

The Hands of Augustine but the Voice of Marsilius *)

Though Marsilius of Padua was but one of a number of vigorous opponents of clerical participation in the political life of medieval Europe, he was among the most influential. Untiring in his efforts to erode papal authority, both within and without the church, his major contribution to that cause is to be found in his celebrated *Defensor Pacis*, completed at Paris in 1324 ¹⁾. The book, while a lengthy and sometimes tiresome cataloguing of the evils of the church of his day, also presents a positive plan of reform and demonstrates a skilful utilization of scripture and writings of early church fathers in support of Marsilius' own position. In fact, so adept was Marsilius in citing those sources that it has been argued that he was distinctly influenced by one of the church fathers to whom he makes frequent reference ²⁾, namely St. Augustine.

Professor Alan Gewirth, arguing that the importance of Augustinianism for Marsilius, especially what he terms the positivistic strain in Augustine's political thought, has not been sufficiently recognized, makes mention of the number of quotations from Augustine which appear in the *Defensor Pacis*. He argues that, after the Bible

*) The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful suggestions of Professor Rev. F. X. Martin, O.S.A., University College, Dublin.

¹⁾ Critical editions of the *Defensor Pacis* are by C.W. PREVITÉ-ORTON (Cambridge, 1928), and by R. SCHOLZ (*Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui in Usus Scholarum*; Hanover, 1933). The *Defensor Minor* was edited by C.K. BRAMPTON (Birmingham, 1922). A. GEWIRTH, *Marsilius of Padua the Defender of Peace*, 2 vols (New York, 1951-1956), includes an English translation of the *Defensor Pacis* and a critical study. The other major critical studies are by G. DE LAGARDE, *Naissance de l'Esprit Laïque*, Vol. II (Paris, 1948) and Vol. III (Paris-Louvain, 1970).

²⁾ For convenience, the following terminology is employed throughout. By « simple reference » is meant Marsilius' mention or use of Augustine which does not involve quoting from him. By « reference » is meant any use of or mention of Augustine either by means of quoting him or by means of a simple reference. With the exception of the *Defensor Pacis*, Marsilius' major work, works referred to in the footnotes are those of Augustine, unless otherwise indicated.

and Aristotle, Augustine is more widely quoted than anyone else ³). This may well be true, but it is far too simple a reading of the situation to attribute as much weight to this as does Gewirth.

Compared to the number of quotations taken from the Bible, those from Augustine are quite few. Besides, whereas Augustine might have been quoted in the *Defensor Pacis* more frequently than any of the other church fathers also widely quoted by Marsilius, one cannot attribute any special significance to this fact. After all, the same holds true for the whole body of medieval writings ⁴). Besides, it should also be remembered that almost without exception, all quotations taken from Augustine in the *Defensor Pacis* were taken by Marsilius, not from Augustine's own works, but from the works of the great medieval compilers such as Peter Lombard and St. Thomas Aquinas. Even Gewirth himself admits this ⁵). It also sheds a totally different light on the significance of those quotations. Finally, it is also true that the widespread use of quotations from the Bible and early saints and fathers of the church, found in medieval writers generally, was as much a literary or rhetorical ploy as anything else. The appeal to authority, always persuasive, was especially so to the medieval mind when that authority had the blessings of Rome.

In turning to the quotations from Aristotle, it will be seen that these are employed in a somewhat different role. It is probably true to say that it was in Discourse I of his work that Marsilius worked out the essential theses of his system. The purpose of Discourse II, very largely, was to find scriptural and other appropriate support for the position enunciated in Discourse I ⁶). Yet, except for two references in Discourse I ⁷), all references to Augustine come in Discourse II of the *Defensor Pacis*. But this is not so in the case of Aristotle. Rather, it is in Discourse I, where Marsilius is concerned with formulating the fundamentals of his position, that Aristotle is mostly employed. Furthermore, Marsilius does not have recourse to Aristotle here merely to

³) A. GEWIRTH, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, especially pp. 37-39. See also G. DE LAGARDE, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, especially p. 78. Here Dr. de Lagarde is satisfied that Augustine had no special place in Marsilius' thought.

⁴) See J.G. BOUGEROL, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (New York, 1964), p. 25; GEWIRTH, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 37, n. 18.

⁵) GEWIRTH, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 37, n. 18.

⁶) See A.P. D'ENTRÈVES, *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought* (Oxford, 1939), p. 52.

⁷) *Defensor Pacis*, I. ix. 2, I. xix. 7.

support his own position. He actually weaves Aristotle's thought into his own. As will be seen, one cannot be sure that this is how Augustine is used.

The manner and pattern of citation found in the *Defensor Pacis* is not the only factor which makes one question the correctness of Gewirth's viewpoint⁸). Marsilius' references to Augustine in the *Defensor Pacis* are almost completely confined to five issues. And an examination of the way in which Marsilius employs Augustine in connection with these issues is even more devastating still to Gewirth's position. That this is so can be shown by posing five questions of each of these issues. And it is to a discussion of this point that I wish to devote the remainder of this paper.

The questions posed of these five issues are as follows: (i) How integral and significant a part they play in Marsilius' theory as a whole; (ii) whether they can be considered a development of the general principles of Marsilius' theory as laid down in Discourse I of the *Defensor Pacis*; (iii) whether they are in keeping with Augustine's own general beliefs; (iv) how suitable or pertinent the references employed in connection with them are; (v) to what extent Augustine is the only commentator on any of the issues.

The first point on which Augustine is referred to is the idea that neither Christ nor the apostles and priests after him should have any temporal or coercive power and should in fact recognize as lawful, and consequently obey, the temporal power of civil rulers. Secondly, he is referred to in the discussion on the meaning of the power of the keys and the respective roles of the priesthood and the laity in enforcing this power. Thirdly, Marsilius refers to Augustine in outlining his own views on religious poverty. Fourthly, Augustine is referred to in connection with Marsilius' argument for the equality of all the apostles. And fifthly, Augustine is called upon when Marsilius discusses the validity of divine and human writings.

Before examining the main issues in detail, it will be well to indicate the other lesser points on which Augustine is referred to. There is a simple reference to him when he is called upon to show that governments can come, as they normally do, from human minds⁹); he is

⁸) For a fuller discussion of this point, see Daniel G. MULCAHY, «Marsilius of Padua's Use of St. Augustine», in a forthcoming issue of *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* (1971).

⁹) *Defensor Pacis*, I. ix. 2.

quoted once on the meaning of « church » as held by the latins, meaning a house of prayer ¹⁰); he is quoted twice on the meaning of spiritual ¹¹); there is a simple reference to him on the point that priests should be elected by the people ¹²); he is quoted once on the view that the authority to define scripture belongs to a general council only ¹³); and finally, there is a simple reference to him where Marsilius shows how the saints and philosophers generally have despised the Roman bishop for revoking and suspending human laws and general council laws ¹⁴). Since little significance can be attached to these references, it suffices simply to mention them. However, a more detailed examination of those references which appear in connection with the five issues already identified is in order.

No. 1 Temporal power of priests.

(i) In so far as one of the main concerns of Marsilius is to produce a state in which the civil rulers will have complete freedom to administer the affairs of the state without interference from the clergy, the first main issue on which Augustine is referred to is central to the whole argument of the *Defensor Pacis*. In this connection Augustine is referred to on thirty six occasions in all ¹⁵), more than in connection with any other point. Of these, twenty four are quotations and twelve are simple references. Of the quotations, two are knowingly quoted against Marsilius' own position ¹⁶). Though most of the references here appear together, some of them are distributed in a few different places throughout Discourse II.

(ii) As will be seen from Chapters V and VI of Discourse I in particular, it can be said that this argument, aimed at subordinating the priests and bishops to the temporal rulers, is simply an extension of the general principles laid down in Discourse I.

(iii) Whereas Augustine was in agreement with Marsilius on the

¹⁰) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 2.

¹¹) *Ibid.*, II. ii. 5, II. ii. 6.

¹²) *Ibid.*, II. xvii. 11.

¹³) *Ibid.*, II. xx. 11; see also *ibid.*, II. xx. 2.

¹⁴) *Ibid.*, II. xxiv. 15.

¹⁵) *Ibid.*, II. iv. 2, II. iv. 5, II. iv. 6, II. iv. 7, II. iv. 12, II. v. 2, II. v. 4, II. v. 5, II. v. 7, II. v. 8, II. v. 9, II. ix. 7, II. ix. 9, II. ix. 10, II. x. 2, II. xxix. 4, II. xxix. 6, II. xxix. 7, II. xxix. 8.

¹⁶) *Ibid.*, II. xxvii. 2, II. xxviii. 28. This is a repeated quotation.

point that priests should obey the civil rulers, he would never agree with Marsilius' assertion that the priests should have no coercive power¹⁷). Less still would he agree with the purpose for which Marsilius calls on him in this connection, namely, to reduce the church authorities to complete subordination to civil authorities.

(iv) As to the pertinence of the quotations and simple references in this case, it will be helpful if they are seen as being adduced in connection with five separate aspects of the main point, for it is in connection with these that the references appear. These are: the view that the apostles were not given coercive or temporal power; that Christ did not want an earthly kingdom or rulership; that Christ did not deny earthly rulers power from God; that priests and bishops should not meddle in worldly affairs; and that all including priests must obey earthly rulers. That these are valid distinctions within the major point is true, and so these references, while giving a distorted version of Augustine, are pertinent.

(v) It was stated already that as a general rule throughout Discourse II of the *Defensor Pacis* Marsilius first quoted scripture in defense of his position and then followed the scriptural passage with commentaries by the saints and fathers of the church. This general practice is followed in most cases here. Nor is Augustine the only commentator referred to on this point. Usually he is accompanied by others, and if not, those other commentators are referred to on the same point elsewhere.

No. 2 Equality of all priests.

(i) The second main issue on which Augustine is referred to is that of the equality of bishops. Besides reducing the power of the clergy as a whole to a position of subordination in civil affairs, it is also a key concern of Marsilius to weaken the authority of the pope in temporal and even spiritual affairs. One of the ways, in fact the main way, in which he sets about doing this is by denying any priority to Peter over the other apostles and consequently to the bishop of Rome over the other bishops. And for this reason, this point is integral to his whole argument. In this connection, Augustine is referred to on twenty two occasions, which includes sixteen quotations and six simple refe-

¹⁷) See for example, *De Baptismo*, VII. ii. 99 and *Ad Donatistas post collationem*, IV. vi.

rences¹⁸). One of the « quotations » is from the *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, no longer considered to be a work of Augustine¹⁹). Another is a quotation against Marsilius' own position²⁰), and one is a simple reference²¹) to the apocryphal work just mentioned. All the references appear in two separate places and quite close to each other.

(ii) In this case there is little difficulty in relating this issue to its origins in Discourse I. There it was specifically stated to be the intention of the work to eradicate papal interference in civil affairs, the primary cause of civil strife²²).

(iii) Though he is never very clear on it, it is probably true to say that Augustine accepted the spiritual primacy of the pope²³). To that extent, all references to Augustine on this point are unwarranted.

(iv) As regards the pertinence of the quotations of the main point, there is some doubt also. Marsilius is at pains to prove his point. He side-tracks continually, and it is in arguments which are largely distinct from the central issue, but supporting a position from which Marsilius of his own account goes on to deduce the doctrine of equality of all bishops, that Augustine is used. Broadly speaking, then, whereas it would not be true to say that these quotations are entirely off the point, they certainly are not very appropriate. It should be noted also that here one of the quotations and one of the simple references are from the apocryphal work, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*.

(v) In this group of quotations also it is more general to see the same pattern followed as was the case with those in No. 1 above. The reference usually follows a scriptural passage and rarely is Augustine mentioned in isolation from other commentators.

¹⁸) *Defensor Pacis*, II. xvi. 3, II. xvi. 4, II. xvi. 6, II. xvi. 8, II. xvi. 9, II. xvi. 10, II. xvi. 15, II. xvii. 2, II. xxvii. 2, II. xxviii. 5, II. xxviii. 8, II. xxviii. 9, II. xxviii. 10, II. xxviii. 22, II. xxviii. 28.

¹⁹) *Ibid.*, II. xvi. 8.

²⁰) *Ibid.*, II. xxvii. 2, II. xxviii. 28.

²¹) *Ibid.*, II. xxviii. 22.

²²) *Ibid.*, I. i. 7.

²³) See *Sermo*, CCXCV. iv, and *Tractatus in Johannis Evangelium*, CXXIV. v. See also E. PORTALIÉ, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, trans. R.J. Bastian (London, 1960), pp. 30-32, 238-239, 241; and H. BURN-MURDOCH, *The Development of Papacy* (London, 1954), pp. 207-210.

No. 3 Divine and human writings.

- (i) Here Augustine is referred to in connection with Marsilius' view that divine writings alone — and here he means the New Testament — are infallible, the works of human minds being liable to err ²⁴). This time his references to Augustine amount to thirteen, including four quotations and nine simple references ²⁵). The references are not widely spread throughout the *Defensor Pacis*.
- (ii) It is not until Discourse II that Marsilius' views on this matter are made known.
- (iii) Already it was seen that Augustine and Marsilius were of the same mind concerning the validity of divine and human writings. Unlike Marsilius, however, Augustine does not reject the Old Testament.
- (iv) Here the references are pertinent since Marsilius follows the principle he had laid down concerning the validity of divine and human writings.
- (v) Here again Augustine is not the only commentator called upon.

No. 4 Power of the keys.

- (i) At this point Marsilius is concerned with reducing the power of the priesthood. He attempts to achieve his purpose in two ways. First, he emphasizes the role of Christ in the sacrament of penance, as a consequence of which the importance of the priest is minimized. Second, he claims that even the laity should have a say in the excommunication of sinners. In so far as this argument furthers the aims of Marsilius, it can be considered central to the entire work. In all, there are nine references to Augustine in this group. Six of these are quotations and three are simple references ²⁶). They are not spread throughout the book very well.
- (ii) This line of thought takes its beginnings in Discourse I also ²⁷). Moreover, seeing that it directly interferes with the pope's power of excommunication, and therefore his power in general, it is central to Marsilius' purpose.

²⁴) *Defensor Pacis*, II. iii. 9, II. ix. 10, II. xix. 4, II. xix. 5, II. xix. 6, II. xix. 8, II. xix. 10. See also *De Natura et Gratia*, II. lxi. 71.

²⁵) *Defensor Pacis*, II. xix. 5, II. xix. 6, II. xix. 8, II. xix. 10, II. xxviii. 1.

²⁶) *Ibid.*, I. xix. 7, II. vi. 3, II. vi. 6, II. vi. 8, II. vi. 13.

²⁷) *Ibid.*, I. i. 7.

(iii) Augustine gives more emphasis to the place of the priest in administering the sacrament of penance than Marsilius does. For Augustine, it was the minister who pronounced the judgement of guilt and who decided whether or not there was a need for public penance ²⁸). Neither does Augustine ever give any indication that the laity should have a say in the excommunication of sinners.

(iv) Here the references to Augustine are to the point. Marsilius seems not to have to strain them as he does in some cases. However, that this is so when Augustine actually held views opposing those which Marsilius calls upon him to support shows that he had no real acquaintance with Augustine's thought on the matter.

(v) Again Augustine is not the only commentator consulted here.

No. 5 Status of supreme poverty.

(i) On the question of religious poverty Marsilius is confusing. In all he refers to Augustine on this point on seven occasions ²⁹). There are five quotations and two simple references. Though not a very important issue in his argument, the concept of religious poverty is used by Marsilius to criticize clerical ownership of temporal possessions and consequently to urge the non-interference of clerics in temporal affairs. All of the references are located close to each other.

(ii) In so far as all that pertains to reducing the priests to subordination to civil rulers and the prevention of their interference in temporal affairs is foreseen in Discourse I, this argument has its beginnings there.

(iii) Augustine upheld religious vows including the vow of poverty. Though he seems to have practised the virtue himself, he was careful to avoid the extremes of the Pelagians in this regard: « root out your pride », he says, « then your riches will not hurt you » ³⁰). Marsilius sometimes seems to bring his teaching to extreme lengths which Augustine would not, though generally speaking Marsilius may be said to be in line with Augustine here.

(iv) In this case again there is a tendency to bend the quotations from Augustine's meaning. There is, however, a vague connection between the points on which Augustine is quoted and the main issue.

²⁸) See PORTALIÉ, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-267.

²⁹) *Defensor Pacis*, II. xiii. 5, II. xiii. 31, II. xiv. 10, II. xiv. 12.

³⁰) *Sermo*, XII. ii. 4.

(v) Here again Augustine's commentaries are surrounded by similar commentaries of other authorities.

These, then, are the main issues on which Augustine is referred to. Stated briefly, they are undoubtedly central to Marsilius' thought. However, for the most part they constitute little more than an extension of Marsilius' position as laid down in Discourse I. Moreover, with a few exceptions, these are issues on which Augustine did in fact take an opposite viewpoint from Marsilius. For this reason perhaps, many of the quotations from Augustine are strained to fit in with the point which Marsilius wanted to make. Noteworthy too is the fact that Augustine is never the only commentator on any issue.

Of special interest is the fact that whereas the main points in connection with which Augustine was referred to did pertain to the main argument of the *Defensor Pacis*, it is also true that quotations were frequently employed during the treatment of one of the major issues, not so much to support the main point in question but a somewhat related line of argument. In other words, there is a tendency on the part of Marsilius to branch out into trivial and monotonous detail and repetition, and it is frequently in such instances that Augustine is referred to. This is most noticeable in numbers 1, 2, and 5 above. In numbers 2 and 4 Augustine is called on to support similar detailed arguments, the general aim of which is to prove points to which Augustine himself was in fact opposed.

So much for a statement of facts. The real question is what do the facts signify. Well, they can hardly be said to suggest an influence by Augustine on Marsilius. If anything, they suggest the very contrary. They certainly indicate a lack of any real understanding of Augustine by Marsilius. In fact, Marsilius seems hardly concerned with Augustine beyond the use to which he can put him for his own purposes. And even this much is not reserved for Augustine alone. Nowhere is Augustine given the special consideration which Gewirth implies he is. He is never referred to apart from other commentators. Indeed, on one or two occasions he is even confused with other writers. There is, moreover, wholesale distortion of Augustine's ideas.

Finally, something must be said about the distribution of the references throughout the *Defensor Pacis*. With the exception of one quotation and one simple reference in Discourse I, all references to Augustine come in Discourse II. But the examination carried out above indicates that the five main issues on which Augustine is referred to

were anticipated, to say the least, in Discourse I, where Augustine was all but totally ignored. And while one could not conclude from this that Augustine had no part in shaping Marsilius' thought, it is significant that Augustine is not referred to more frequently at this stage.

In this essay I have argued that there is no evidence to support the conclusion that St. Augustine genuinely influenced the political thought of Marsilius of Padua. In doing so, I identified five main issues on which Augustine was referred to. However, while the issues themselves were central to Marsilius' argument, the manner in which he invoked Augustine when treating of them makes one doubt whether Marsilius was really acquainted with Augustine. Likewise, it renders the suggestion that Marsilius was in fact influenced by Augustine highly questionable.

Daniel G. MULCAHY.

The University of New Brunswick

Fredericton N.B.

Canada.