

Recensiones

Peter BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo. A biography*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press — London, Faber and Faber, 1967, 463 pp. \$ 10.- 70 s.

This well-written, literary book is a biography. It is impossible, however, to write a good biography of Augustine without a great deal of interpretation and a profound knowledge of his doctrine. The author shows that he possesses this knowledge. This biography at no time simply retraces the well-worn paths. The most striking aspect is the extensive historical knowledge of the author, which enables him to put Augustine in his own « Umwelt » in a very original way. By so doing, this book acquires a very suggestive power. Many details of the life of Augustine emerge in a new and keener light. B. has the intention to show the inner evolution of the personality of Augustine. His purpose is to demonstrate how outside circumstances and changes in the world around Augustine challenged and influenced him, and how Augustine in his turn, because of his strong personality, transformed the changing world around him.

The work of B. consists in five chronological parts (subdivided in 36 chapters), each preceded by a chronological table. B. describes very well the idealistic tendency of the young Augustine, but he also shows how Augustine in the course of years became more and more realistic. The optimistical certainty of Augustine regarding the future grew progressively into an uncertainty concerning the future of man. The young Augustine is rightly characterized as an earnest young man in search of the spiritual. Far more than has been done till now, Augustine's Manichaeism is seen in this context of earnestness.

In a penetrating manner the author treats successively of Augustine's need of friendship, his discovery of the Platonic philosophy, the origin of the first dialogues at Cassiciacum (whereby the link with Augustine's own life could have been underlined a little more), the monastic life at Thagaste, his life as a priest and later as a bishop, the *Confessions* (excellent chapter!), the Donatism as a religious conflict, the *De doctrina christiana*, the fall of Rome and the *De civitate Dei* (the remark that this is not a book about flight from the world is to the point, p. 324), the Pelagianism (where B. observes that Pelagianism rests firmly on a bed-rock of the old ethical ideals of paganism, especially of Stoicism, p. 367), and the controversy with Julian of Eclanum (the citation on p. 397 should be *Op. imp.* II, 22 and not I, 22).

As we can see, this book has many positive qualities and I hope

that these positive elements emerge sufficiently in this short review. My enthusiasm is somewhat tempered by some bold affirmations and contrasts for which the author seems to have a predilection. By examining accurately certain texts, it seems to me that on occasion a greater nuancing is necessary. One can ask if injustice is not done to Manichaeism by describing it as a small sect, the «Bolsheviks» of the fourth century, a «fifth-column» of foreign origin (p. 46). From *Epist.* 18 it does not appear, in my opinion, that a sense of emptiness pressed Augustine into a more active life (p. 135). Neither can we say that the young Augustine wished to live alone with his mind, when, on the contrary, at a more mature age he will pray to have friends (p. 324). Friends were always very important to Augustine; he has never been a lonely man (although an evolution in his thought about friendship is undeniable; but this evolution takes the form of a deeper appreciation of the human value of friendship). It is true — as seen from the outside — that the man who had once come to Hippo to persuade an Imperial agent to become a monk, will now persuade a general not to do so (p. 325); but to deduce from these facts a contrast between the young and the old Augustine is going too far.

B.'s judgment of the Donatist schism is very important. Donatism was essentially a religious conflict and it would be inexact to consider the differences between Donatists and Catholics only as the expression of social and political cleavages (p. 217). But — although it would be naive to exculpate entirely the attitude of Augustine and his colleagues against the Donatists — it seems exaggerated to me to write that «many» of Augustine's colleagues managed at one and the same time to be efficient suppressors and great scoundrels (p. 240). The Basilica Florentia was not only rebuilt to celebrate the famous victory over the Donatists in 411, but already in *Sermo Denis* 21 mention is made of the necessity of a new building because the Basilica Margarita has become too small (p. 240). Nor do I believe that the epigram «Love wholeheartedly: then do what you like» (*In Epist. Joh.* VII, 8) appears in its harshest form as a justification of persecution of the Donatists by the Catholic Church (p. 209). This epigram is rather the harmonious consequence of Augustine's theology of love, a consequence which is valid for the whole of christian life, apart also from the Donatist question. Sometimes I have the impression that B. gives too much credence to some assertions of Augustine's adversaries. By this I do not mean that Augustine was always right! But could we accept unquestioningly the assertion of Julian of Eclanum concerning the affair that «Alypius had carried with him the promise of eighty Numidian stallions, fattened on the estates of the church, as *douceurs* for the calvary-officers, whose views on grace had proved decisive» (p. 362)? I would rather agree with A. Mandouze's remark on this affair: we will never be able to discover the truth of this and other events belonging to the «petite histoire» of the big controversies (*Saint Augustin, L'aventure de la raison et de la grâce*. Paris, 1968, p. 448).

But, despite the fact that some details of this book (and there are more of such details than those I have mentioned here), ask for verification, the biography of P. Brown as a whole remains a very fascinating and enriching book.

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Reinhard SCHWARZ, *Vorgeschichte der reformatorischen Busstheologie*. (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 41). Berlin, W. de Gruyter & Co, 1968, x-349 S. geb. DM 46.-

This work is an investigation of Luther's ideas regarding the notion *iudicium* or his conception of penance, such as this conception appears in the *Erste Psalmenvorlesung* from 1515. In 1515 one cannot yet speak of the strict Reformation theology and this is the reason for the title « prehistory » of the Reformation theology of penance. In sketching the specific Reformation view, the author gives, at the end of his book, an outlook to the later period of Luther and also to Melancthon and Calvin.

S. begins with an examination of the understanding of penance in those writers who can be considered as sources for Luther. He treats successively : Augustine (pp. 16-58; in four paragraphs : *confessio peccati* and *confessio laudis*, penance as convergency with the will of God, penance and justification, *iudicium damnationis* and *iudicium discretionis*), Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Auvergne, Gabriel Biel, the Devotio Moderna, John of Staupitz o.e.s.a. (pp. 150-159) and medieval monachism (John of Paltz o.e.s.a.).

In his solid exposition of the thought of Augustine, the author limits himself to the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, the *Sermones* and the *Tractatus in Johannem*, because only these works could have been sources for Luther. This limitation is to be borne in mind when the author reaches his conclusions, for example, when he asserts that Augustine seldom speaks of the experience of man's conscience (p. 43); of course this cannot be applied to the *Confessions*. I would have wished for a longer elaboration of the central place of humility in Augustine's theology, because humility is precisely one of the best approaches to his thought. It seems to me that the word *caro* in Augustine has been interpreted a little too materialistically (pp. 259-260); Augustine's thinking is here fully in the line of the Johannine Gospel. Further, it should be noted that after the year 393 the affections in Augustine's view are no more seen as « enemies », such as in Luther's (p. 263).

The most striking aspect of this book, in my opinion, is the rather slight influence of Augustine on Luther. The influence of Gregory the Great and of medieval theology was far more extensive than that of Augustine. Luther and Augustine agree principally on the following