

## BENOZZO GOZZOLI'S LIFE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE IN SAN GIMIGNIANO || the Subscripted Text Revisited

In the first number of this volume Matthias Strauss<sup>1</sup> published a useful and detailed description of the frescoes, 1463-1465, located in the church of Sant-Agostino at San Gimignano that depict the Life of Saint Augustine. In Strauss's Dissertation for the Degree of Master of Arts, he points out several details in the architecture and in the landscape, which would doubtless remain hidden for a superficial visitor viewing the church.

However, to my mind it remains unclear as to why the illustrations should be numbered in a reverse fashion and not in parallel with the descriptions provided by the text. Starting at number 22, he works his way back to number 7 as the last of the representations and adds some more detail for the later numbers.

Worse, Strauss makes mistakes in his transcription of the subscripted texts of the scenes, especially when guessing at the illegible bits. These you can see for yourself where photos of the texts have been made. On p. 75, as Strauss tells us 'Unverständlich sind die von Pecori, Crowe und Cavalcasselle, sowie Courcelle<sup>2</sup> von den Originalen abweichend zitierten Bildunterschriften. Bei allen werden sie nur stellenweise angeführt und sind darum häufig anders als jene die in San Gimignano zu lesen sind... Bisher wurde auf diese Diskrepanz noch nie hingewiesen', evidently he is unaware of having done precisely the same thing himself. Of the 17 paintings only three are well transcribed. The texts of two of the scenes have disappeared entirely. Transcriptions of the remaining 12 scenes have been recorded incorrectly.

Since I have reason to believe that Strauss's study is likely to be regarded as a more or less complete description of the Gozzoli frescoes, I deem it necessary herewith to offer the reader a revised and more accurate version of the transcriptions.

<sup>1</sup> M.. STRAUSS, *Die Augustinusvita von Benozzo Gozzoli aus der Kirche S. Agostino in San Gimignano*, in *Augustiniana* 52 (2002), 5-114, and 57 illustrations. Freie Universität Berlin, Fachbereich Geschichtswissenschaften, Kunsthistorisches Institut, zur Erlangung des akad. Grades eines Magister Artium.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanne et Pierre Courcelle (see under no. 7) do not give all the subtitles but those they do give are almost entirely faultless.



1. In the text to the first picture: Augustine's parents present him to the schoolmaster of Tagaste (*Abbildung 22*) on p.60, MONICA is written with a 'C' and not with a 'K'.
2. The subtitle to the sixth picture: Augustine teaching in Rome (*Abb. 17*) the transcription on p.64 has PRECIRUORUM but this should be PRECIPUORUM. Again on p.64 Strauss transcribes the last word of the text depicted on the open book of the man sitting on the left as COSUSTIT whereas it ought to be CONSISTIT.
3. The text to the seventh painting: Augustine is shown leaving Rome (*Abb. 18*) on p.65 has been correctly transcribed without any mistakes. At the top of the scene however, a text is contained within a cartouche referring to Prior Domenico Strambi OSA by whom Gozzoli was commissioned. The text is given as GEMIGNANICI but it should read GEMIGNANIACI instead, see p.65, as is confirmed by Courcelle p.92.
4. The eighth scene: Augustine's arrival in Milan (*Abb. 15*), on p.66. Here I offer more probable words as follows: for DO-TORUM read DOCTORUM, for OMITUTU read COMITATU, for GRATANTUR read GRATANTER and for HON-RIFICE read HONORIFICE.
5. The text to the ninth scene: Augustine and Ambrose are engaged in a theological dispute and Ambrose is preaching to the people (*Abb. 16*), is only partly legible as can be seen on p.67. However, there is no doubt that the word FUI must be read as being FUIT.
6. The following painting presents the Conversion of Augustine in the Garden (*Abb. 14*). The transcription of the defective subtitle on p.68 should not read BICENTEM but DICENTEM. Again on p.68 Strauss provides a text to the scene of Augustine's baptism (*Abb. 13*). Here the text should not be BATTI[SUUM] but BATTI[SMUM]. The baptismal font carries a date in Italian as "First of April 1464", see p.69, and *Abb. 13b*, but in that case PRIMA has to be changed into PRIMO.



7. About the twelfth picture: Augustin's visit to the Hermits of Monte Pisano, the Presentation of the Rule and the Conversation with the Child at the Sea (*Abb. 12*), I wrote a study, see ALBERIC DE MEIJER OSA, *Saint Augustine and the Conversation with the Child on the Shore: The History behind the Legend*, translated from the Dutch by Jan Busch OSA, in *Augustinian Heritage* 39 (Villanova, PA, 1993), 21-34. This study appears to have been completely unknown to Strauss otherwise he would surely not have made as many mistakes in the transcription as he did. Since JEANNE AND PIERRE COURCELLE, *Iconographie de Saint Augustin*, II: Les cycles du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris 1969), 85-106, pl. XLV-LXV, make no mention of it, in 1991 I asked the then Prior, Fr. Giuseppe Pucci OSA, if he would be so kind as to have the text transcribed for me<sup>3</sup>. Together with two of his friends, Vasaturo among them, Fr. Pucci was able to determine the subscripted text below the scene. This I have had printed both in *Holland* 23 (1991), note 27, and in *Augustinian Heritage* 39 (1993), note 23. Here I give the text again for the third time so that the reader may compare it to that given by Strauss on p.70:

QUALITER AVGV[STINVS] C [VM] S [VIS] VISITATIS  
HEREMITIS DE MONTE PISANO A...ST DATAM EIS  
REGVLAM A D[OMI]NO NOSTR[O] IHESV CHRISTO  
SVB CVIVSDAM SCITVLI EFFEGIE / SECVS LITV[S]  
[S]IMILITVDINEM MARIS AD PARVAM FOVEAM DE  
ARD[VA] AC DIFFICILI INDIVIDVE TRINITATIS  
[CO]GNITIONE EST[I]T INFORMATVS.

8. The thirteenth scene. This shows the death of Monica (*Abb. 11*). The words in Strauss's transcription on p.71 require correcting as follows: not TIBE[RINOM] but TIBE-[RINAM]; not HUBITIS but HABITIS; not COLLOQUIUS but COLLOQUIIS; not PUERLI but PUERILI.

<sup>3</sup> On p.21, note 47, Strauss tells us that he spoke with Prior Remualdo [sic] Vasaturo. However, Romualdo Vasaturo is no Augustinian and certainly not the Prior. He is the author of a booklet entitled *Chiesa di s.Agostino in San Gimignano* (1993), with texts in both Italian and English. In the English version, note 17, Vasaturo makes mention of my original text: *Augustinus aan het Spaarne*, in *Holland* 23 (Haarlem 1991), 53-72.



9. In the description of the fourteenth scene: Augustine blesses the people (*Abb. 10*), Strauss writes on p.72 ASSUMTUM whereas it is quite clear that this should be ASSUNTUN. The completion of the word EPISC... should be EPISC-C[OPATUM] as the Courcelles did on p.103.
10. The fifteenth scene. The Dispute with Fortunatus (*Abb. 9*) on p.72. Here the transcription DISPUTAM should be corrected to DISPUTANS and PUPLICE needs to become PUBLICE.
11. The sixteenth scene (*Abb. 8*). This penultimate painting shows St. Jerome appearing to Augustine and the ...US on p.73 may be completed as DEFUNCTUS.
12. In the seventeenth and final scene: the death of Augustine (*Abb. 7*), the subscripted text has been copied without mistakes.

Albéric de MEIJER OSA