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THE CONCUBINAGE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Contents: 1. The Roman law on the concubinage prior to the fourth century; 2. Christianity in the antiquity and the views on the concubinage; 3. St. Augustine's experience of the concubinage; 4. The concubinage and marriage in the writings of St. Augustine.

Introduction

In the reflections on biographies of great saints, including the one of St. Augustine of Hippo, historians and theologians most often focus on the post-conversion period. Less interest, however, is aroused by the earlier stage, before the conversion, however full of dramaturgy and tension, and extremely intense this experience is, as evidenced by a fragment of *Confessions*. This article aims to analyze the personal experience of Augustine's concubinage and the possible influence of this relationship on his later views on marriage.

1. The Roman law on the concubinage prior to the fourth century

The concubinage was known in the earliest times. In Genesis there are descriptions of numerous concubines of Abraham. Mosaic law did not contain any provisions on the concubinage. The Mishnah, Talmud and the midrash explain the significant difference between the wife – *iszah*, and *pillegesz*, i.e. the second wife, mattress, concubine. The term *pillegesz* refers to a woman joined to a man without a solemn vow, without *ketubah* - (*donatio propter nuptias* - meaning a donation on the occasion of marriage). The

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custom was phased out, while the second wife was replaced by the maid. Through Greece, the institution of the concubinage reached Rome.

In the Roman society there were two parallel forms of cohabitation of a man and woman: concubinage and marriage. During the period of the Republic, the concubinage was treated more as a factual rather than a legal status¹. In the reign of Emperor Octavian August (27 BC - 14 BC), a special kind of extramarital relationship was created, called concubinage. It referred to a sexual relationship between a man and a woman without permanence of that relationship, i.e., excluding *affectio maritalis* – outward demonstrated will of both parties to permanently remain in a union and have sexual relationship with each other. Lack of *affectio maritalis*, demonstrated by even one of the parties resulted in the termination of marriage. Both sides should be unmarried. The concubinage did not have civil ramifications. The concubine did not enjoy *honor matrimonii* - she was not considered a wife. She had no right to claim the title *materfamilias* or *uxor*. Children from such a relationship were in a specific legal position and shared the status of their mother. Legislation under the rule of Octavian Augustus contributed to the development of unmarried relationships among persons who did not have the right to a legal marriage².

In the ancient Rome extramarital sex was prohibited by law. Extramarital sexual relation of a woman and a married man was punishable, as evidenced by the acts attributed to Numa Pompilius - the legendary second king of Rome (753-673 BC), and according to Aulus Gellius (late 2nd century) – the erudite and Roman writer, such women were deprived of civic respect³. Despite prohibitions, concubinage became increasingly commonplace. It was a reaction to the growing number of obstacles to marriage. The ban on marriages with peregrines, the restriction on marriages with liberated female slaves, the matrimonial ban on soldiers, or the case of emperors – all needed to be regulated by law. The Constitutions of the emperors Septimius Severus (ca. 145-211), Caracalla (188-217), Alexander Severus (208-235) and others, gradually turned the concubinage into a legitimate institution, regarded as marriage-like, although of a lower category. It was available only to free people. Women who intended to enter concubinage were obliged to testify to it publicly through *testatio*, that is,

¹ S. Paździor, *Konkubinat w Prawie Kanonicznym oraz w polskim prawie cywilnym*, in: „Roczniki Nauk Prawnych”, vol. XVII, 2/2007, 179.

² Insadowski, *Rzymskie prawo...*, 88-89.

³ Insadowski, *Rzymskie prawo...*, 89.

with a statement in the presence of a witness. Without *testatio*, the concubinage was considered *stuprum*, i.e. an illegal cohabitation, contrary to the accepted behaviour. In the 4th-century empire, the concubinage became a legal institution and was widely practised⁴.

Starting with Constantine the Great, the legislation of the Christian emperors on the issue of concubinage underwent a gradual change. For a while, the emperors recognized this kind of relationships as a kind of marriage called *inequale conjugum*, *legitima coniunctio sine honesta celebratione matrimonii*, or *licita coniunctio* – non-marriage legal relationships without the legally-regulated ritual. Over time, legislation sought to abolish such relationships and to transform them into marriages. The boundaries between the marriage and the concubinage became less pronounced. Therefore, to distinguish between the two relationships, lawyers applied the principle of the necessity of *affectio maritalis*. By the end of the antiquity, both in the marriage and in the concubinage, the intention was to preserve the relationship and the publically confirmed and lasting will of a man and a woman to remain in that relationship and cohabitation. An important issue for the concubinage was the fact that the couple treated each other as if they were married. In that case the relationship would be perceived as equal to the marriage⁵.

Limitation to the legal status of the concubines was introduced by Constantine the Great (272-337). In 336, he forbade the male concubines to make endowment for their cohabiting partner and their children⁶. Following emperors: Valentinian (321-375), Valens (328-378) and Gratian (359-383), softened the regulation and made endowment to the children of the cohabitants possible, however, limiting it to a certain proportion of inheritance, depending on whether or not there were also natural children. In 397, Arkadius (377-408) and Honorius (384-423), retreated to the ruling of Constantine, but in 405, together with Theodosius II (401-450), they resumed the regulation of 371. Justinian the Great (482- 565) sought to legally convert the concubinage into marriage by removing the social barriers that had previously prohibited marriages. According to his legislation, from then on, indecent women could legally enter legal marriages, while patriarchs were allowed to marry freed persons. In addition, it was

⁴ Insadowski, *Rzymskie prawo...*, 90-93.

⁵ B. Rawson, *The Roman Family*, in: *The Roman Family in Ancient Rome. New Perspectives*, London-Sydney, 1986, 20-21.

⁶ Theodosii Codex, 4, 6, 2; Codex Justiniana 5, 27, 1.

possible to concubinate with any person without exposing oneself to the accusation of *stuprum*- indecency⁷. In the Justinian law, the concept of the concubinage was close to that of the marriage. In this context, the requirements therefor were similar to those necessary for the marriage: the need to preserve monogamousness and the required minimum age - the female concubine should be at least 12 years old. In this way the concubinage became a substitute for the marriage impossible to be legally concluded for various reasons. Children from cohabitation continued to be considered unlawful, but were not considered illegitimate. Legally, they still did not have the father, were raised by the mother, however the cohabitantes ceased to be banned from making endowments. In the following centuries there was a tendency to gradually eliminate the concubinage in accordance with the ecclesiastical spirit⁸.

2. Christianity in the antiquity and the views on the concubinage

Sacred Scripture of the New Testament explicitly rejects the concubinage as incompatible with the teaching of Jesus Christ⁹. In its origins, Christian antiquity did not develop structured legal content on the issue of marriage. The cohabitation was treated in much the same way as in the Roman law, i.e. as a marriage concluded unlawfully. Initially fragmented and devoid of legal formalities, the institution of marriage gradually gained traits of systematism. Its base was the notion of a relationship of a man and a woman based on the Revelation, characterized by the permanence, exclusivity, fidelity and holiness of marriage. The marriage was to be concluded by the priest, with his blessing - *coram Ecclesiam*. The marriage was seen as a state of life with specific qualities and a legal status. At the same time, there were prohibitions to marry in certain cases and sanctions for adultery¹⁰.

As mentioned before, just after the onset of the Christian domination in the Roman Empire, the concubinage was widely practised. There was a clash between the Christian conception of marriage and the cohabita-

⁷ Insadowski, *Rzymskie prawo...*, 95-96.

⁸ Insadowski, *Rzymskie prawo...*, 96-99, S. Paździor, *Konkubinat*, EK, vol. IX, c. 647.

⁹ Matthew 5, 32; 19, 9; Mark 10, 11-12; Luke 16, 18.

¹⁰ W. Góralski, *Instytucja małżeńska w starożytnym prawodawstwie kościelnym (III-VI w.)*, in: „Vox Patrum” 8-9: 1985, 275-294.

tion approved of by civil authority. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-235) in *Traditio Apostolica*, from c. 218, suggested that marriages concluded by Christians under the Roman law be considered valid¹¹. At the same time, as regards the catechumens, he argued that baptismal candidates should abandon their concubines and take legal wives, otherwise they were not allowed to accept the Christian faith¹². As noted by W. Góralski, Hippolytus even seems to go beyond the Roman law, allowing candidates for the catechumenate to be males - masters living in concubinage with their slave (forbidden by law) if the latter raised the children born from this relationship and had intimate relations exclusively with her master. As can be seen, in this context, fidelity, monogamy and raising children would be essential elements of the marriage¹³.

In his ordinances, Pope Julius I, who led the Catholic Church between 337 and 352, went even further beyond the Roman legislation, bearing in mind the Christian background of the sacrament of marriage. He demanded the freedom of choosing a spouse for a lifetime by the candidates, not only by their parents, and also treating the marriage as valid, if a free parson wanted to marry a slave. It should be noted that, according to the Roman law, slaves were not allowed to marry free persons. Such a relationship was not considered to be a marriage. However, it was permitted by the popes, who recognized such relationships as *marriages of conscience*. Although formally, it was a breach of the civil law, such relationships were possible with the consent of the bishop. In the decree of Pope Julius I from 352, we read:

Some doubted the decency of the relationship between the master and the slave liberated by him. That is why we, solving this ancient and dubious issue, state that marriages of this kind shall be legal. If affection is the cause of all marriages, and if there is nothing illegal and unlawful in such relationships, why should they be forbidden?¹⁴.

The issue of concubinage was raised by the "Apostolic Constitutions," edited around 400. The eight-book Constitutions, inter alia, discusses the Christian principles of secular life, the life of bishops, clergy, widows,

¹¹ *Traditio Apostolica* XV.

¹² *Traditio Apostolica* XVI.

¹³ W. Góralski, *Instytucja małżeńska...*, 276-277.

¹⁴ A. Sarmiento-J. Escrivá, *Enchiridion Familiae. Textos del Magisterio Pontificio y Conciliar sobre el Matrimonio y la Familia (Siglos I a XX)*, vol. I, Madrid 1992, 12-13, (English translation by Joanna Gębka).

orphans and martyrs. In the last, 8th book, the issue discussed above is brought up by an unknown author¹⁵. It can be noticed that this collection is dependent on the work of Hippolytus of Rome. A female slave who permanently stays in a relationship with a pagan could be admitted to the catechumenate. Were she to conduct sexual activities with other men, she should resign from the Christian faith. On the other hand, a Christian man with a female concubine being a slave, must give up on her and get married in accordance with the law. In the case of a concubine being a free person, he should marry her, otherwise he cannot be admitted to the catechumenate.

3. St. Augustine's experience of the concubinage

Historians and theologians studying the person and activity of St. Augustine of Hippo concentrate mainly on his pastoral activity and theological and philosophical work after his conversion. Most of them focus on his rich literature on the marriage and the family, however, relatively few look into his personal experience of the concubinage in the pre-christening period¹⁶. One can hypothesize that his views on the marriage and the family stemmed from the personal experience of the relationship unacceptable in accordance with the Christian legislation¹⁷.

Augustine was born in 354 in Thagast (Latin Tagaste) in Proconsular Africa, to a middle-class family from a pagan father and a Christian mother. His father was indifferent to Christianity. Mother Monica asked God for a grace of baptism for her husband just before his death. From 366 to 370, Augustine studied in his hometown Thagast, then, between 366 and 370 in Madurai. Afterwards, he studied rhetoric in Carthage. During this period he gave lessons in court speech, Latin literature and philosophy. There, he also became interested in astrology, which led to his interest in the esoteric religion of Manichaeans, which lasted for 9 years. Under the influence of a local Manichean bishop, who impressed him with his elocution and wide

¹⁵ *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, VIII, 32, 12-13, w: F. X. Funk (ed.), *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, vol. I, Paderbornae 1905, 537.

¹⁶ J. van Oort, *Manichean Women in Augustine's life and work*, in: "Vigiliae Christianae" 69 (2015), 312-326; K. Power, *Sed unam tamen: Augustine and his Concubine*, in: "Augustinian Studies" 23 (1992), 49-76; M. A. McNamara, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine*, Staten Island NY 1958; T. J. Van BAVEL, *AUGUSTINE'S VIEW on WOMEN*, in: "Augustiniana" 39 (1989), 5-53.

¹⁷ K. Power, *Sed unam tamen: Augustine and his Concubine*, in: "Augustinian Studies" 23 (1992), 49.

knowledge, he joined the sect. Augustin formally became a listener - *auditor*. The Manichean doctrine was based on pantheistic duality. Its followers believed in existence of two divine elements: the Good-Light and the Evil-Dark. The first element was called God or the Father of Greatness, the second- Matter, the Satan. The combination of good and evil existed in the man. For the release of light in the man, the Father of Greatness emanated from himself "the third messenger" - Jesus Christ. The task of Jesus was to reveal to the first parents, Adam and Eve, the divine knowledge, or gnosis, that is to answer the question about the beginning of man, of the sense of earthly existence, and what must be done to free oneself from evil. According to the Manichaeans, Jesus was not a real man. He was not born from Virgin Mary, nor was he born at all. He had a body but only apparently suffered on the cross. According to the Manichaeans, the Catholic Church falsified the truth, fell into heresy and promoted evil¹⁸. Years later, in his Confessions, St. Augustine wrote the following about his personal experience with manicheism:

Early nine years passed in which I wallowed in the mud of that deep pit and in the darkness of falsehood, striving often to rise, but being all the more heavily dashed down¹⁹.

At the age of 16, he met a woman from Proconsular Africa, of an unknown name with whom he lived in concubinage for several years. His relationship with the young woman, as can be deduced from various passages of his writings, was to begin in 370/371, when, as he wrote in Confessions, he began studying in Carthage, and then threw himself into sensual experiences.

I came to Carthage, where a caldron of unholy loves was seething and bubbling all around me. I was not in love as yet, but I was in love with love; and, from a hidden hunger, I hated myself for not feeling more intensely a sense of hunger. I was looking for something to love, for I was in love with loving, and I hated security and a smooth way, free from snares²⁰.

From the relationship, most likely between the late 372 or early 373, the son Adeodatus was born. He was the pride of Augustine. The son owed much to his mother, who raised him. But later Augustine attributed most of his son's positive traits to God himself

¹⁸ R. Szmurło, *MANICHEIZM*, in: EK, vol. 11, Lublin 2006, c. 1143-1148.

¹⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 3, 11.

²⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 3, 1.

He was barely fifteen years old, but his intelligence excelled that of many grave and learned men. I confess to thee thy gifts, O Lord my God, creator of all, who hast power to reform our deformities—for there was nothing of me in that boy but the sin. For it was thou who didst inspire us to foster him in thy discipline, and none other—thy gifts I confess to thee. There is a book of mine, entitled *De Magistro*. It is a dialogue between Adeodatus and me, and thou knowest that all things there put into the mouth of my interlocutor are his, though he was then only in his sixteenth year. Many other gifts even more wonderful I found in him. His talent was a source of awe to me. And who but thou couldst be the worker of such marvels? And thou didst quickly remove his life from the earth, and even now I recall him to mind with a sense of security, because I fear nothing for his childhood or youth, nor for his whole career. We took him for our companion, as if he were the same age in grace with ourselves, to be trained with ourselves in thy discipline. And so we were baptized and the anxiety about our past life left us²¹.

It is interesting to note that the author of *Confessions* constantly goes back to his past sins. Writing in superlatives about his beloved son, he describes Adeodatus as born from his sin. Augustine's son was very much loved by his grandmother, Monica, whom, after her death he missed dearly and mourned²².

In August 374, Augustine returned to Thagast, where he opened a school of grammar. After two years he closed it and returned to Carthage, where he founded a school of rhetoric. In 383, he went to Rome to set up yet another school. Having learned that in Milan they sought an orator, the following year he went to Milan, the capital of the West Roman Empire. At the age of 30, he became a lecturer in rhetoric. Fascinated by the Roman classics, Augustine fell into a rationalistic skepticism, becoming doubtful about religious matters. In Milan, he suffered a painful event: after several years of relationship, he split up with his concubine. Monica long prayed for the conversion of Augustine; In Milan, she asked Archbishop Ambrose to convince her son and encourage him to convert.

When that woman had begged him to agree to have some discussion with me, to refute my errors, to help me to unlearn evil and to learn the good for it was his habit to do this when he found people ready to receive

²¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9, 14.

²² Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9, 6, 12.

it-he refused, very prudently, as I afterward realized. For he answered that I was still unteachable, being inflated with the novelty of that heresy, and that I had already perplexed divers inexperienced persons with vexatious questions, as she herself had told him. “But let him alone for a time,” he said, “only pray God for him. He will of his own accord, by reading, come to discover what an error it is and how great its impiety is. He was barely fifteen years old, but his intelligence excelled that of many grave and learned men²³.

The conversion of St. Augustine took place in 387. On Holy Saturday, on the night of 24th April. At the age of 33, together with his son Adeodatus, and his friend Alipius, Augustin was baptized in the Catholic Church by Bishop of Milan. Ten years later, before leaving Italy, his mother Monica died in Ostia. After arriving in Africa in 390, his son Adeodatus also found eternal piece. Augustine and his friends went to Hippo, where he decided to set up a monastery and spend the rest of his life there. Thanks to the support of the local Bishop Valerius, by the acclamation of the people, he was elected and consecrated in 394 to the Sufragan Bishop of Hippo. He continued to lead a common life in the monastery. The community became a place of formation for future bishops and priests. For the rest of his life, Augustine was fighting with heretics: Manichaeans, Donatists and Pelagians. Personally, he participated in disputes with them. He fought them with a pen and word because they were a serious threat to the Church. The polemics resulted in important theological works which explained many theological problems mistakenly interpreted by the heretics. Augustine died on August 28th, 430 during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals.

As mentioned earlier, during his stay in Carthage, he met a woman of an unknown name. From the age of 19 to 28, he was a Manichean and lived in a concubinage.

During this space of nine years, then, from my nineteenth to my eight and twentieth year, we went on seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in various lusts; publicly, by sciences which they style liberal— secretly, with a falsity called religion²⁴.

Little is known about the woman. She was probably of a low social status, therefore he could not legally marry her. Augustine never disclosed the name of his concubine. Some, e.g. M. McNamara, explain this attitude with

²³ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 3, 12.

²⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 4, 1.

respect for the cohabitee. They suggest that after their separation, he wanted to save her suffering and distress²⁵. It is important to note that Augustine usually avoided disclosing the names of women except for his mother, Monica²⁶. Also in his correspondence he attempted to omit all facts that would make it possible to identify them.

On the basis of the passage from *Confessions* 3.3, some suggest that the couple could first have met in the Christian temple as catechumens, and the woman could be a catechumen²⁷. It could seem that the mentions in this passage do not give rise to such speculation. On the other hand, however, according to P. Brown, her vow of celibacy after being freed from slavery would be in line with the requirements of the Catholic Church for the baptism, and one could assume that she became a catechumen in the course of her relationship with Augustine²⁸. If she had been a slave, she would have fulfilled all the conditions for receiving baptism, since the vow of chastity was consistent and logical with the requirements for the candidates for baptism²⁹. Others suggest that the woman in relationship with Augustine could have belonged to the sect of Manichaeans. In *Confessions* 4.2, he wrote:

In those years I had a mistress, to whom I was not joined in lawful marriage³⁰.

Of course, the statement “*In those years*” refers to the period when he was a fervent Manichaean³¹. This could be the key to understanding his current situation when he was in the concubinage. J. Van Oort suggests that Augustine, as a Manichean auditor, could have had a concubine, but he was not allowed to have sexual relations with other women at the same time. It is also known that contraception was then accepted and commonly used in the Manichean circles. Was Augustine’s companion also a Man-

²⁵ M. A. McNamara, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine*, Staten Island NY 1958, 48.

²⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9, 13.

²⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 3, 3. J. J. O’Meara, *The young Augustine: The Growth of St Augustines Mind up to his Conversion*, London 1954, 55.

²⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 16, 15. Brown suggests that she was probably a good Christian during her relationship with Augustine, and that her later vow of chastity would confirm that she was eligible for baptism or that she could receive the Eucharist. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1967, 80.

²⁹ K. Power, *Sed unam tamen. Augustine and his Concubines*, in: *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 49-76, s. 51-52.

³⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 4, 2.

³¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 4, 1.

ichaeon? There is no definite answer. One thing is certain: female *auditors* played an important role in the life of the Manichean church, as well as in the daily lives of their husbands or cohabitants³².

Augustine's narrative of the personal experience of the concubinage shows love associated with physical pleasure, coupled with bitterness, suffering, tension and pain. He describes himself in terms of a prisoner - a slave of insatiable lust. The concubinage became the easiest way to satisfy his lust. Although Augustine's language is filled with metaphors, it strives to be extravagant. His public confession has a pedagogical goal: he exaggerates the descriptions to further accentuate the negative side of his own attitude. His egocentrism, seeking pleasure "at every call" is apparent:

I remained faithful to her and with her I discovered, by my own experience, what a great difference there is between the restraint of the marriage bond contracted with a view to having children and the compact of a lustful love, where children are born against the parents' will- although once they are born they compel our love³³.

The text shows the tension of opposites: desire and fidelity. What can be noted the lack of consistency and responsibility. On the one hand, avoiding conception, and on the other, love for children. Undoubtedly, the Manichean ideas influenced his views on having children. From the perspective of this religion, the absence of offspring in a concubinage was seen as a negative effect of cohabitation, since the soul was not imprisoned in the body. The Manichaeans were convinced that the misbehavior of children stemmed from the regulated conception used by their parents. What was Augustine's personal view on the issue of having children? One fragment of *De bono coniugali* may suggest that he and his concubine used anticonception to avoid progeny, though his partner was not happy about it³⁴.

Could the concubinage of Augustine last? Probably not. In fact, it survived only for a certain period of time³⁵. Evidently, he was very passionate about his concubine, until abandoning her. Even several years later, he kept remembering her, and in a sense, he tempered his attitude towards the concubinage. Why did Augustine abandon his concubine? Would she interfere with his devotion to practising philosophy? It is not known whether or not

³² J. van Oort, Manichean Women in Augustine's life and work, in: "Vigiliae Christianae" 69 (2015), 312-326.

³³ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 4,2.

³⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *De bono coniugali*, 5, 5.

³⁵ K. Power, *Sed unam tamen...*, s. 52-53.

his companion was an educated person. Some, such as McNamara, suggest that she was an intellectually weak person who could not offer Augustine much more than sexual pleasure³⁶. It is possible that the experience of such an intense physical and emotional connection with a woman was an important obstacle preventing him from the search for wisdom. His concubine could have interfered with his passion for practising beloved philosophy. After some time, this experience which ruined the peace of the philosopher and his love of wisdom could have encouraged Augustine to leave his concubine instead of entering into a permanent marriage. The state of constant tension between the material and the spiritual could ultimately have led to a decision of breaking up with the woman he had seemed to love so much so far. As he wrote in *Soliloquia* 1, 10, past bodily experiences: attachment to external and material things would not give him complete joy and authentic peace.

At this point it is worth considering how Augustine treated his relationship. Was his relationship *de facto* a marriage? In the 6th Book of Confessions he describes his life in the concubinage:

Actually, it was Alypius who prevented me from marrying, urging that if I did so it would not be possible for us to live together and to have as much undistracted leisure in the love of wisdom as we had long desired. (...) I quoted against him the examples of men who had been married and still lovers of wisdom, who had pleased God and had been loyal and affectionate to their friends. I fell far short of them in greatness of soul, and, enthralled with the disease of my carnality and its deadly sweetness, I dragged my chain along, fearing to be loosed of it. Thus I rejected the words of him who counseled me wisely, as if the hand that would have loosed the chain only hurt my wound³⁷.

In spite of these difficulties and obstacles, Augustine's relationship could be considered an actual marriage, although not recognized by law. The boundary between the concubine and the real marriage in the case of the orator and his concubine was ambiguous. After all, he broke up with his companion, the mother of his son, Adeodatus, and intended to enter into a legal marriage. In the dialogue *Reason* he raises the question:

And how about a wife? Would not one beautiful, modest, docile and cultivated, or at least, one who could be easily taught by yourself, bringing,

³⁶ McNamara, *Friends...*, s. 51.

³⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 6, 12.

also, — since you despise opulence, — a marriage portion sufficient to prevent her being a tax upon your leisure, especially if you might confidently hope that no annoyance could come to you because of her, would not such a wife greatly delight you? No matter how you portray her or load her with desirable things, I have decided that nothing is so much to be shunned as sexual relations, for I feel that nothing so much casts down the mind of man from its citadel as do the blandishments of women, and that physical contact without which a wife cannot be possessed³⁸.

After leaving his concubine, he once again found himself in a situation of internal dilemma:

Meanwhile my sins were being multiplied. My mistress was torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, and my heart which clung to her was torn and wounded till it bled. And she went back to Africa, vowing to thee never to know any other man and leaving with me my natural son by her. But I, unhappy as I was, and weaker than a woman, could not bear the delay of the two years that should elapse before I could obtain the bride I sought. And so, since I was not a lover of wedlock so much as a slave of lust, I procured another mistress--not a wife, of course. Thus in bondage to a lasting habit, the disease of my soul might be nursed up and kept in its vigor or even increased until it reached the realm of matrimony. Nor indeed was the wound healed that had been caused by cutting away my former mistress; only it ceased to burn and throb, and began to fester, and was more dangerous because it was less painful³⁹.

Again he accused himself of uncontrolled enslavement to sexual passions. He suffered from remorse because he had abandoned his former concubine and joined another woman. He felt it as adultery. Years of cohabitation were a strong experience, still recurring in memories. The breakup of a concubinage, which for him was like marriage, was a great loss. He found himself in a new relationship, again becoming a slave of passion. He suffered more and more. It is possible that these sufferings evoked in him reluctance to conclude any relationship based on deep affection. From then on, he hoped to find consolation in Christianity and philosophy. He wanted to be free of emotional engagement⁴⁰. Augustine's decision to abandon the concubine is most often attributed to the insistence of his mother, Monica. Some also think that he finally came to the conclusion that in fact

³⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *Soliloquia*, 1, 10.

³⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 6, 15.

⁴⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 2, 6.

he had never loved his former partner⁴¹.

4. The concubinage and marriage in the writings of St. Augustine

Especially in his *Confessions*, St. Augustine often spoke about the concubinage. What could be the impact of his personal experience on his later teaching? It should be noted, that in his other writings, the bishop of Hippo draws relatively little attention to the issue of the concubinage. The author touched on this subject, among others, in the treatise *The City of God* - a work showing the fate of humanity, guided by Divine Providence and aimed at strengthening Christians. In Book XVI he used the term "concubine" in reference to the Egyptian slave Hagar - Abraham's concubine, who, unlike Sarah, was the wife of the patriarch. As Augustine explains, Abraham should not be condemned for this, because it was not for lust but for the purpose of raising the offspring and with the consent of his wife Sarah, that physically he got close to Hagar, who gave birth to his son, Ishmael. This kind of custom - the wife letting a female slave get close to her husband in order to give birth to his offspring was widely practised in the ancient Middle East. Also in the book *The Problems of Heptateuch*, Augustine uses the term "concubine". The author presents therein his personal reflections on the selected passages of the Scriptures that attracted his attention during perusal of the inspired texts⁴². In Book I, In Question 90, Augustine raised the question: "*Is there a difference between a wife and a concubine?*" As the Bishop of Hippo observes, it is not easy to see which of the women mentioned in the Scripture are married wives and which of them are concubines. For example, Hagar, was called a wife, and also a concubine. The same was true of Kettura- the next wife of Abraham⁴³. He concludes:

Unless according to the Scripture, each concubine is a wife, and not-wife is a concubine. That means that Sarah and Rebecca, Lia and Rachel, cannot be called concubines, but Hagar and Kettura, Balla and Zelfa can be called concubines and wives⁴⁴

⁴¹ K. Power, *Sed unam tamen...*, 57.

⁴² Św. Augustyn, *Problemy Heptateuchu, I Księga Rodzaju, Wyjścia, Kapłańska*, Liczb, PSP vol. XLVI, Warszawa 1990, 6.

⁴³ Genesis, 25:1.

⁴⁴ Augustyn z Hippony, *Problemy Heptateuchu, I, Q. 90*, (English translation by Joanna Gębka), 48.

St. Augustine's treatise *Faith and Deeds* also contains a reference to the problem of the concubinage. Chapter XIX deals with the issue of mortal sins, including adultery. The persistence in such sins was a hindrance to the candidates for baptism. The bishop notes that this subject was often overlooked in the early years of Church, probably because the cases of men taking other men's wives were not frequent. Although Augustine himself sometimes had problems with the interpretation of some of the issues raised in the Scriptures concerning marriage, he clearly emphasized that offences against chastity and especially adultery, constituted a significant obstacle to receiving the sacrament of baptism, which does not cease

If there is no change of will and improvement by penance. In cases of doubt, if possible, it is recommendable to stay away from such relationships⁴⁵

In the treatise of St. Augustin, an important assumption of the dignified behaviour of the Christian can be seen: the close relationship between faith and the necessity of leading authentic Christian life. The treatise was an answer to views of some unknown persons, who claimed that good deeds are not necessary to receive the gift of salvation.

Although in the treatise of St. Augustine, *Values of Marriage (De bono coniugali)*, written as a reply to Jovin's errors, who diminished the role and value of virginity equating it with life in a marriage, in chapter XIV of paragraph XVI, the author also deals with the question of the concubinage. He clearly states that the desire to have children alone does not entitle to the concubine.

If a concubine taken for a while only wanted the relation to give children, then it is not allowed to give such a relationship a priority over marriage, even the marriage of women committing a daily sin⁴⁶.

Also in the sermons of St. Augustine we can find direct references to the problem in question. For example, in the Easter Sermon 224, he urged those who were baptized in Christ and born to a new life to identify themselves with the rest of the people of God because they became members of Christ. Therefore, they should refrain from debauchery, theft, deceit, perjury, dis-

⁴⁵ Augustyn z Hippony, *Wiara i uczynki*, XIX, 35, in: *Pisma katechetyczne. Początkowe nauczanie – Mowa o symbolu do katechumenów – Wiara, Nadzieja i Miłość – Wiara i uczynki – Chrześcijańska walka*, (Polish translation by W. Budzik), Poznań 1929, 262-264.

⁴⁶ Augustyn z Hippony, *Wartości małżeństwa (De bono coniugali)*, in: *Pisma świętego Augustyna o małżeństwie i dziewictwie. Przekład i komentarz*, red. Augustyn Eckman, (English translation by Joanna Gębka), 95.

putes, drunkenness, and adultery. This last sin, Christians should fear more than death. At the end of the sermon, he said that those who had a wife should not seek other women. He urged to consider the words of St. Paul:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Having taken the members of Christ, shall I make them members of the harlot? Never!⁴⁷.

He continued: Can anyone question the fact that a woman whose husband betrays his wife is not a prostitute, but a concubine? The bishop raises a rhetorical question: do you have a wife?, you, saying that? If you answer yes, then if you wish it or not, she is a prostitute. Go and tell her that the bishop has offended you by saying that you have a wife while you are sleeping in bed with another woman⁴⁸.

It should be emphasized that the Bishop of Hippo, undoubtedly the greatest authority of Christian antiquity, paid most attention to the positive aspects of the sacrament of marriage, which is a major area of his interest. Although he did not create a complete treatise on marriage, yet among the Greek and Latin Fathers and Doctors of the Church, he was close to creating a serious dogmatic and moral synthesis on the subject⁴⁹. The father of the Church made his statements about marriage in a pastoral context. Not only did he often meet with the specific questions raised on this issue, but also with the polemics and accusations⁵⁰. In his treatises, he defended the values of marriage as an institution of God, against the erroneous teachings of the Manichaeans, Pelagians, Montanists, and Novices. First of all, he explained that marriage is merit received from God and takes its origin from it. He emphasized that marriage is a union of a man and woman, merit in itself, because it comes from God⁵¹. Based on biblical and philosophical reasons, he showed three merits of the marriage: progeny, fidelity, and the sacrament itself. In addition, in views of Augustine, the marriage creates the basic and natural social cell of the relationship between a man and woman, the bond of friendship, the suppression of lust, and the positive effect on the fidelity of both. In marriage the spouses realize the vocation to love.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians, 6:15.

⁴⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *Sermo* 224,4 (PL 38, c.1093-1095).

⁴⁹ A. Eckmann, *Wprowadzenie. Święty Augustyn o małżeństwie i dziewictwie*, in: *Pisma świętego Augustyna o małżeństwie i dziewictwie. Przekład i komentarz*, Lublin 2003, 6. About this sacrament in other treatises of Augustine of Hippo: *De bono coniugalibus*, *De bono viduitatis*, *De coniugis adulterinis*, *De continentia*, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*.

⁵⁰ E. Stanula, *Wstęp*, in: Augustyn z Hippony, *Problemy Heptateuchu...*, 5.

⁵¹ Genesis 2:24.

Summary

The article presents the problem of the concubinage on the example of Augustine - the later Bishop of Hippo and Doctor of the Church. After several years of informal relationship with a woman, an extremely intense and dramatic experience - this great oracle in the making, a former Manichaeon, dismisses her and gradually enters the path of conversion. The baptism by Archbishop Ambrose in Milan becomes the key event in his life. From then on, he definitely follows the path of Christianity. He is elected the Bishop of Hippo. Like a zealous shepherd, in his numerous sermons, treatises, and disputes, he fights for the orthodoxy of the Church. One of his interests is the Catholic teaching on the marriage, based on the foundation of faith, whose values are progeny, fidelity and the sacrament itself. Many point out that in the presentation of his teaching on the marriage, he has benefited from the painful and traumatic experience of his own concubinage.

Key words: *Augustine of Hippo, Roman law, Christianity in the antiquity, concubinage, marriage.*

Konkubinat św. Augustyna

Streszczenie

W rozważaniach nad życiorysem wielkich świętych, jak np. choćby w przypadku św. Augustyna z Hippony, historycy i teolodzy najczęściej koncentrują się na jego okresie po nawróceniu. Mniejsze zainteresowanie natomiast budzi etap wcześniejszy, okres konkubinatu, przed konwersją.

Konkubinat był znany w czasach najdawniejszych. W Księdze Rodzaju są opisy licznych konkubin, które posiadał Abraham. Prawo Mojżeszowe nie zawierało przepisów dotyczących konkubinatu. W społeczeństwie rzymskim istniały dwie równoległe formy pożycia: konkubinat i małżeństwo. W okresie republiki, a następnie cesarstwa prawodawstwo dotyczące konkubinatu ulegało stopniowej ewolucji – od całkowitego zakazu, aż po stopniowe zezwalanie na zawieranie konkubinatów. W ten sposób taki związek stawał się namiastką małżeństwa, niemożliwego do prawnego zawarcia z różnorodnych powodów. Dzieci w konkubinatów w dalszym ciągu

były uznawane za nieprawe, ale nie były uważane za nieślubne. Nie posiadały prawnie ojca, były utrzymywane przez matkę, konkubentów przestał obowiązywać zakaz darowizn. W następnych wiekach istniała tendencja do stopniowego wyeliminowania konkubinatu zgodnie z duchem kościelnym. Mimo, iż po zapanowaniu chrześcijaństwa w cesarstwie rzymskim konkubinaty były dalej praktykowane, jednak nastąpiło zderzenie tej formy pożycia z chrześcijańską koncepcją małżeństwa. Z jednej strony Kościół katolicki stopniowo wychodził poza prawo rzymskie uznając za ważne małżeństwa osób wolnych z niewolnikami, a jednocześnie podkreślał istotny przymiot małżeństwa jako związek mężczyzny i kobiety, oparty na Objawieniu i nacechowany trwałością, wyłącznością, wiernością i świętością.

Św. Augustyn z Hippony w okresie młodości studiował w Kartaginie retorykę. Tam zainteresował się astrologią, co doprowadziło go do zbliżenia z ezoteryczną religią manichejczyków. W tym czasie poznał kobietę pochodzącą z Afryki Prokonsularnej o bliżej nieznanym imieniu, z którą żył w konkubinacie kilkanaście lat. Ze związku urodził się syn Adeodatus. W 384 r. Augustyn udał się do Mediolanu - stolicy cesarstwa zachodnio-rzymskiego i został wykładowcą retoryki. Jego matka Monika długo modliła się o nawrócenie syna. Po latach nieformalnego związku Augustyn rozstał się ze swą konkubiną. W 387 r. z rąk abpa Mediolanu św. Ambrożego przyjął chrzest. Dziesięć lat później zmarła w Ostii jego matka św. Monika, a po powrocie do Afryki w 390 r. odszedł do wieczności syn Adeodatus.

Augustyn wraz z przyjaciółmi w Hipponie założył klasztor. W 394 r. przez aklamację ludu został wybrany i konsekrowany na biskupa sufragana Hippony. Św. Augustyn do końca życia prowadził walkę z błędnowiercami: manichejczykami, donatystami oraz pelagianami. Zmarł w 430 r. podczas oblężenia Hippony przez Wandali.

Narracja św. Augustyna na temat osobistego doświadczenia konkubinatu przedstawiona w *Wyznaniach* ukazuje przemieszanie miłości związanej z przyjemnością fizyczną, jednocześnie połączonej z goryczą, cierpieniem, napięciem i bólem. Opisuje siebie w kategoriach więźnia - niewolnika nienasyconej żądz. Konkubina stała się dla niego najprostszym środkiem zaspokojenia żądz. Chociaż język Augustyna jest przepełniony metaforami, jednak dąży do ekstrawagancji. Jego publiczna spowiedź ma cel pedagogiczny: przerysowuje wyobrażenia, aby jeszcze bardziej uwidocznić negatywny obraz własnej postawy. Po nawróceniu, ten gorliwy duszpasterz w licznych kazaniach, traktatach i dysputach walczył o prawowierność Kościoła. Jednym z jego zainteresowań była katolicka nauka o małżeństwie,

jako sakramencie opartym na fundamencie wiary. Istotną wartością małżeństwa w ujęciu św. Augustyna winno być potomstwo, wierność małżeńska i sam sakrament.

Wiele wskazuje na to, iż w przedstawieniu pozytywnej nauki o małżeństwie skorzystał z osobistych bolesnych i traumatycznych doświadczeń swojego konkubinatu.

Słowa kluczowe: *św. Augustyn z Hippony, Prawo Rzymskie, Chrześcijaństwo w Starożytności, konkubinaty, małżeństwo.*

