

Paul. Les chapitres introductifs sont suivis par une bibliographie, qui est suivie à son tour par l'édition même des textes. Ensuite, nous trouvons les textes des sermons 151-156 (sauf de 154A, qui est édité dans un appendice), qui sont accompagnés de trois apparats: un appa- rat qui décrit la tradition manuscrite utilisée pour reconstituer le texte, un appa- rat qui indique les citations bibliques et un dernier appa- rat qui mentionne les variantes. Dans le texte même, les citations bibliques sont indiquées en italique. Les textes des différents sermons sont suivis d'un passage sur l'interprétation syntaxique dans lequel G. Partoens justifie le choix qu'il a fait pour certaines parties compli- quées ou difficiles du texte. A la fin du volume, nous trouvons encore un *Index Locorum Sacrae Scripturae* et une table des matières.

Alicia EELEN

Tarmo Toom, *Thought Clothed With Sound. Augustine's Christologi- cal Hermeneutics in De doctrina Christiana*, International Theo- logical Studies. Contributions of Baptist Scholars 4, Peter Lang, Bern, 2002, ISBN 3-906769-07-0, 277 p.

As the Author states from the very beginning, the goal of his work is to study, in *De doctrina Christiana* (=doc. chr.), "the relation- ship between biblical hermeneutics and Christology (...) from an epis- temological perspective" (p. 15). A goal which is often reiterated and summerized in sentences like the following: "The present study focuses on Augustine's Christological epistemology as a context for assessing hermeneutics in *De doctrina Christiana*, and its goal is to demonstrate that Augustine's hermeneutical theory is ultimately a Christological theory" (p. 80).

Augustine's *doc. chr.* is a treatise about Holy Scripture and the rules (*praecepta*) of its interpretation. More precisely, it deals with the *modus inveniendi*, the way of discovering the things which are to be understood (corresponding to the first three books of *doc. chr.*), and with the *modus proferendi*, the way of teaching what has been learned (corresponding to the fourth and last book of *doc. chr.*). The Author concentrates on the first three books, which are strictly about interpre- tation, and approaches them in the light of Augustine's epistemologi- cal quests and Christological convictions which hinge upon the "most basic Sign", the man Jesus Christ (see pp. 39ff). Christ is, in fact, at the root of Augustine's "preunderstanding". It is on Christ, the Wis- dom of God, through whom the world was created and through whom

the latter can be understood, that the signification theory of *doc. chr.* is ultimately constructed.

The analysis of the first three books of *doc. chr.* – made by Toom from an epistemological perspective which is focused on the “Christological theory” underlying Augustine’s biblical hermeneutics (see pp. 65ff) – is not limited to the content of this particular treatise. In point of fact, Toom’s investigation embraces other augustinian works, especially the *Contra Academicos* and the *De magistro*, where the themes of epistemology, Christology, language and exegesis were already present and interrelated. Besides, he does not forget to put Augustine’s hermeneutical construction in the wider context of the ancient linguistic and philosophical “universes” (Plato, Aristotle, Stoics and Epicureans, Philo of Alexandria, Plotinus, Latin Rhetorical Schools) (pp. 111ff).

Toom analyses book one of *doc. chr.*, which shows the movement from *res* to *signa* (the comprehension of the *res* leads to the knowledge of that which is signified), and books two and three, which deal with the inverted movement from *signa* to *res* (the scriptural interpretation infers from signs that which is signified). On the one hand – Augustine argues – the *res* must be sought, against the background of the *uti/frui* scheme, in the light of the *regula fidei* and of the double commandment of love (*caritas*), viz. in the Church, where the right context is provided (see pp. 105ff). On the other hand, the *signa*, namely the linguistic signs of which human language is made up, represent the visible mediation of God talking to mankind through Scripture, although these signs are “ultimately inadequate for speaking about the Infinite” (p. 162). Hence the necessity for the *scientia signorum* of distinguishing the various *signa data* within Scripture: *ignota*, *ambigua*, *translata* (see chapters 4 and 5). Again, these signs must be understood in the light of God’s self-revelation, namely the incarnate Christ, the humble Mediator between God and men, the one who – being the “very first sign” – is the only possible way for ultimately knowing God.

That Augustine’s theory of interpretation is essentially a Christological theory can be inferred also by the fundamental Christological analogy found in *doc. chr.* 1,13 (see pp. 226ff), based on the analogy between thinking and speaking (the inner and the expressed word distinction) on one part, and God uttering his Word on the other. This analogy, understood in the light of the Christian exegete’s preunderstanding (*uti/frui* scheme, *regula fidei* and *caritas*), is what makes possible a correct comprehension of Scripture. When that happens, in fact, “the signifying links in the chain of signification are not multiplied

arbitrarily. Rather, they are clustered around one sign, the humanity of Christ (...) The incarnated Word leaves no gap between the sign and the signified, for Christ signifies himself" (p. 240). Thanks to his humanity, Christ is the "signifier", and thanks to his divinity, He is the "signified". In other words, He is both the *via* and the *patria* (cf. *doc. chr.* 1,11,11), and because of that He constitutes "the transcendental possibility for the scriptures to linguistically signify the spiritual realities" (p. 241).

Toom's reconstruction of the theological/Christological approach adopted by Augustine in his theory of biblical hermeneutics is convincing. We cannot but agree with him that Christology appears to be the key to the correct understanding of *doc. chr.* We would simply add that this scope was already clear in Augustine's mind even before drawing his hermeneutical *praecepta*. Not only would the immediate precursors of *doc. chr.* (*Contra Academicos* and *De magistro*) hint at that (let us think of Augustine's "illumination theory"), but the Bishop of Hippo's very biographical *parcours* – of which the Milanese "conversion" signs a point of no return – explains the centrality of Christ the Saviour in his life, thought and work.

Donato OGLIARI

Paul van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as a Negative Theologian*, Late Antique History and Religion 4, Peeters, Leuven-Paris-Walpole MA, 2011, ISBN 978-90-429-2473-4, XII, 262 p.

In this book Paul van Geest traces throughout Augustine's corpus the recurring emphasis to be found within it on the mystery of God. Taking a chronological approach, the book examines works which "contain passages representative of Augustine's discourse about God during a certain period", and more specifically, "passages in which Augustine himself made *the way of speaking about God* an object of reflection" (p. 18). In reading Augustine as 'negative theologian' van Geest responds to a widespread reception of Augustine as a 'positive' theologian who developed and provided for later Christian tradition precise and definite ways of speaking about the God of salvation and all that that entailed doctrinally speaking. He thus contributes to a small but growing literature on Augustine's 'negative discourse about God' (p. 9), bringing the latter into the limelight by showing how an awareness of God's unknowability pervades Augustine's