

The Journal of Religion

PLUMER, ERIC, trans. *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. xvii+294 pp. \$70.00 (cloth).

Repeatedly during the 390s, Augustine turned to Paul to construct a biblically grounded Catholic response to the challenge of Manichaean theology and exegesis. The *Propositiones*, or notes on Romans; the *Inchoata expositio*, also on Romans; a brief commentary on Galatians, which would lead to an extended correspondence with Jerome; three substantial comments on questions arising from Romans 7–9 (questions 66–68 of *De diversis quaestionibus*)—these are all exegetical warm-up exercises for the theological resolutions achieved, with dizzying panache, between 396 and 398, in the *Ad Simplicianum*, *Confessiones*, and *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*. So securely dated is this dossier, so repeated his efforts over these Pauline texts, that studying these works has the effect of viewing a time-lapse photograph. The uncertain Augustine of the mid-390s is not yet the man he will be, but as we track his arguments and his growing facility as an interpreter of the Bible, we can see how he matures through this struggles with Paul's legacy.

When commenting on Romans in the 390s, Augustine seemed especially concerned by the theological problem of free will and divine foreknowledge, faith and grace. When commenting on Galatians, however, he shifted his focus: this letter served less as an opportunity for theological argument per se and more as an occasion for describing, historically and ethically, what was at stake in Antioch when Paul confronted Peter. At stake also was a larger issue of the quality of biblical narrative. Could Scripture say one thing but really mean another? Allegorically, yes, of course. But could it ever be ironic? Ethically and historically, says Augustine in this treatise, no. Jerome, earlier, had argued that Peter and Paul had only faked their fight for the edification of their audience. Augustine felt that such a position eroded the moral authority of Scripture and played into the hands of the Manichaeans. The episode that Paul referred to in Galatians 2, Augustine urged, must be understood as a straightforward account of a real dispute.

Along the way, as Eric Plumer illuminates in his rich introduction, Augustine drew many lessons for Christian behavior. Paul had corrected Peter, but Peter did the harder thing: corrected in public, he nevertheless heard what Paul said and conceded his own error. Peter's true humility, in Augustine's view, resonated with the humility of Christ and presented to the church a model for Christian behavior. Plumer urges that this focus on principled correction, true humility, and behavior that builds up community gives us a clue to Augustine's motivation in writing this commentary: his concerns were "pastoral and practical, rather than historical and philological" (p. 104). Tying this observation to his understanding of the *Monastic Rule*, which he takes to be authored by Augustine, Plumer concludes that Augustine directed this commentary specifically to "the monks at Hippo" (p. 77; cf. p. ix).

One can be unpersuaded of this conclusion and still find much to appreciate in Plumer's introduction. Besides analyzing Augustine's treatise from a number of useful perspectives, Plumer also considers other near-contemporary Latin commentaries on Galatians and their influences on Augustine or his on them. Tyconius, unfortunately, is dismissed in a short footnote, evidently on the strength of an opinion expressed by Eugene TeSelle in 1970 (p. 5, n. 3). Plumer rightly notes that Tyconius (unlike Augustine's other Latin counter-

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parts) did not write specifically on Galatians, and Tyconius's influence is most clearly attested only two years after Augustine wrote his commentary on Galatians. But the argument that God elects an individual to salvation because God foreknows the individual's faith features prominently both in Augustine's commentaries on Romans (written at the same time as his commentary on Galatians) and in Tyconius's *Liber regularum III*. Both rhetorically couple Jews/fear/failure to keep the Law and Christians/love/fulfilling the Law. And Tyconius combines Romans and Galatians, explaining one in terms of the other, much as Augustine does in his Galatians commentary. An analysis and comparison of their respective patterns of citations would have been a useful way to approach the question.

Plumer reproduces Johannes Divjak's text, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 84, altering it in light of Jean Rousset's suggestions (*Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* [1972]) or his own reading. His translation is lucid and clear. Beautifully produced, this edition offers very full notes and an ample bibliography, for which both author and publisher must be thanked. Plumer's new book makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on Augustine, on fourth-century Latin patristics, and on the history of exegesis. *Tolle, lege*.

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KERR, FERGUS. *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. viii+254 pp. \$59.95 (cloth); \$26.95 (paper).

NICHOLS, AIDAN. *Discovering Aquinas: An Introduction to His Life, Work, and Influence*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002. x+214 pp. \$28.00 (paper).

These two works, both by Dominicans, one Scottish and the other English, serve quite different publics. Aidan Nichols presents "Aquinas in miniature [in an effort to] recapture the lucidity and splendour of Thomas's thought," which the author explicitly executes over against "the confused and unattractive face contemporary Christianity often shows the world, [so that] the reader may be struck by the contrast of the beauty this 'miniature' displays" (pp. 182–83). This goal licenses a witty and engaging style, and the presentation is straightforward, giving the reader the man, the doctrine, and the aftermath. This celebration could attract theological readers to pursue the actual study of Aquinas, however, especially if they react with similar dismay to the "face of contemporary Christianity."

Fergus Kerr's study is decidedly more analytic, indeed "postmodern," in dialectically portraying the various ways in which Aquinas has been appropriated. Yet to show the many faces of Aquinas, one must "destabilize . . . the standard conceptions of Thomas's thought" (p. vi), which Kerr dubs "Leonine Thomism," to signal its origins in the endorsement of Thomas by Pope Leo XIII (in 1879) in an attempt to supply Catholics with an alternative to Descartes. So Kerr must begin (after a dramatic account of Aquinas's life and times) by "overcoming epistemology" (chap. 2). Countering the ploy of opposing a "Thomistic realism" to the Cartesian legacy of skepticism, he reminds us how "knowledge [for Aquinas] is the product of a collaboration between the object known and the subject who knows: the knower enables the things known to become intelligible, thus to enter into the domain of meaning, while the

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