

In memoriam Father Norbertus Teeuwen O.S.A.

The death took place on September 27 at Sint-Truiden of Fr. Norbertus (Herman) Teeuwen, founder and editor-in-chief of this journal, « Augustiniana ». He had been in failing health for a few years. In 1967 he left Heverlee-Louvain to spend his last years in Sint-Truiden. Although it was becoming ever more evident that a fatal illness was undermining his strength, this did not prevent him from devoting all his energies to « Augustiniana » until shortly before his death. In the eyes of his many friends and acquaintances his death was like his life, quiet and unobtrusive. Therefore the news of his passing away will come as a surprise for many readers of this journal.

Herman Teeuwen was born at Roermond (The Netherlands) on July 20 1910. In 1929 he entered the Belgian Province of the Augustinian Order. Already before he was ordained priest on June 15 1935 he took an interest in the history of the Augustinian Order. Together with some young confrères he formed a small team which undertook with enthusiasm the study of Augustine and the Order which bears his name.

In 1933 he published some popularising articles on texts of Augustine, concerning, among other topics, the question of the possibility of worship of Mary in Augustine and Augustine's thinking on commemorating the dead. But he soon showed a preference for what was to later become his great specialisation, namely, the history of the Belgian Augustinians. A number of articles then appeared dealing with well-known Augustinian figures, such as Bartholomeus de los Rios, Thomas of Jesus, Nicholas of Tolentine, Abraham of Sancta Clara and Gregor Mendel. Less known local figures, however, receive his special attention : Maigret, de Tombeur, Stevins, Pauli, Agolla, Mantelius, Cools and Neeffs.

These studies, obviously, coincided with a research into the old records concerning the different establishments of the Belgian Province of the Augustinians before the French Revolution, which at the

height of its glory numbered no less than thirty-one houses and some famous schools. Bearing witness to these investigations are his articles on the Augustinian houses and schools of Ghent, Louvain, Brussels, Ypres, Tienen, Herentals and Binche. His study of the Augustinians in Flanders brought him necessarily to the level of local history. He made studies, particularly in his later years, on the local history of Ypres, Aarschot, Tienen, Neerlanden and Sint-Truiden. He was a member of several local history groups.

Among the most important publications of Fr. Teeuwen must be reckoned the « *Augustiniana Belgica Illustrata* », a memorial volume published for the occasion of the seventh centenary in 1956 of the union of the Hermits of Augustine, and « *Documents pour servir à l'histoire médiévale de la province augustiniennne de Cologne. Extraits des registres des prieurs généraux (1357-1551)* », which appeared in different volumes of this journal, a study which he was unable to complete. Both works were accomplished in cooperation with other authors: the first in cooperation with Dr. E. Braem and the second with archivist A. de Meijer.

Publishing was not Fr. Teeuwen's strongest point, nor was appearing in public. As far as I know, he only once took part in a scientific congress abroad. It was difficult to get him to write anything. What was the cause of this reserve? Was it the fact that he was an autodidact? (Although here it must be added that at forty years of age he attended the classes of the well-known Louvain historian, professor Albert De Meyer.) Was it a native shyness that held him back from publishing? At any rate, the fact was that he often gladly handed over his data, rather than having to write something himself. That others carried off the glory was something he didn't mind.

Publication, therefore, was not the most important of Fr. Teeuwen's activities. His greatest contribution was the collection of material and its preservation for posterity. Even in his student days he was already searching out rare documents which he often copied by hand, for fear that the original should ever be lost. And, in fact, during the second World War several documents were destroyed, and they exist now only in copies in his handwriting. By reason of the material he collected he became a living source of information for many people. One could always call on him. He was always helpful, because he was neither ambitious nor mean in sharing his treasures.

This, I think, was the great contribution of his personality in the scientific field.

His driving motive was: to preserve for posterity. That was what urged him in 1950 to found this journal, having already privately produced a stencilled one for two years. From 1950 until his death he managed «*Augustiniana*» practically alone, both at the financial and editorial levels, and brought it to what it now is. He helped and stimulated many in their research, but he himself remained in the background. In this way he has made an invaluable contribution to the rediscovery in our time of that great spiritual movement which is called «*Augustinianism*», an important, but still quite unexplored, aspect of our Western Culture.

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