*Sitz im Leben* as well as to his own pronouncements on this subject. C. begins by devoting a very lengthy discussion to Jerome's use of the concept of 'brevitas epistolaris'. Here she unfortunately fails to mention G. J. M. Bartelink, 'Een gemeenplaats uit de briefliteratuur bij een christelijk auteur: Brevitas epistolaris bij Hieronymus', *Lampas* 10 (1977), 61–5. In her discussion of the 'Vorgang der Brieferstellung' she affirms (p. 107): 'Ein weiterer von Hieronymus für den Schreiber verwendeter Begriff ist "scriba velox" ' (*Epist*. 65.7.1). It should, however, be pointed out that here 'scriba velox' is merely Jerome's literal rendering of the Hebrew 'sopher mahir' (Ps. 45.2), which he at once proceeds to gloss as *notarius* (*ibid*. 7.2).

Chapter 4, which opens with an impressive discussion of theoretical approaches to epistolography, then moves on to a detailed examination of four of Jerome's letters, which have been judiciously chosen to illustrate the diversity of his correspondence: no. 34 to Marcella on exegetical issues in Ps. 127, no. 54 to Furia on the preservation of widowhood, no. 15 to Pope Damasus on trinitarian terminology, and no. 109 to the priest Riparius in defence of vigils and the cult of relics. C. rounds off this section by concluding that exegesis is the staple of Jerome's letters, that he adopts the rôle of teacher in them, that he fills them with topoi and that in the course of them he tends to get carried away. The final chapter deals with Christian and pagan elements in Jerome's epistolography. C. rightly concludes that the latter are largely there to impress.

Throughout this perceptive and valuable book C. shows a commendable awareness of the importance of rhetorical technique for a proper appreciation of Jerome's work. Here a more specific terminology might sometimes have been employed: e.g. polyptotic *redditio* instead of just 'dreigliedrige Alliteration' (p. 76), or *sermocinatio* and *dilemma* instead of mere 'Fragestränge' (p. 191).

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## AUGUSTINE ON *GALATIANS*

E. PLUMER: *Augustine's Commentary on* Galatians. *Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes*. Pp. xvii + 294. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-19-924439-1.

Augustine wrote his commentary on St Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* in 394 or 395 during the relatively short period of his priesthood at Hippo (391–5/6) before his ordination as bishop. At that time he was living in the monastic community he had set up, based on a group of his friends. Moreover, this was the time when, having recently read Jerome's commentary on the *Letter to the Galatians*, Augustine opened a correspondence with the prickly biblical scholar in Bethlehem, to discuss various points of translation and interpretation. These three aspects of Augustine's life at this period—as priest, monk, and incipient biblical scholar—are, according to Eric Plumer in his introduction to this annotated edition and (almost flawless) translation of Augustine's commentary, crucial to our understanding of Augustine's purpose in writing this neat work in which so much of what comes to be seen as typical of Augustine's thought is already present. Through his interpretation of St Paul's letter to the pagans turned Christians in Galatia, a letter which deals primarily with the value accorded to Jewish law and Christian faith and grace, Augustine allows the reader to perceive many of the hermeneutical presuppositions fundamental to his later exegesis: here we can see his belief in the truth of Scripture, the unity of the Bible, the primacy of love and humility, as well as his interest in spiritual and pastoral

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matters in preference to questions of an historical or philological nature. In many ways, as P. shows, Augustine's seamless verse by verse commentary is the antithesis of Jerome's learned work on the same Pauline epistle; by also comparing Augustine's work with the commentaries by Marius Victorinus (whose work P. considers Augustine was probably familiar with), Ambrosiaster, and Pelagius, P. shows how original Augustine's work was. This was largely because Augustine was responding to the particular circumstances in which he was living: the often polemical tone was determined by the writer's attempts to counter the convictions of Donatists and Manichees, those heretical groups that attracted the most adherents in North Africa. Augustine was still trying to shake off his reputation as a former Manichee, and allusions in this commentary to questions of the relation between free will and determinism, or the continuity between Old and New Testaments are likely to have had a Manichee audience in mind. If he was always aware of the dangers and temptations of Manicheism, he was also having dealings on a daily basis with Donatist Christians in Hippo and beyond. It is to the Donatists in particular that the statements regarding the importance of unity in the church and of a humble acceptance of error are directed.

These spiritual virtues were important not only in the church as a whole but in the more intense world of the monastic community, to prevent the brothers allowing sin to divide their community, thereby breaking a fundamental rule of the monastic life, namely that the brothers should have 'cor unum et anima una'. Looking at Augustine's interpretation against this background, as P. does, it becomes easy to see why Augustine interprets the tricky passage of *Galatians* 2.11–14 in the way he does. While Jerome favoured an interpretation which explained away any suspicion of inconsistency in the behaviour of Paul and Peter towards the Gentiles and Judaizing Christians, but laid the apostles open to a charge of hypocrisy, Augustine chose to protect their honesty rather than their consistency, welcoming the opportunity to stress the value of Paul's rebuke of Peter and Peter's humble acceptance. It was Augustine's interpretation, with its emphasis on fraternal correction and humility, that later became widely accepted.

In his commentary Augustine is clearly also addressing his congregation in his rôle as spiritual pastor. He deals with such everyday problems as swearing, drinking, excessive interest in astrology, and general ignorance, problems which seem to have been widespread in local society.

P.'s interpretation of Augustine's purpose in writing the commentary presents convincing evidence that Augustine is not here concerned to portray St Paul as a soul in anguish (the picture of Paul one may derive from the *Confessions*), but rather as a community leader steering the Galatians back to the truth of the gospel by means of gentle correction. It is on this view of Paul that Augustine seems to be modelling himself at this point in his life when, according to what he writes to Bishop Valerius in Letter 21, his chief aim was to concentrate on helping those around him for whose salvation he was responsible. However, being Augustine, he could not help becoming involved in doctrinal discussion: in this respect the commentary on the letter to Galatians gives us a foretaste of the Augustine who was to wield his pen more vigorously against Manichees, Donatists, and later, Pelagians, in the years to come.

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