ. What is lacking in faith, has to be supplemented. Thus he points to the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, the deeper insight into Jesus Christ after his death, which is given to the perfect believers. Augustine calls the Spirit of Truth 'solid food', and catecheses for the *competentes* 'milk'. For Augustine 'solid food' and 'milk' both come from mother Wisdom. He will explain how mother Wisdom functions in this

²⁰ St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55-111* (Retting) 213-214.

²¹ Reference to Col 2:5 (Vg): *nam et si corpore absens sum sed spiritu vobiscum sum gaudens et videns ordinem vestrum et firmamentum eius quae in Christo est fidei vestrae* (For though I be absent in body, yet in spirit I am with you, rejoicing, and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith which is in Christ).

²² Reference to 1 Th 3:10 (Vg): *nocte et die abundantius orantes ut videamus faciem vestram et compleamus ea quae desunt fidei vestrae* (Night and day more abundantly praying that we may see your face and may accomplish those things that are wanting to your faith?)

fragment.

Augustine takes the person of mother Wisdom from the Latin translation of Sirach 24 of *Ecclesiasticus*, but not her properties (fair love, fear, knowledge and holy hope).²³ He attributes to her grace and truth.

*“Ego mater [...] in me gratia omnis vitae et veritatis [...]: I am the mother [...] in me is all grace of the life and the truth.”*²⁴

Augustine expresses these abstractions with the imagery from Paul’s “milk” and “solid food” (1 Corinthians 3:2) and attributes these to Mother Wisdom, as we shall see.

Her residence in the highest heavens connects to the residence of mother Wisdom (Sir. 24:4).²⁵ In heaven she feeds the angels with “solid food”. The bread of the angels is found in the book of Wisdom of Solomon (Wisdom 16:20).²⁶ It tells that God fed his people with the food of the angels prepared in heaven. Unlike Scripture, Augustine clearly states that Mother Wisdom, not God, is the one who feeds the angels.

²³ The Latin translation of Sirach 24 of *Ecclesiasticus* can be found in the *Vetus Latina* and in the Vulgate. Augustine worked with the *Vetus Latina*, a collective name for ancient translations of the Greek text of the Bible into Latin, and gradually he made more room for the Vulgate (390-405). Dulay, M., Hoe Augustinus de Bijbel leest, in Bavel, van T., (ed.), *Sint Augustinus*, Augustijns Historisch Instituut, Heverlee, 2007, 107-119, 108.

²⁴ Sirach 24, 24-25: *ego mater pulchrae dilectionis et timoris et agnitionis et sanctae spei. In me gratia omnis vitae et veritatis in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis.* Thiele, W., Sirach, *Ecclesiasticus*, In Sabatier, P., (Hg.), *Vetus Latina, die Reste des Altlateinische Bibel*, Band 11/2, Freiburg, Herder, 1987, pp. 694-695.

²⁵ Sir 24, 7: *ego in altis habitavi et thronus meus in columna nubis.* W. Thiele, Sirach, *Ecclesiasticus...*, pp. 676-677.

²⁶ Sap 16, 20 (Vg): *pro quibus angelorum esca nutristi populum tuum et paratum panem e caelo praestitisti illis sine labore omne delectamentum in se habentem et omnis saporis suavitatem* (Instead of which things, thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven, prepared without labour; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste).

She reveals herself in the highest heavens as eternal nourishment. Thereby, Augustine sees the eternal nourishment and Wisdom as the same. Her personification coincides with the gifts she represents: Mother Wisdom is the bread in heaven, with which she satisfies the angels.

It is not possible for those who are bound to the world to comprehend this food; it is beyond them because of its divine character. Therefore, Mother Wisdom transforms her nourishment (“solid food”) for her children: the *competentes*, those who are working towards Christian initiation. This transformation is rendered by Augustine with the verb *lactescere* (as in Conf. 7.18.24). He uses the symbolism of a lactating mother in this tractate to describe the transformation that solid food undergoes in the body (flesh) of mothers and nurses to become milk for their infants. Like a nursing mother, Mother Wisdom transforms her celestial bread into grace (“milk”) for her children on earth. Augustine expresses her grace symbolically in ‘milk’ and truth in ‘solid food’. Although Tarcisius van Bavel was aware of this particular symbolism, he links it directly to the incarnate wisdom, Jesus Christ, instead of mother Wisdom.²⁷ Even worse, he completely overlooked mother Wisdom in this tractate.²⁸

Mother Wisdom mediates her grace through Jesus on earth for her

²⁷ Bavel, T. van, “L’humanité du Christ comme lac parvulorum”, *ibid.* 255. In note 41, he did not quote Io.eu.tr. 98, 6. Van Bavel draws attention to the imagery of milk in relation to Jesus Christ, but he doesn’t mention Mother Wisdom in his article: “Maternal Aspects in Salvation History”, *ibid.* 262.

²⁸ Van Bavel calls the divine Wisdom a mother, who has become weak in the incarnate wisdom: Jesus Christ. This mother, *mater nostra Sapientia*, is the hen Jesus while on earth (Mat 23, 37). Bavel, T. van, “Maternal Aspects in Salvation History”, *ibid.* 265, notes 54 en 55.

children: *competentes*. He is her instrument. Although mother Wisdom prepares the gifts of grace, she does not present these gifts herself. Jesus has taken over her role of hostess. He presents the spiritual gifts to her children. In this tractate, the relationship between mother Wisdom and Jesus is expressed in the feeding with “milk”. Jesus represents her gifts of grace, in that he is “milk”. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the bread that comes down from heaven (John 6:51), but he is not the milk. In Augustine’s text, “milk” refers to grace, as we saw earlier. Grace is prepared by mother Wisdom, and Augustine places it in the context of Christian initiation. A connection between mother Wisdom and grace is found in Sirach 24: “In me is the grace of all life and truth”.²⁹ Grace facilitates growth in faith so that ‘flesh’ is transformed into “spirit” so that *competentes* are able to receive the Spirit of truth that leads to a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ.

Function of mother Wisdom

Mother Wisdom is not the same as the Creator who bestows himself in grace; neither does she coincide with the incarnate Word, nor with the Holy Spirit. Instead, she has a permanent revelatory status in the highest heavens. Her revelation has to do with eternal nourishment (“solid food”) intended for the angels, and grace (“milk”) intended for the *competentes*. She is related reciprocally in heaven to the angels, who open themselves to abundant nourishment. They are her heavenly

²⁹ Sir 24, 25: *in me gratia omnis vitae et veritatis in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis*. Thiele, W., Sirach, Ecclesiasticus, *ibid.* 694-695.

disciples. Her disciples (“children”) on earth are the *competentes* who open their heart to her grace, mediated by Jesus Christ.

The way of Salvation of Mother Wisdom at the Incarnation

The transformation of eternal nourishment into grace takes place in the incarnation of the Word of God, but does not coincide with it. In doing so, Augustine adds a maternal element to the incarnation, which he links in symbolic language to the mother’s body (flesh) as the place where solid food is transformed into milk for her baby. With this symbolism he refers to Mother Wisdom who transforms her eternal nourishment into grace. This double incarnation culminates in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ: he is the Word becoming flesh (1); in him is the grace which Mother Wisdom has prepared (2). Thanks to the incarnation, the candidates of Baptism can be nourished with grace, so that they become partakers in Christian life. The relationship between mother Wisdom and Jesus points to the wisdom tradition, which understands Jesus as her envoy. For Augustine, this relationship has to do with the nourishing aspect of God that he attributes to mother Wisdom. He associates her with a source of grace.

1.2. Mother Wisdom and the Church

In this section I will discuss two fragments. The first fragment deals with the Church connected with the Holy Spirit, through which she can nourish the faithful. The second fragment is about the nourishment of mother Wisdom in the Eucharist.

1.2.1. The relationship between the Holy Spirit and mother Church

Augustine associates the nourishment of Mother Wisdom with the Church, where the faithful are fed with her gifts of grace. These gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

Fragment of Augustine's text from *en.Ps.* 130, 11

“Our Lord Jesus Christ made the bread that was himself into milk for us by becoming incarnate and appearing as a mortal man, so that in him death might be abolished and we, by believing in the flesh which the Word took himself, might not wander away from the Word. Let us use the means to grow; let us get our nourishment from this milk. During this time when we are not yet strong enough to feed on the Word, let us not abandon our milky diet of faith. There have been heretics who wanted to argue about food beyond their capacities, saying that the Son is inferior to the Father and that the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son. They postulated differences of rank within the Godhead. The result was that they tried to foist on the Church belief in three gods, for they cannot deny that the Father and God and the Son and God the Holy Spirit is God; but if God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are unequal and not of the same substance, there is not one God but three gods. These heretics were arguing about matters beyond their comprehension – food to which they were unsuited – and so they exalted themselves proudly and met the fate called down by the psalmist: If I was not lowly in mind, but spiritually high-flown, may retribution come upon my soul as on a baby in its mother's arms that is torn away from its milk. Their mother is Gods' Church, from which they separated. They ought to have stayed with her, being fed on milk that would have helped

them to grow until they were ready to feed on the Word who is God with God, in the form of God and equal to the Father.”³⁰

Analyses

In this fragment Augustine tells us that Jesus Christ is the ‘bread’ who has made himself into “milk”. Augustine speaks not only about the incarnation of Jesus Christ, but also about his death “that death might be ended in him”. As a result, the human being can be accepted by God and become partaker in divine life. This assumption is possible by believing in Jesus while on earth in whom is grace (“milk”). With this grace the faith can grow and become powerful, so that the faithful are able to understand the Word. This grace is also available in the Church and has an important function in the growth of faith, where the transformation of the gifts of salvation (“bread” into “milk”) goes further.

Augustine rages against the heretics who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They subordinate the Spirit to the Son and deny the identity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Perhaps he is referring to the pneumatomachi. They opposed the deity of the Holy Spirit and reduced the Spirit to a quality of created reality. The divine origin of the Spirit was confirmed at the Council of Constantinople (381). If God were not equal to the Holy Spirit, God could not bestow his gifts. God can bestow the grace thanks to the Holy Spirit. Augustine does make a distinction between mother Wisdom (and Christ as mother) who prepares the

³⁰ St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 121-150* (Boulding), p. 149.

divine gifts, and the Holy Spirit who gives them.³¹ Those who proudly place themselves above Mother Church, do not share in the grace of the divine Spirit. Augustine links the faith in the divinity of the Spirit to the “milk” of Mother Church. To disbelieve in the divinity of the Spirit means to be taken away from the “milk”. So the heretics who reject this doctrine of the church receive no grace.

Augustine extends the mystery of the Incarnation to the Church, which he personifies as a mother. As the Church of God, she is connected with the Triune God, especially with the Holy Spirit sent by God (at Pentecost). The church is the place where the ever-weak faith is “nourished”. The grace is mediated by Jesus Christ, whenever he is presented in the reading and proclamations of the scriptures, in the celebration of the sacraments.

Function of the motherhood of the Church

The church is the place where faith is nourished with grace bestowed by the divine Spirit. The Church is also personified as Mother. She is critical of heretics who reject the doctrine of the divinity of the Spirit, so that the Spirit cannot bestow gifts of salvation. She also shows herself to be critical of baptism candidates who place themselves arrogantly above her, because then they do not receive the grace that she mediates thanks to her relationship with the Holy Spirit.

³¹ In this *enarrationes* Augustine links the nourishing aspect also to Christ as a mother (en .Ps. 130, 9). Augustine expressed this aspect with the symbolism of a nursing mother, the same as he ascribes to mother Wisdom (Io.eu.tr. 98, 6). Bouwman, K., “Wisdom Christology in the Works of St. Augustine.” In Vinzent, M. (ed.), *Studia Patristica XCVIII, Volume 24: St. Augustine and his Opponents*, Leuven, Peeters, 2017, pp. 607-620, pp. 613-614.

1.2.2. Motherhood of Wisdom in the Eucharist

In his exposition on Psalm 34, which Augustine wrote between 395 and 405, he associates mother Wisdom not only with the incarnation, but also with the kenotic love of Christ in his death on the cross. His sacrifice is made present in the Eucharist.

Fragment of Augustine's text from en.Ps. 33, s. 1, 6

“It was necessary for that banquet to be converted into milk if it was to become available to little ones. But how does food become milk? How can food be turned into milk, except by being passed through flesh? This is what a mother does. What the mother eats the baby eats too, but since the baby is unable to digest bread, the mother turns the bread into her own flesh, and through the humility of the breast and its supply of milk she feeds her baby with the same bread. How then does Wisdom of God feed us with that supernal bread? “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). Think of the humility of it: humans have eaten the bread of angels, as scripture says: “He gave them bread from heaven: mortals ate the bread of angels” (Ps 77 (78):24-25). The eternal Word on whom the angels feed, the Word who is equal to the Father, this Word human beings have eaten. He who, “being in the form of God, deemed it no robbery to be God’s equal, he on whom the angels feed to their total satisfaction, emptied himself and took on the form of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, sharing the human lot, he humbled himself and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8), so

that the Lord's flesh and blood might be delivered to us today as the new sacrifice."³²

Augustine uses the metaphor of the humility of the mother's breast - maternal love - with which a mother attunes herself to the needs of her baby she is feeding. Mother Wisdom also humbly attunes her grace to human being for whom she has prepared her gifts. They are the starting point of her love.

The Word is the same as the 'bread' of the angels. This angelic bread is not only transformed into 'milk' at the Incarnation of the Word, so that human beings may be satisfied by it. This 'bread' is also transformed in the humbling of Jesus Christ in his death on the cross, so that people can participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Then the love of Jesus Christ is mediated in the Eucharist. His love for mankind was proved at his death on the cross by the grace which was revealed by God. Augustine places the gifts of the Eucharist in line with the transformation of divine nourishment into grace that Mother Wisdom brings about. These gifts of salvation become available through the humility of Jesus Christ. His humility is based on the humility of Mother Wisdom. Van Bavel attributes the humility to Jesus Christ, but Augustine places his humility in line with that of Mother Wisdom and thus humble Wisdom becomes the deepest ground of the Eucharist.³³ After all, if Mother Wisdom had not been so humble in transforming her heavenly gifts into grace, her 'children' would not have been able to eat

³² St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 33-50* (Boulding), p. 329.

³³ Van Bavel attributes humility to Jesus Christ and not to mother Wisdom, which Augustine also describes as humble. Bavel, T. van, "Maternal Aspects in Salvation" ..., p. 263.

and drink Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The grace prepared by Mother Wisdom forms the basis for the gifts of salvation that are mediated in the Eucharist.

Function of Mother Wisdom in the Eucharist

Augustine also extends the mystery of the incarnation to the Eucharist, in which the gifts of salvation of Mother Wisdom are mediated through Jesus Christ. The function of Mother Wisdom is to attune her gifts of grace to the faithful, so that she can nourish them with her gifts of salvation in the Eucharist.

The way of Salvation of Mother Church

As a mother, the Church fulfils a sacramental function, because the divine Spirit is anchored in her. She mediates the gifts of salvation when Jesus Christ is made present in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments.

1.3. Mother Wisdom and the heavenly Jerusalem

In the discussion of the texts a distinction has emerged between the Wisdom equal to God and the created Wisdom. The Wisdom equal to God is co-eternal with the Word, by which all things were created (Conf. 7.18.24; and Ps. 33, s. 1, 6). Created Wisdom is personified as a mother, who has her abode in the highest heavens (Io.eu.tr. 98, 6). In book twelve of the *Confessiones*, Augustine elaborates on this distinction.

Fragment of Augustine's text from *Conf.* 12.15.20

“Well then, the first of all creatures was, the rational, intelligent mind of our chaste city. That city on high is our mother, and see is free and eternal in heaven – and what heaven can that be, if not the heaven's heaven which belong to the Lord?”³⁴

In this fragment, created Wisdom is personified as a mother on the one hand, on the other hand described as a heavenly city. Her personification and her designation as a heavenly city converge in the highest heavens. Mother Wisdom has a divine origin, for she was created before all creatures and before the times. She partakes in eternity and enjoys the intense bliss in contemplation of God (*Conf.* 12.9.9).

In describing Mother Wisdom in the heavenly Jerusalem, Augustine no longer uses the symbolism of motherhood as a reference to the transformation of her eternal nourishment into grace. The faithful who are taken up into the heavenly Jerusalem are satisfied with the eternal nourishment of Mother Wisdom. Those are the faithful who passed the final judgment. They no longer need to be fed grace ('milk'). They are comforted and carried by Mother Jerusalem in heaven. Augustine writes about this in *De civitate dei* (ciu. 21.20). I will discuss this text in the next paragraph about Mary's Way of Salvation (2.3), because 'carrying' is an activity that is typical for her Way of Salvation.

³⁴ St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (Boulding), p. 323.

2. The Way of Salvation of Maria

Texts about Mary's motherhood contain key theological themes such as incarnation and the church. Unlike in texts about Mother Wisdom, we also find themes about the announcement and the indwelling of God's Word in Mary. These themes connect with her motherhood for Jesus. This section begins with Mary's motherhood at the incarnation (2.1), and continues with Mary and the Church (2.2). We will see that the Way of Salvation linked to Mary leads to the heavenly Jerusalem (2.3).

2.1. Motherhood of Mary at the Incarnation

Introduction

At the Council of Nicaea Christ's deity and humanity were proclaimed. They wanted to emphasize the divine birth of Jesus Christ. Augustine not only speak of his divine birth from the Father, but also of his human birth from his mother. The Nicene and Constantinople Creeds remain silent on the human birth of Jesus from Mary. These Creeds only say that Jesus Christ was made flesh by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and emphasize Mary's virginity, not her motherhood. Augustine places Mary's motherhood in the foreground. He emphasized the physicality of Jesus Christ who was born of a mother, opposite to the interpretation of the Manichaeans who regarded him as a make-believe man. The motherhood of Mary does not limit Augustine to a human category, but he gives it a divine connotation by emphasizing the divine action in the birth of the human Christ: "and the more they think it [the motherhood

of a virgin] is impossible, the more divine it seems to us that a man was borne by a virgin bringing forth” (*sermo* 184,1). In this sermon, Augustine ascribes motherly actions of Mary for her child Jesus Christ.³⁵

Fragment of Augustine’s text from *sermo* 184, 3

“Rightly therefore did the prophets foretell that he would be born, while the heavens and the angels announced that he had been. The one who holds the world in being was lying in a manger; he was simultaneously speechless infant and Word. The heavens cannot contain him, a woman carried him in her womb.³⁶ She was ruling our ruler, carrying the one in whom we are, suckling our bread. O manifest infirmity and wondrous humility in which was thus concealed total divinity! Omnipotence was ruling the mother on whom infancy was depending; was nourishing on truth the mother whose breasts it was sucking. May he bring his gifts tot perfection in us, since he did not shrink from making his own our tiny beginnings; and may he make us into children of God, since for our sake he was willing to be made a child of man.”³⁷

Analysis

Augustine speaks about the child Jesus in paradoxical language; his divinity and his humanity are at odds with each other. We also find this paradoxical language in his description of Mary’s pregnancy. He

³⁵ Drobner considers *sermo* 184 as undated, because it is not known when and where Augustine delivered this sermon. He did not refer to an historical event. According to Kunzelmann, this sermon is after 411/412 because of the theme that Augustine discusses in it: the Christological misconceptions concerning Christ’ incarnation Mary’s virginity. According to Hill, this sermon was delivered before 396 because of the rhetoric in this sermon. Quoted by H. Drobner, *Augustinus von Hippo, Predigten zum Weihnachtsfest (Sermones 184-196)*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003, 42.90.

³⁶ It says in the English translation of sermon 184, 3: bosom. I translate the Latin *sinus* with womb.

³⁷ St. Augustine, *sermons 184-229W* (Hill), p. 19.

emphasizes the power of her womb that can bear the greatness of the Word. Although a womb can normally bear a human fruit - which is a result of human action - Mary's womb bears the all-encompassing Word - which is a result of divine action. In carrying, the Word is both transcendent - it transcends the heavens - and immanent - it dwells in its womb. That is where the mystery of the Incarnation takes place.

In the acts Mary performs as mother for her child Jesus, there is a double dependence because of his divine and human nature. The infant Christ is dependent on its mother Mary and the human Mary is dependent on the God Christ. This double dependence also manifests itself in leading and nurturing. Mary led the infant Christ who is the leader of Christians. In leading he is dependent on his mother, at the same time she is dependent on Christ who leads her. As Creator, Christ precedes her, because he called her into existence. This double dependence also manifests in feeding. While Mary is breastfeeding her baby Jesus, Christ is feeding her with "bread." At the level of biological motherhood, she breastfed her child. In feeding she was filled by Christ with the divine food of truth. These acts Mary performed as a mother for her child Jesus led to a reciprocal relationship with Christ.

In the act of "carrying" Mary's spiritual motherhood emerges. The bearing points to the indwelling of the Word in her womb. In doing so she bore not only the humanity of Jesus Christ, but also his Deity in who humanity is: "in who we are". Augustine may have thought of Acts 17:28, in which the relationship between God and mankind is similarly

indicated.³⁸ Augustine describes carrying both with *ferre*, which can refer to pregnancy; as with *portare* denoting the ability to carry, also figuratively. During her pregnancy (*ferre*) Mary carries the Word entrusted to her. With this Word, God bore the creation, sustains it and establishes the existence of every human being. Because Mary carries the Word (*portare*), a transformation of humanity takes place, which is effected by the Word.

Mary's function as a mother and as a spiritual mother

Mary as a biological mother maintained a reciprocal relationship with Jesus Christ that she initiated by performing acts as a mother for her child Jesus. By leading and nourishing him she came into contact with Christ who revealed himself to her as truth, an experience that led her into contemplation.

Mary's spiritual motherhood showed itself in the carrying. With that act, her motherhood extends to all humanity that she carries. By carrying the Word, she brought humanity into contact with their relation with Christ (Acts 17:28), and mediated God's fundamental involvement at the existence of human beings.

Mary's Way of Salvation

At the end of *sermo* 184, Augustine expresses the desire for Christ to take up the origin of humanity—the relationship between the Creator

³⁸ *Sermo* 184, 3: *in quo sumus* (in whom we are). Reference to Act 17, 28a: *in ipso enim vivimus et movemur et sumus* (for in him we live and move and are).

and human beings as creatures (*Imago Dei*). However, the origin also points to the sin of the first parents, which clouded mankind's relationship with God. Thanks to the mystery of the incarnation, human beings become reunited with God. Because Christ became human, human beings might become child of God. Mary's spiritual motherhood played a role of importance in this. When she carried the Word in her womb, there is a transformation of humanity effected by Christ, so that human beings might become partakers in the divine life.

2.2. Mary and Mother Church

Augustine places the church in line with Mary, both of whom he considers a mother:

Fragment of Augustine's text from *sermo 195, 2*

“Because he hath both made her a mother for us, and kept her a virgin for himself [...]. So the Church too, like Mary, enjoys perpetual virginity and uncorrupted fecundity. What Mary, you see, was found worthy to possess in the flesh, the Church has preserved in the mind. Except that the former gave birth to one, the latter gives birth to many, who are, however, to be gathered together into one through that one.”³⁹

While Mary as a mother gave birth to only one child, the Church gives birth to the faithful through baptism. They were born from the womb of mother Church through the love of the Holy Spirit. All these

³⁹ St. Augustine, *sermons 184-229W* (Hill), pp. 57-58.

baptized belong to the body of Christ which is connected by God's love. In sermo 215, Augustine links the birth of Jesus Christ from the Spirit and Mary to the rebirth of the Church. The birth of Jesus Christ, who is the work of Mary and the Spirit, flows into the birth of the Church by the Holy Spirit. Augustine places the motherhood of the Church in line with Mary by granting them both the quality of *integritas*:

Fragment of Augustine's text from *sermo* 215, 4

"May he be born of the Holy Spirit and a woman untainted, he in whom the Church may be born again untainted of the Holy Spirit".⁴⁰

Function of Mother Church

Mary's motherhood and the Church's motherhood correspond in that they are both spiritual: linked to the Holy Spirit. Another similarity is the ability to give birth. While Mary's giving birth points to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Church' birth points to the admission of the faithful in the church as the body of Jesus Christ.

Way of Salvation of Mother Church

Mary's spiritual motherhood for humanity flows into the spiritual motherhood of the Church, which Augustine places in line with each other. Mary's qualities of fecundity, virginity and purity are attributed by Augustine to Mother Church.

⁴⁰ St. Augustine, *sermons 184-229W* (Hill), p. 162. In Latin: *nascatur de Spiritu sancto et integra femina in quo renascatur de Spiritu sancto integra ecclesia* (PL 38, p. 1074).

2.3. The Heavenly Jerusalem

Introduction

Mary's way of salvation ends up in the heavenly Jerusalem, which Augustine personified as a mother and described as a city. Augustine ascribes to her the ability of 'carrying' (*portare*), as well as to Mary. At the Last Judgment, a distinction is made between the good and bad people by God, in which the good human beings are comforted by the heavenly Jerusalem. Augustine describes her as a mother like Paul does (Gal 4:26). He pits the children of the slave girl Hagar against those of Sarah because of the promise that God made. The addition of 'in servitude' makes it clear to the reader that the promise will be fulfilled for the children of Sarah.

Fragment of Augustine's text from *Civitate Dei* 20,21

"By Jerusalem here we should understand not the Jerusalem which is in servitude with her children but rather the Jerusalem which is the Jerusalem which is, according to the Apostle, the free woman, our mother, eternal in heaven. There, after the toils of the anxieties and cares of this mortal existence, we shall be comforted like her little children carried on her shoulders and on her knees. For that unaccustomed bliss will support us, like new and inexperienced children, with the most tender of helping hands. There we shall see, and our heart will rejoice. Isaiah does not explicitly promise may be fulfilled in us, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see' (Mt 5, 8), (ciu. 20, 21).⁴¹

⁴¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Babcock), pp. 425-426.

Function of Salvation of Mother Jerusalem

Mother Jerusalem carries and comforts the pilgrims who have endured the difficulties and efforts of the earthly life. As a mother, the heavenly Jerusalem prepares the way for the children, for whom the promise will be fulfilled. Under her most affectionate guidance they are led to the bliss where they will see God. With her comfort she frees them from the earthly burdens, but also brings about an inner renewal that makes them 'inexperienced novices'. This renewal makes it possible for them to see God in contemplation. Here we see that the way of salvation of Wisdom and that of Mary come together in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Following the textual findings and their theological patterns, my research shows two ways of salvation, both referring to motherly figures, which are at work simultaneously in Augustine's texts: one belonging to an early Christianity wisdom tradition that centre stages Mother Wisdom and sees Jesus as her envoy, and the other to the more main stream Christian tradition in which Mary's performance is emphasized in her role of giving birth to God's Son.

In both cases salvation consists of being guided by the Church and finding fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. Augustine interwove these two ways of salvation, but they are recognisable as separate ways in the motherly symbolism of 'feeding' and 'carrying and giving birth' which he uses frequently in his works. Both refer to the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the Church community, and are completed with the ultimate

initiation into God's presence in eternal bliss.

The way of Salvation of Mother Wisdom points to Wisdom Christology, which is related to a nourishing aspect of God and based on Mother Wisdom from the book Ben Sirach (Sir. 24:18). Augustine describes her as an eternally nourishing mother who is continuously giving life to angels, spiritual persons and to human beings on earth. He did not identify this nourishing mother with Jesus while on earth (second level of the early Christian wisdom tradition). The continued revelation of mother Wisdom is related to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus while on earth, who meditates her gifts (first level of the early Christian wisdom tradition). He adds an element to the incarnation, which relates to Mother Wisdom. In doing so, he breaks through the one-sided approach to the Christian way of salvation, which has emphasized the Word, which Mary conceived and gave birth to, and the one-sided approach to the Triune God, who is exclusive. He describes an inclusive Triune God who has included Mother Wisdom.

Augustine did not gradually replace the Old Testament Wisdom's way of salvation with that of Jesus Christ in which Mary came to the fore. Both ways are simultaneously present and he did not write about an evolution from the one in the other. In the course of the history of Christianity, the way of salvation of mother Wisdom who approached humankind as a divine mediator, disappeared out of sight. Thus the nourishing aspect of mother Wisdom once belonged to the inclusive reality of God was transferred to Jesus Christ. Despite the disappearance of mother Wisdom's nourishing function, her gifts of grace are still

experienced as a grace. The faithful who are connected to God in a reciprocal relationship enjoy her gifts of love in contemplation.

Bibliography

Augustinus, Aurelius, *Confessionum Libri XIII*, vol. 27, edited by M. Skutella & L. Verheijen. In *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1981.

Augustinus, Aurelius, *In Iohannis evangelium tractus CXXIV*, vol. 36, edited by R. Willems. In *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1954.

Augustinus, Aurelius, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, vol. 38-40, edited by E. Dekkers. In *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1956.

Augustinus, Aurelius, *De civitate Dei*, vol. 47-48, edited by B. Dombart. In *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1955.

Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana: Opere di Sant'Agostino, A. Trapé (ed.), (www.augustinus.it/latino/index.htm)

Works of Augustine in translation

St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, translated by Maria Boulding, in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part I: Vol. 1, New York, New City Press, 1997.

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by William Babcock, in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part I: Vol. 6, New York, New City Press, 2012-2013.

St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, translated by Maria Boulding in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part III: Vol. 15, New York, New City Press, 2000.

St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 33-50*, translated by Maria Boulding in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part III: Vol. 16, New York, New City Press, 2000.

St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 121-150*, translated by Maria Boulding in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part III: Vol. 20, New York, New City Press, 2000.

St. Augustine, *Sermons (184-229W) on the Liturgical Seasons*, translated by Edmund Hill in *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*, Part III: Vol. 6, New York, New City Press, 2014.

St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55-111*, translated by John W. Retting, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1994.

Secondary Sources

Bavel, T. van, “Maternal Aspects in Salvation History According to Augustine” en *Augustiniana* 47 (1997), pp. 250-290.

Bavel, T. van, “L’humanité du Christ comme lac parvulorum et comme via dans la spiritualité de Saint Augustin” en *Augustiniana* 7 (1957), pp. 245-281.

Bavel, T. van, “God absorbeert niet: de christologie van Schoonenberg”, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 11 (1971), pp. 382-412.

Beentjes, P., *De wijsheid van Jesus Sirach*, Budel, Damon, 2006.

Bouwman, K., *Mater Sapientia, de mystagogische functie van het moederschap van God en het geestelijk moederschap bij Augustinus*, Skandalon, Vught, 2015.

Bouwman, K., “Wisdom Christology in the Works of St. Augustine.” In Vinzent, M. (ed.), *Studia Patristica XCVIII, Volume 24: St. Augustine and his Opponents*, Leuven 2017, pp. 607-620.

Dreyer, E. A., and Burrows, Mark. S., *Minding the Spirit, The Study of Christian Spirituality*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Dodaro, R., "Maria virgo et mater." In Mayer, C. (Hg.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Vol. 3, Basel, Schwabe, 2004.

Drobner, H., *Augustinus von Hippo, Predigten zum Weihnachtsfest (Sermones 184-196)*, Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2003.

Dulay, M., "Hoe Augustinus de Bijbel leest." In Bavel, van T., (ed.), *Sint Augustinus*, Augustijns Historisch Instituut, Heverlee, 2007, pp. 107-119.

Schüssler Fiorenza, E., *Jesus, Miriam's Child Sophia's Prophet, Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*, New York, Continuum, 1994.

Thiele, W., Sirach, Ecclesiasticus. In Sabatier, P., (Hg.), *Vetus Latina, die Reste des Altlateinische Bibel*, Band 11/2, Freiburg, Herder, 1987.

Waaijman, K., *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, Leuven, Peeters, 2002.