

BOOK REVIEWS

Kenneth Michael Becker, *From the Treasure-House of Scripture. An Analysis of Scriptural Sources in De Imitatione Christi* [Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia. Research on the Inheritance of Early and Medieval Christianity 44]. Brepols, Turnhout 2002, 767 pp. + supplementary sheet (Notes for readers). ISBN 2-503-51386-7. € 120.

This book has collated the Scriptural references used in Thomas à Kempis' *De Imitatio Christi*, aiming at a comprehensive analysis of the exact use of the Vulgate in this work. The first part of this book, in essence his doctoral dissertation at the University of Wales, Lampeter, sketches the historical background of Thomas and the *Imitatio*. Chapter two expands on the content of the *Imitatio* and the historical context of the *Devotio Moderna*. Chapter three focuses on the use of Scripture in the Modern Devotion milieu. The author demonstrates that the meditative prayer centred on Scripture was at the very heart of this spirituality. Biblical passages were to be ruminated upon and memorised, so as to provide the individual with a mnemonic library that would serve the personal imitation of Christ. This memorisation technique, that allowed Thomas to steep his mind in Scripture, accounts for the vast number of Scriptural references in the *Imitatio*, both the literal and the creative combinations. Chapter four illustrates the central role of this Scriptural rumination by analysing Thomas' concept of *lectio divina*.

Chapter five, the longest, analyses the exact use of the Vulgate in the *Imitatio*, based on an easily consultable, verse by verse presentation of the *Imitatio* accompanied by the 3815 Vulgate texts, 1200 of which had not been identified in earlier editions. These quotations are divided into 50 categories varying from "single source quotations" up to "stylistic word plays" (pp. 136-8), through which the author examines how Thomas uses Scripture. Despite its ingenious structure, the intricate nature of this categorisation makes its analysis also difficult to read. Moreover, sometimes the correspondences between the texts rest on one parallel word, which on the one hand innovatively opens up perspectives into Thomas' creative way of quoting Scripture, but on the other, the basis for presuming interfaces seems to lack an objective guarantee and transparency. This might cause some statistical inaccuracies about the number of quoted Vulgate texts. An

excellent overview of some dubious examples can be found in the book review of Wim Janse, (reference below).

Although one has to keep in mind these possible slight inaccuracies, the analysis provides clear insights in Thomas' "working bible," his mental library most frequently used in the *Imitatio*, and his modification of passages in an ascetic direction. Dr. Becker's book will be a great manual for further research into different areas such as Thomas' spirituality and, as the author himself indicated as a *desideratum*, the theological ideas behind the modification of Scriptural passages in the *Imitatio*.

See also earlier reviews:

P. Detienne, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 125, no. 2 (2003), p. 345.

Wim Janse, in *Dutch Review of Church History* 84, no. 1 (2004), pp. 571-574.

Mary Carruthers, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, no. 4 (2004), pp. 778-779.

Wanda Zemler-Cizewski, in *Speculum* 79, no. 4 (2004), pp. 1031-1032.

Ineke Cornet

Faculty of Theology

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Dittrich, Constance, Fischer, Norbert, Naab Erich (eds.), *Augustinus, ein Lehrer des Abendlandes. Einführung und Dokumente*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009 – VIII + 136p. ISSN/ISBN: 978-3-447-05923-7.

This volume is the catalogue of an exhibition on the reception of Augustine in the *Staats-und Seminarbibliothek der Katholischen Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*. Six contributions precede the actual catalogue. Four articles sketch the reception history of Augustine from the fifth century until today and the contemporary research of Augustine: Karla Pollman, *In ecclesia praesens: zur Augustinrezep-tion im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert* (pp. 1-14); Norbert Fischer, *Zum heutigen Streit um Augustinus: sein Werk als Schatz, als Bürde und als Herausforderung des Denkens* (pp. 15-31); Cornelius Mayer, *Grund-lagen der Augustinus-Forschung* (pp. 33-41); Oliver Motz, *Original*