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The law of freedom is the law of love: Some remarks on Christian liberty in Augustine's thinking.

Abstract: We encounter the term "liberty" (*libertas*) in many places of Augustine's writings. Basically, he uses it in two different contexts: politically and religiously. However, he does not provide a systematic definition of the term in either category, although in the period of the anti-Pelagian controversy his ideas develop into an informal definition of the term. In this paper, I briefly summarize some basic aspects of the term liberty as it is presented in the political as well as in the religious contexts, and then I focus mostly on his concept of Christian liberty which is the term Augustine uses whenever he talks about the true liberty manifested by the real presence of God's love in man. In fact, this love strengthens human will in pursuing the good works which the human being is unable to perform by himself without God's grace after Adam's fall.

Keywords: Augustine of Hippo, true liberty, free choice of will, sin, good works, Christian love.

"The law of freedom is the law of love."¹ This citation from Augustine's *Letter 167* written to Jerome in Bethlehem in 415 is the starting point of my argumentation in this paper. In this letter the bishop of Hippo discusses the opinion of the apostle James: "Whoever observes the whole law, but offends on one point, has become guilty of all."² (*James 2:10*) And further he explains that "this question has to do with living the present life in such a way that we may come to eternal life"³ which is possible only when we live a life of virtue. So Augustine asks whether a person who has one virtue really has them all and whether one who lacks one virtue really has none.⁴ In his view, the virtue which stands out among other virtues is love, and it is precisely the virtue

¹ *Ep.* 167,6,19, CSEL 44, 606: "Lex itaque libertatis lex caritatis est.", transl. WSA II/3, 103.

² *Ep.* 167,1,1, CSEL 44, 587: "Quicumque enim totam legem servaverit, offendat autem in uno, factus est omnium reus.", cited in WSA II/3, 95.

³ *Ep.* 167,1,2, CSEL 44, 587: "...de agenda namque praesenti vita, quo modo ad vitam perveniamus aeternam.", transl. WSA II/3, 95.

⁴ Without endorsing the doctrine of the philosophers Augustine explains that if a person has one virtue, he has them all and that if a person lacks one virtue, he lacks them all. And further he shows how true prudence entails justice, courage, and temperance. Cf. *Ep.* 167,2,4.

of love that Augustine links with human freedom. In this paper, therefore, I would like to focus on some aspects of religious freedom as it is presented, first and foremost, in the context of Augustine's reflections upon the Christian charity.

Before examining the topic of true liberty (*vera libertas*) which is manifested by a real presence of God's love in the life of man, I find useful to take into consideration the fact that Augustine was first of all a Roman citizen (*civis Romanus*), then an excellent Christian thinker (*Christianus*) and finally a holy man of the Church (*vir beatus*). In general, he uses the term liberty (*libertas*) in two significant ways: politically and religiously. Both the categories embrace a plurality of meanings that appear throughout his writings in various contexts, some of which are polemical and some nonpolemical. Interestingly, Augustine makes no effort to provide a systematic account of the notion of liberty in either category, although at times during the Pelagian controversy he offers a kind of an informal definition of the term.⁵ However, before examining characteristic features of Augustine's understanding of Christian liberty, I would like to summarize briefly some basic ideas regarding his view of liberty within the political context. In fact, it was precisely the notion of political liberty which provided Augustine with the grounds for his reflection upon the religious freedom.

Liberty in the political context

In ancient Rome, liberty was one of the social values of free Roman citizens and the importance they attributed to it is well attested in the fact that they personified it in the form of a goddess of Liberty (*Libertas*).⁶ Some of the Roman depictions of *Libertas* have survived until today, for instance on coins and other artefacts. She is usually portrayed as a matron in a flowing classical dress, often holding the liberty pole in her right hand (*vindicta*) and wearing a liberty cap (*pilleus*). *Libertas* signified freedom of action, freedom from restraint, independence, rights, and related forms of personal and social liberty. The oldest representations of the goddess *Libertas* are preserved on the denars of C. Cassius (126 BC) and Portius Laeca (125 BC).⁷ According to the tradition she had a temple on the Aventine Hill in Rome (built in ca. 238 BC).

⁵ On the topic of *liberty* in Augustine's thinking see DJUTH 1999a, 495; KARFÍKOVÁ 2012; BROWN 2005, 50–65; GILBERT 2005, 201–224; PADUSNIAK 2014, 37–48; SPROUL 1986.

⁶ The Greek personification of liberty *Eleutheria* (Ἐλευθερία) was also an epithet for the goddess Artemis, and as such she was worshipped in Myra of Lycia. For more information on the topic of liberty in Graeco-Roman mythology see LIMC: "Liberty", 278–284.

⁷ Cf. LIMC: "Liberty", 282.

Obviously, as a Roman citizen, well trained in classical schools, Augustine could not ignore this topic in his writings and the comments on political liberty appear, first and foremost, in the context of his discussion of the earthly city (*civitas terrena*) in his masterpiece *De civitate Dei*.⁸ In the discussion of moral qualities of the ancient Romans Augustine contrasts the love of liberty (*amor libertatis*) with their desire to dominate (*cupiditas dominationis*). While, on the one hand, the attainment of political liberty enabled Roman citizens to perform temporal happiness to their own benefit, on the other hand, it had the opposite effect on those societies that Romans deprived of their liberty through domination rooted in their unhealthy desire for praise and glory (*cupiditas laudis et gloriae*). As the Roman poet says: "...yet shall a patriot's love prevail and unquenched thirst for fame."⁹ Augustine recalling another passage of Virgil puts it in the following way:

"This was the result of that vaunted eagerness for praise and passion for glory! In this way, the Romans were led to do many great deeds, first by their love of liberty, and then by their desire for praise and glory. Their most distinguished poet bears witness to both these things when he says: 'When Porsenna demanded that the exiled king Tarquin be restored, and laid siege to the city, then did the sons of Aeneas take up arms for their liberty.' (VERG., *Aen.* VIII,646)"¹⁰

When one nation exercises an unjust mastery over others, their freedom of movement is suppressed, freedom of thought and speech curtailed and freedom of social status lost.¹¹ However, even peaceful societies might be at times forced to defend the life and liberty of their citizens in war due to enemies' unjust provocations aimed at subjugating or enslaving them.¹² Therefore, the presence of political liberty in society ensures that the citizens of an earthly state will be able to pursue ends that are materially and at the same time morally advantageous to them in their present life.¹³ In his *De civitate Dei*, howev-

⁸ For more information on various aspects of political and religious liberty in Augustine's thinking see for instance DJUTH 1999a, 495–496.

⁹ VERG., *Aen.* VI,823, 525: "vincet amor patriae laudumque immensa cupido."

¹⁰ *De civ. Dei* V,12, CCL 47, 143: "Hoc illa profecto laudis auditas et gloriae cupido faciebat. Amore itaque primitus libertatis, post etiam dominationis et cupiditate laudis et gloriae multa magna fecerunt. Reddit eis utriusque rei testimonium etiam poeta insignis illorum; inde quippe ait: 'nec non Tarquinium eiectum Porsenna iubebat accipere ingentique urbem obsidione premebat; Aeneade in ferrum pro Libertate ruebant.'" , transl. DYSON, 208.

¹¹ Cf. *De civ. Dei* I,4; III,21; VI,10; XVIII,26; *Ep.* 204.

¹² Cf. *De civ. Dei* III,10; 30. On Augustine's concept of a just war see for instance MATTOX 2009, 121–160; MARKUS 1983, 1–13; ZWITTER-HOELZL 2014, 317–324.

¹³ Cf. *De lib. arb.* I,5,11; *De civ. Dei* I,31. Although the concept of human freedom developed mainly in Augustine's later anti-Pelagian writings, we find some interesting insights on the topic already in his *De libero arbitrio*. While his *De libero arbitrio*, completed in 395, attempted to explain the

er, Augustine goes further and links political forms of liberty with religious freedom when saying:

“These, then, are the two things which drove Romans to perform such wondrous deeds: love of liberty, and the desire for human praise. In order to secure the liberty of dying men, and out of the desire for human praise which is common to all mortals, a father could slay his sons! If this is so, then, is it any great thing if, for the sake of that true liberty which has set us free from the dominion of iniquity and death and the devil, we are required not to slay our sons, but to regard Christ’s poor as our sons? Is it any great thing if we do this not through the desire of human praise, but because of a love that will set men free not from King Tarquin, but from demons and the prince of demons?”¹⁴

In fact, it is this pain caused by the loss of political liberty that became for Augustine a breeding ground in encouraging Christians to exercise the religious liberty which liberates them from the dominion of death, concupiscence and from the devil.¹⁵ In his view, such encouragements of Christians were of great importance to them, especially in the time when Augustine had to refute the critiques of Roman citizens aimed at Christians after the fall of Rome in 410 AD.¹⁶ It is precisely in his *De civitate Dei* where Augustine offers against the forms of political freedom his own vision of the true liberty (*vera libertas*) as one of the forms of religious freedom.

Liberty in the religious context

In Augustine’s writings the idea of human freedom is mostly discussed within the context of religious liberty and it is often linked with the notion of free choice of will (*liberum arbitrium voluntatis*).¹⁷ This topic is dealt with both

will’s natural constitution, his anti-Pelagian *De natura et gratia*, completed in 415, investigated the origin of the good will. Avoiding the extremes of Manichaean pessimism and Pelagian optimism, Augustine develops a realistic concept of free choice of will which is compatible with fallen human nature. See more closely DJUTH 1993.

¹⁴ *De civ. Dei* V,18, CCL 47, 151: “Haec sunt duo illa, libertas et cupiditas laudis humanae, quae ad facta compulsi miranda romanos. Si ergo pro libertate moriturorum et cupiditate laudum, quae a mortalibus expetuntur, occidi filii a patre potuerunt: quid magnum est, si pro vera libertate, quae nos ab iniquitatis et mortis et diaboli dominatu liberos facit, nec cupiditate humanarum laudum, sed caritate liberandorum hominum, non a Tarquinio rege, sed a daemonibus et daemonum principe?”, transl. DYSON, 219.

¹⁵ On the topic of religious freedom in the western tradition see for instance WALLACE 2009; with regard to Augustine especially p. 518–526.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. *De civ. Dei* III,17.

¹⁷ In fact, Augustine is the first Latin author in the Christian West who elaborated his own concept of will (*voluntas*) and made it a significant philosophical tool. Nevertheless, in spite the central role it plays in his thinking, in none of his works we can find a systematic exposition regard-

before and after the year 396 when his *Ad Simplicianum* was completed in which Augustine, for the first time, put forward his own view of the divine origin of human freedom. However, he paid particular attention to this topic especially in the time of his polemic with the Pelagians, i.e. after 411.¹⁸ Pelagians maintained that human beings are able to exercise free choice of will because liberty as such inheres in created human nature.¹⁹ Therefore they believed that since liberty is a natural good, it can never be lost. For if such a good could be separated from human nature it would mean that this nature would cease to exist.²⁰ Apparently, Augustine rejects such understanding of human liberty not only in his anti-Pelagian writings but also in all other works.²¹

On a general level, he establishes the bond between the religious freedom and the strength of moral will which puts the exercise of free choice in two directions: toward good and toward evil.²² When he includes into Christian understanding of morally good life Plotinus' notion of the soul's ascent to-

ing the nature and operation of will. However, numerous references to this topic are scattered throughout his entire oeuvre (likewise the notion of liberty). In his reflections he attributes to this term various meanings or ways of application, both in verbal and nominal forms depending on the context in which it appears. When defining this term he is usually helped by literary, philosophical and biblical sources which enrich and, at the same time, complicate the task to properly understand his concept of will. Cf. DJUTH 1999b, 881.

¹⁸ On the topic see for instance BONNER 1968.

¹⁹ In his article, M. Lamberigts points out that it is precisely against the background of Pelagius' critique of the Manichaeism that one can understand his emphasis on free will. In fact, he considered the Manichaean determinism to be dangerous for an authentic Christian ethic which could exist, in his view, only if such its components were preserved as liberty and responsibility. And since he took seriously human liberty and responsibility, Pelagius insisted on the fact that human being who received *posse* from God should live a life without sin. The idea of *impeccantia* so often attributed to Pelagius and considered a part of the evidence emphasizing the arrogance of his teaching was based on Jerome's unjustifiable critique. Because he insisted on human liberty and responsibility, Pelagius was forced to defend himself against the accusations that he had neglected divine grace. However, he never stopped refuting these accusations. Cf. LAMBERIGTS 2002, 180-181. Augustine points to this fact in several places of his anti-Pelagian writings, for instance in *De grat. lib. arb.* 5,10.

²⁰ Cf. e.g. *De nat. et gr.* 62,72; 64,76; *De perf. iust.* 11,23, etc.

²¹ In Augustine's writings one encounters several specific meanings of the word "religious liberty" as it is explained before and after the fall. According to his exposition, we can distinguish between the situation of man before the first sin and the situation after the fall (*post peccatum*; cf. *De gen. Man.* I,18,29) in which the original order is disturbed by the fault of human will. By choosing evil, the bad angels and Adam fell from goodness, and, as a consequence, they lost the will's uprightness along with the first liberty (*prima libertas*) to do good. Hence, without the aid of God, they can neither perfect nor reacquire goodness throughout the exercise of free choice of will (cf. *Ep.* 186; *De perf. iust.* 4,9; *De civ. Dei* XIII.15; 22.30). Nevertheless, unlike the fallen angels, Adam and in him the entire fallen humanity have the possibility to be saved by the liberating grace of Christ (*per gratiam Christi*) which strengthens the will of the elect by the inability to sin that is attributed to them. For more information on prelapsarian a postlapsarian liberty see DJUTH 1999a, 496. The relationship between God's will and human will throughout Augustine's entire oeuvre is discussed in KARFIKOVÁ 2012.

²² Cf. e.g. *De gr. Chr. et de pecc. or.* I,18,19 — 21,22.

ward God, he conceives will as a desire or an appetitive force that moves a rational being back and forth between the intelligible and sensible orders, i.e. between God and the world. When the will exercises its *liberum arbitrium* it does so through maintaining the moral strength which is deeply rooted in itself. The presence or absence of moral integrity in the will defines its movement upwards or downwards:

“All love either descends or ascends, for by good desire we are raised to God, but by bad desire we are plummeted into the depths.”²³

And in another place we read:

“If you are in love with the earth, your journey is taking you far from God. If you are in love with God, you are climbing toward him. Let us exert ourselves in charity toward God and our neighbor, that we may make our way back to charity.”²⁴

When defining human will, Augustine often identifies it with love (*amor*). So the will's movement back and forth depends upon the mode and degree of love which rational beings have for God. Since all human beings are made in the image of God (cf. *Gen* 1:26) and since that image includes will in addition to memory and understanding, the will's loves and affections reflect God's love for humanity to a greater or lesser degree.²⁵ In his treatise *De Trinitate* Augustine explains it in the following way:

“For if we take ourselves to the inner memory of the mind by which it remembers itself, and to the inner understanding by which it understands itself, and to the inner will by which it loves itself, where these three things are always together at the same time, and always have been together at the same time, from the moment when they began to be, whether one thought of them or whether one did not think of them, then the image of that trinity, too, will indeed be seen to belong to the memory alone; but because the word cannot be there without the thought [...]; this image is rather to be recognized in these three things, namely, memory, understanding, and will.”²⁶

²³ *En. in Ps.* 122,1, CSEL 95/3, p. 107: “Desiderio enim bono levamur ad Deum, et desiderio malo ad ima praecipitatur.”, transl. WSA III/20, 29.

²⁴ *En. in Ps.* 119,8, CSEL 95/3, p. 53: “Si amaveris terram, peregrinarius a Deo; si amaveris Deum, ascendis ad Deum. In caritate Dei et proximi exerceamur, ut redeamus ad caritatem.”, transl. WSA III/19, 507.

²⁵ Cf. *De Trin.* XI,5,8; XIV,7,10; XIV,8,11.

²⁶ *De Trin.* XIV,7,10, CCL 50A, 434: “Nam si nos referamus ad interiorem mentis memoriam qua sui meminit et interiorem intellegentiam qua se intellegit et interiorem voluntatem qua se diligit,

True liberty and Christian love

Augustine associates human will with true freedom (*vera libertas*) which enables the will to intervene in an appropriate manner if man respects the integrity.²⁷ True freedom is therefore a supernatural gift bestowed on the wills of the elect²⁸ in virtue of Christ's redemptive love. Its presence in the will restores the will's uprightness throughout the dispensation of the inability to sin which ensures that the elect will be able to adhere to the good and persevere in it until the end.²⁹

Within this context, Augustine uses the term "Christian liberty" (*Christiana libertas*) when he speaks about the true liberty as a gratuitous gift of God which he identifies with the love (*caritas*) that "has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (*Rom. 5:5*)"³⁰ In his *De natura et gratia* he further explains that this is the law of freedom, not of slavery, because it is the law of love and not that of fear.³¹ According to Augustine, this freedom comes to us with Christ as we can read it in the third book of his *De doctrina christiana*:

"That is why those who were found by Christian liberty to be serving under useful signs were found to be near; and by explaining the signs to which they were subjected, this liberty raised them up to the substantive realities, the things they were signs of, and so set them free."³²

In a similar way we can also understand his words addressed to the Manichee named Faustus when against his views Augustine defends the role of the Old Testament in the life of the Christians:

"We have already shown sufficiently why and how we maintain the authority of the Old Testament, not for the imitation of Jewish bondage,

ubi haec tria simul sunt et simul semper fuerunt ex quo esse coeperunt sive cogitentur sive non cogitentur, videbitur quidem imago illius trinitatis et ad solam memoriam pertinere. Sed quia ibi verbum esse sine cogitatione non potest [...] in tribus potius illis imago ista cognoscitur, memoria scilicet, intellegentia, voluntate.", transl. 147; cf. also *De Trin.* XIV,8,11.

²⁷ Cf. *C. Acad.* 1,1; *De civ. Dei* II,29.

²⁸ On the problematic issue regarding Augustine's doctrine of strict predestination see for instance VAŠEK 2007, 39.

²⁹ Cf. *De corrept.* 12,38.

³⁰ Cf. *De nat. et gr.* 57,67.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *De doctr. christ.* III,8,12, CCL 32, 85: "Quam ob rem Christiana libertas eos, quos invenit sub signis utilibus, tamquam prope inventos, interpretatis signis, quibus subditi erant, elevatos ad eas res, quarum illa signa sunt, liberavit.", transl. WSA I/11, 175. On the topic of the subjection of the Jews to useful signs and the Christian liberty see for instance MASSIE 2011, especially pages 279–288.

but for the confirmation of Christian liberty."³³

In Augustine's view, Christian liberty affects the human will and strengthens it in goodness so that the soul can find real pleasure in performing good acts.³⁴ Consequently, the delight of the will that comes spontaneously during pursuing the good liberates the will from the servile fear as well as from the concupiscence that are both linked with carnal habits from which rises the dominion of the evil.³⁵ In opposition to the law of sin binding the will to the evil, the law of liberty liberates the will from the necessity to sin. Thereby the soul experiences real happiness when it finds pleasure in the truth, i.e. in the supreme good which is God himself.³⁶ Thus, when the faith operates through charity the elect follow God's ways humbly subordinated to his commands, while, at the same time, they are able to do good solely thanks to his help.³⁷

"The Lord will give sweetness, and then our earth will yield its fruit (*Ps.* 84:13). It enables the faithful to perform good actions not out of fear but out of love, not through punishment but through delight in righteousness."³⁸

Therefore, Augustine identifies the possession of the true liberty with the ability to live a good Christian life.³⁹ We can understand it better in the light of his commentaries where he explains how the Christians live this freedom. In fact, to be on the way toward the freedom means that they should be liberated from the pride, concupiscent love or even from the love of earthly goods, especially from the love of personal gain.⁴⁰ In several places of his works Augustine emphasizes with reference to the Scriptures that the beginning of every sin is the pride and the root of every evil is avarice (cf. *1 Tim* 6:10; *Sir* 10,15).⁴¹

According to Augustine, preferring the love of personal gain to the love of the common good is the servile liberty (*servilis libertas*) that is merely the

³³ C. *Faust.* VIII,2, CSEL 25, 306: "Iam quidem satis superius ostendimus, quare et quomodo teneamus auctoritatem Veteris Testamenti non ad iudaicae servitutis imitationem, sed ad christianae libertatis testificationem.", transl. SCHAFF, 222.

³⁴ Cf. *De gr. Chr. et de pecc. or.* I,24,25.

³⁵ Cf. *De spir. et litt.* 16,28.

³⁶ Cf. *De lib. arb.* II,13,37; *De civ. Dei* V,10.

³⁷ Cf. *De civ. Dei* XV,21.

³⁸ *En. in Ps.* 67,13, CCL 39, 877: "Dominus dabit suavitatem, et terra nostra dabit fructum suum (*Ps.* 84:13); ut bonum opus fiat non timore, sed amore; non formidine poenae, sed delectatione iustitiae.", transl. WSA III/17, 335.

³⁹ In relation to this topic see e.g. Dideberg's comments (cf. DIDEBERG 2008, 478–479) on Augustine's interpretation of the verse *1 Jn.* 3:18: "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (cf. *In Ioh. ep.* 6,1).

⁴⁰ Cf. *Sol.* I,10,17.

⁴¹ Cf. e.g. *In Ioh. ep.* VIII,6.

licence to do whatever one pleases regardless of God's law.⁴² Moreover, the freedom from divine justice is servitude to sin, as Augustine observes in the disobedience of mind and body. Therefore we can better understand his words when he says:

"For this free will will be more free to the extent that it is more healthy and more healthy to the extent that it is more subject to divine grace and mercy."⁴³

Since after the fall of Adam man is no more subordinated to God, other things which are below him do not obey him. Therefore in his commentary on the *First Letter of John* Augustine says to his faithful:

"Well then, brothers, we have read how man was made to the image and likeness of God. And what did God say of him? *And let him have power over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and all the beasts that crawl upon the earth* (Gen. 1:26). Did he say, "Let him have power over men"? *Let him have power*, he said. He gave an innate power. *Over what would he have power? Over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the crawling things that crawl upon the earth.* Why is this innate power of man in that? Because man has power from the fact that he has been made to the image of God. But where has he been made to the image of God? In his understanding, in his mind, in the inner man, in that which understands the truth, distinguishes righteousness and unrighteousness, knows by whom he was made, and is able to understand his creator and to praise his creator."⁴⁴

And further he adds:

"Pay heed to what I say: God, man, beasts. Clearly God is above you, the beasts are below you. Acknowledge him who is above you, so that those who are beneath you may acknowledge you."⁴⁵

⁴² Cf. *C. Acad.* III,19; *Conf.* III,8,15; *De doctr. christ.* III,19,28.

⁴³ *Ep.* 157,2,8, CSEL 44, 454: "Haec enim voluntas libera tanto erit liberior quanto sanior, tanto autem sanior quanto divinae misericordiae gratiaeque subiectior.", transl. WSA II/3, 20.

⁴⁴ *In Ioh. ep.* 8,6, BA 76, 330: "Ergo, fratres, legimus quemadmodum factus sit homo ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei. Et quid de illo dixit Deus? Et habeat potestatem piscium maris et volatilium caeli et omnium pecorum quae repunt super terram. Numquid dixit: habeat potestatem hominum? Habeat potestatem, ait; dedit potestatem naturalem. Quorum? Habeat potestatem piscium maris, volatilium caeli, et omnium reptantium quae repunt super terram. Quare haec est naturalis potestas hominis in ista? Quia homo ex eo habet potestatem ex quo factus est ad imaginem Dei. Ubi autem factus est ad imaginem Dei? In intellectu, in mente, in interiore homine; in eo quod intellegit veritatem, diiudicat iustitiam et iniustitiam, novit a quo factus est, potest intellegere creatorem suum, laudare Creatorem suum.", transl. WSA I/14, 120.

⁴⁵ *In Ioh. ep.* 8,7, BA 76, 332: "Intendite quid dicam: Deus, homo, pecora verbi gratia. Supra te Deus, infra te peccora. Agnosce eum qui supra te est ut agnoscant te quae infra te sunt.", transl. WSA

In the light of these comments it becomes clear what Augustine puts forward in the first book of his *De doctrina christiana* where he offers a new perspective on the biblical teleology while discussing the *uti - frui* distinction regarding the love of God and that of neighbor. There we read:

“But because the divine substance is altogether more excellent than our nature and high above it, the commandment bidding us to love God was distinguished from the one about love of neighbor. [...] In other words, he (God) takes pity on us, so that we may enjoy him, while we take pity on each other, again so that we may all enjoy him, not one another.”⁴⁶

This perspective is a key to reading the first book of *De doctrina christiana* as it is presented in its preamble and the conclusion. The terms such as *beati, beatitudo, pervenire, inhaerere, propter ipsam rem*, are characteristic of the teleological perspective and the *frui - uti* pair is defined precisely within this context: the *res*, objects of the *frui*, make us happy; the *res*, objects of the *uti*, are only steps toward the beatitude.⁴⁷ The conclusion of the book recapitulates the argument by specifying the purpose of the *telos* according to the Bible: “The fulfillment and the end of the law and of all the divine scriptures is love (*Rom 13:8; 1 Tim 1:5*); love of the thing which is to be enjoyed, and of the thing which is able to enjoy that thing together with us.”⁴⁸ We can therefore say with L. Verheijen that Augustine’s method here is “to explain how the Bible sees the *telos* of human life and that he wants to compose a treatise on biblical teleology.”⁴⁹

According to Augustine, love of neighbor is a means in progressing on the way toward God. Then the verb *uti* is used independently on *frui* in order to designate sensible realities and, as such, it is opposed to the love which should be reserved to God alone.⁵⁰ In *De vera religione* to wish (*frui*) to investigate created things rather than the creator and the truth itself is qualified as the bad use (*male utendum*) of the free will, as it becomes clear from Augustine’s words:

“They not only wish [...] to investigate created things against the com-

I/14, 121.

⁴⁶ *De doctr. christ.* I,30,33, CCL 32, 25: “Sed quoniam excellentior ac supra nostram naturam est divina substantia, praeceptum, quo diligamus Deum, a proximi dilectione distinctum est. [...] id est, ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos vero invicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur.”, transl. WSA I/11, 121.

⁴⁷ Cf. *De doctr. christ.* I,3,3 – 4,4.

⁴⁸ *De doctr. christ.* I,35,39, CCL 32, 29: “Legis et omnium divinarum scripturarum plenitudo et *finis* esse dilectio rei qua fruendum est et rei quae nobiscum ea re frui potest.”, transl. WSA I/11, 123.

⁴⁹ VERHEIJEN 1986, 173.

⁵⁰ Cf. *De doctr. christ.* I,20,37; 26,48–50; BOCHET 1997, 454.

mandment of God and to enjoy them rather than the law itself and Truth, which we gather was the sin of the first man, making bad use of free will, but they go on to add this in the very sentence passed on them, so that, as well as loving, they also serve the creature rather than the creator and worship it through all its parts, going from the highest to the lowest part.”⁵¹

Conclusion

So it is not fortuitous if we note that the right relationship to the created world is in Augustine’s view thought of as *uti*⁵², while the word *frui* is reserved solely to the relationship with God.⁵³ Therefore we can conclude that the more man progresses toward God and adheres to him with love, the more he is free since he is less dependent on carnal things that bind him to the created world. In this perspective we can better understand Augustine’s words from his *Exposition on Psalm 99* where we read:

“It is a great happiness to be a slave in this magnificent household, brothers and sisters, even if you are fettered. [...] Since the truth made you free, let charity enslave you. [...] Do not look for any manumission that would be an escape from the household of the master who has manumitted you already.”⁵⁴

From the above cited passages it becomes clear that the liberty of grace interferes into human will and offers it through the ability of will the possibility to participate in the love of God and of neighbor. When this happens, God’s image in man is manifested through human action which becomes a mirror reflecting God’s love and goodness.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *De vera rel.* 37,65, CCL 32, 231: “Non enim tantum scrutari creaturam contra praeceptum Dei et ea *frui* potius quam ipsa lege et veritate volunt, quod primi hominis peccatum deprehenditur *male utentis* libero arbitrio, sed hoc quoque in ipsa damnatione addunt, ut non modo diligant, sed etiam serviant creaturae potius quam creatori et eam colant per partes eius a summis usque ad ima venientes.”, transl. WSA I/8, 75.

⁵² Cf. *De vera rel.* 40,91.

⁵³ Cf. *De vera rel.* 11,21.

⁵⁴ *En. in Ps.* 99,7, CCL 39, 1397: “Magna felicitas, fratres, esse in ista domo magna servum, etsi cum compedibus. [...] Servum te caritas faciat quia liberum te veritas fecit. [...] non te sic quaeras manumitti, ut recedas de domo manumissoris tui.”, transl. WSA III/19, 18–19.

⁵⁵ Cf. e.g. *De Trin.* XIV,15,21 – 19,25.

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