

Boekbesprekingen — Comptes rendus

LUC VERHEIJEN, *Saint Augustine's Monasticism in the Light of Acts 4. 32-35*. Villanova (Pa.), Villanova University Press, 1979.

This book contains the extended text and documentation of The Saint Augustine Lecture for 1975. Historical criticism combines here with an effective developmental method. The author's vast erudition becomes apparent from the way in which he deals with the problems inherent in his subject. Few scholars are as well equipped as is Père Verheijen to evaluate the contribution of Augustine of Hippo to the monastic movement of the Late Roman Empire.

Having dwelt, in pages 1-6, on how lines 3-10 of Augustine's Rule are animated and dominated by the paradigm of Christian community living promulgated in Acts 4, 32-35, V. proceeds to show (pp. 6-16) by a comparison of passages how a shift of meaning is discernible in Augustine's use of Acts 4.32a, *anima una et cor unum*. The earliest use of this text by Augustine (*En. in Ps.* 4.10, from the period of his priesthood) stresses the individual, whereas both collective and individual aspects are present in Augustine's use of the phrase *cor unum* in his *Sermo Denis* 11.7, a work cautiously assigned by V. to 13 September 397. The various contexts in which Augustine employs Acts 4. 32-35 are examined by V. in pages 16-39, though the meaning of Acts 4.32a was not foremost in Augustine's thought in all of these contexts.

The major portion of the book (pp. 40-80) examines passages of Augustine's works which either have a monastic content or deal, at least, with matters of an ascetical nature. The first of these passages, curiously enough, is from Possidius' *Vita Augustini*, chapter 5, which describes the monastic foundation established at Hippo by Augustine immediately after his ordination to the priesthood. Following this text come passages set forth in chronological order: the Rule of Augustine, which V. tentatively dates c. 397, specifically lines 3-10; *Contra Faustum* 5.9; *De opere monachorum* 16.17; 21.25; 25.32; *De sancta virginitate* 45.46; *En. in Ps.* 131.3-7; 132.2, 6, 12-13; *Epistula* 211.2 (= *Obiurgatio*); *En. in Ps.* 99.11; 83.4; *De civitate Dei* 5.18; *Epistula* 243.3-4; and, finally, the two well-known *Sermones de moribus clericorum* 355.1; 356.1-2. It might be noted in passing that, according to V. (p. 78), Augustine's words in *Sermo* 356.1 could be taken to mean that Acts 4.31-35 was the "Rule" in force, at the time, among the clerics living with him at Hippo. This would differ from the situation prevailing in the monastery established earlier at Hippo by Augustine.

Possibly as a result of correspondence with Paulinus of Nola, an exchange initiated by the latter in the year A.D. 394, Augustine, says V.

(p. 15), added a new dimension to his use and understanding of the words *anima una et cor unum*, by terminating them with the phrase *in deum*. This is consistent with the fact that a theocentric dynamism is apparent in Augustine's earlier writings. According to V., Augustine also owes to Paulinus his gradual discovery of the collective sense of Acts 4.32a. At the same time, we are treated here to an awareness of how Augustine both received, as well as exerted, influence as a participant in the evolution of the western monastic ideal. Thus, the knowledge of Egyptian cenobitism which Augustine displays in the *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 31.67 may, according to V. (p. 43), owe something to the famous letter of Jerome to Eustochium, 22.35. Oral reports are alluded to by V. as another source of such knowledge. Direct inquiries made by Augustine on monastic practices during his stay in Rome following the death of Monica would have left him open to such influence from many quarters. It would be helpful here to recall Augustine's firsthand familiarity (*De mor. eccl. cath.* 1.33.70) with monasticism both at Milan (*Vidi ego diversorium sanctorum Mediolani...*) and Rome, where he also knew of several monastic houses (*Romae etiam plura cognovi...*), which linked manual labor with the monastic ideal (*Orientis more*).

On the question of the origin of the Augustinian Rule in its feminine form V. (p. 70), first reiterates the three hypotheses which he articulated in his magisterial two-volume study, *La règle de saint Augustin* (Paris 1967): (1) that the feminine version derives from the masculine, and not vice-versa; (2) that transcription to the feminine gender took place in, or for the use of, the monastery to which *Epistula* 211.1-4 was addressed; (3) that this particular monastery is the *locus originis* of the manuscript tradition which associates *Epistula* 211.1-4 (= *Obiurgatio*) with the feminine adaptation (= *Regularis Informatio*) of the masculine original (= *Praeceptum*). To these three hypotheses V. now adds a fourth, namely, that the association of Acts 4.32a with Psalm 67.7 in *Epistula* 211.2 indicates that the nuns already were in possession of the feminine transcription of the Rule from its original masculine form. The nexus, therefore, between Acts 4.32a and Psalm 67.7 in the Rule for Men (= *Praeceptum*), lines 3-4. merely triggers the very same juxtaposition in Augustine's subsequent *Epistula* 211.2. According to V., if the nuns were already in possession of the feminine version of the Rule, the bishop of Hippo's reprimand, expressed in his usual forthright epistolary manner, thus takes on considerable clout and meaning. Finally, V. again argues (pp. 46-47) for a close connection between Augustine's Rule and the monastery of lay-monks at Hippo, depicted in the fifth chapter of Possidius' *Vita*. In all of Patristic literature, the sequence Acts 4.32b + c + 35b is found only here and in the first chapter of the *Praeceptum*.

Scholars will find some of the above hypotheses strained, but this does not weaken the value of the present monograph. V. is possibly better recognized as a scholar's scholar; his assemblage of materials here

as elsewhere deserves close critical scrutiny. The next generation as well as the present one can not ignore his provocative theses.

The author concludes with a resumé (pp. 81-97) of the following Augustinian themes: the Triune God enlarges all human life. All people, therefore, not simply the first Christians of Acts 4.32-35, approach the peace and unity of the heavenly Jerusalem. Christians, however, are richly endowed by the intersubjectivity of the three divine Persons. A theocentric dynamism, thus underlies this ineluctable movement towards God. Such a dynamic orientation is Christogonic for those who are rooted in the ecclesial and sacramental reality of Christ. Close affinity exists between Church and Eucharist. The unitive power of peace and love is attributed to the activity of the Holy Spirit. Monastic life and family life are microcosms of ecclesial life. Monastery and home "constitute two different ways of orienting one's life toward God, but their basic inspiration is the same: fraternally ecclesial, or ecclesially fraternal" (p. 95). Eschatological tension regularly threatens such fragile possessions as beauty, harmony, concord, the fullness of peace, love and unity. Their limited enjoyment is the necessary lot of a pilgrim people. Finally, monastic and family life embodied in the Church possess, for Augustine, "a strong contemplative dimension" (p. 97).

Regrettably, there is a fair number of misspellings, a blemish upon so distinguished a series of published lectures. Thus, in corrected form: Prescinding p. 1; insistence, pp. 11 and 29; simplest, p. 48; bestows, p. 57; Bethzatha, p. 65; independence, p. 70; episcopal, p. 78; Paulinus of Nola's wife is Therasia, pp. 9, 10, 11 and 14. The following misspellings reflect the author's second language, French, which he employs so well in his many scholarly writings: exceptionally, p. 15; responsibility, pp. 17, 24, 28, 30 and 39; responsible, p. 33. There is a printer's error on p. 27; the word is "rearing".

There are also a few infelicitous expressions: "resumed by a phrase", page 2, note 5; on p. 34, "*imbrem divinum*" = "divine rain"; "communitary virtualities", p. 47; "cannot be very apart chronologically", p. 49; on p. 64 read "further" instead of "farther"; "a part of the nuns", p. 67; on p. 66, *suum* = "belonging"; on p. 76, *propium* = "belongings"; "to accomplish one high ideal or another", p. 71; "Christendom", p. 53; "a profound and unsoundable mystery", p. 82. The reference to *De. mor. eccl. cath.*, p. 40, note 65 should read: I, 31 (67).

This book is one of the all too few of V.'s publications to appear in English. Hopefully, the above corrections will be incorporated into a second printing. Students of Augustinian monasticism are very likely to request one.

GEORGES P. LAWLESS, O.S.A.