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Matthew Alan Gaumer

Augustine's Cyprian: Authority in Roman Africa

Brill's Series in Church History 73

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016

Pp. 377. \$175.00.

At its heart this book examines the issues of the authority Cyprian held in late antique Africa and who could claim to be his successor. This is viewed through the lens of Augustine of Hippo's changing involvement in both the Donatist and Pelagian controversies. Gaumer argues that in the African context of Donatism, Augustine was something of a maverick standing against a long opposition to the outside world and imperial involvement. In that context Cyprian, although important, needed to be downplayed somewhat through reinterpretation and universalized, while in the Pelagian context Cyprian was used without hesitation. From the outset the author acknowledges that this book looks at Augustine's appropriation of Cyprian (viewed thematically rather than contextually) and less at how Augustine's opponents appropriated him, and that it makes great use of comparative numerical data.

Gaumer is very conscious that reading Augustine over the centuries has been strongly influenced by the polemical debates of the time. The initiative for an investigation into Augustine's appropriation of Cyprian is something the author kindly attributes to an article I wrote in 2010. The question then is the extent to which this book answers my call.

The volume is divided into three chronological parts: the first, in three chapters, investigates Augustine's earliest years in ministry; the second, also in three chapters, focuses on the Donatist controversy, which Gaumer argues was a problem for Augustine long after the colloquium of 411; and the third part, in a single chapter with attached conclusion, considers the Pelagian controversy. There is no doubt that the Donatist controversy presented Augustine with his most difficult challenge in terms of his attitude toward Cyprian, but it is great to see that this volume is not limited to that controversy. Indeed, having a wider purview than just Donatism enables Gaumer to show us, through contrast with other phases of Augustine's life, just how constrained and selective Augustine's treatment of Cyprian was during those years when Donatism seemed to dominate his activity. Augustine both appealed to and downplayed Cyprian to the extent that it was necessary to advance his own arguments.

In part, the chronological argument depends upon dating Augustine's homilies. Gaumer notes that the dates assigned are rather tendentious (xix) but offers the suggestions from five leading scholars to cover variation. Given Hubertus Drobner's challenge in a series of articles in *Augustinian Studies* nearly two decades ago to the whole enterprise of trying to date Augustine's homilies, I think that Gaumer needs to do more to establish criteria for assigning dates to Augustine's homilies. Because Donatism was a longer-running issue for Augustine than scholarship traditionally has recognized, the issue becomes even more convoluted. Are certain parallels with topics and themes (if such themes are restricted to one particular phase of Augustine's career) in datable letters sufficient to secure dates for the homilies?

The groundwork is laid in the first chapter's discussion about Donatism's impact in the earliest years (prior to 400) of Augustine's ministry. The themes that emerge here are his personal experiences of Donatist pride and error, the differences between African isolationist and Italian universalized Christianity, and the differences between Augustine's Christianity and Donatism. Cyprian is little evidenced in this chapter. If there is a conclusion to be drawn from this absence, Gaumer does not make it, other than to say that Augustine has not yet latched on to the importance of Cyprian. The chapter finishes with material drawn from some homilies.

It is in the second chapter that Gaumer asks why Augustine needed Cyprian. The answer is that Augustine's own failures in the 390s in making headway against the Donatists led him to reconsider the value of appeals to authority (ranging from divine authority in Scripture down to the personal authority of prominent individuals). From the late 390s, Cyprian was one such authority, and one who needed to be rescued from Donatist clutches. Augustine was increasingly, though slowly at first, at pains to show how much he revered the great Carthaginian martyr bishop, how Cyprian never fell victim to pride (the sin he accused the Donatists of possessing), and how he was a model of resistance to error. The influence of several sermons (37, 305A, 313A, 313B, 313C, and 313E) is crucial for Gaumer's arguments, and the flow of his thought depends upon issues of dating: When did Augustine latch onto his insights into Cyprian? The risk of circular argument is great here. Are ideas first encountered in a sermon like 313E "developments" (in the sense of linear progression) in Augustine's thinking or merely alternative insights offered by a preacher? While Gaumer considers 313E to have been preached before 400, the implications for the unfolding of Augustine's thinking using Cyprian is left unexplored.

The third chapter considers the impact of the election of Primian as Donatist bishop of Carthage in about 392, the controversy that resulted from that election within the ranks of the Donatists (Maximianist schism), the opportunity that was presented to Augustine in terms of Donatist inconsistency on the need for rebaptism, their refusal to appeal to imperial authority, and the overlap between Primian and Caecilian. Cyprian does not feature in this chapter.

The middle section begins by concentrating specifically on Augustine's *De baptismo* (but including *Contra epistulam Parmeniani*) and considering how appropriating Cyprian for his own side was Augustine's most effective means of countering Donatists. Cyprian as one who reconciled the schismatic to his community was emphasized, in contrast to Donatist practice. Augustine was removing Cyprian as an authority figure for the Donatists. Other theological themes besides Cyprian were developed during this period. Augustine's problem was to minimize the fact that Cyprian, like the Donatists, insisted on "rebaptism" (which of course they insisted was the only real baptism), since the baptism received in schism was considered to be completely ineffective. Augustine's solution would be the idea of sacramental grace *ex opere operato* and the greater good of preserving church unity, which Cyprian as humble martyr did.

The fifth chapter continues this examination into the years after *De baptismo*, where reference of Cyprian continued in Augustine's writings, although not so much between 411 and 419. Gaumer offers extensive collation with pages of

tables of references to themes in Augustine (e.g. *veritas*, *caro*, *concupiscentia*, etc.). Just how that relates to Cyprian as an authority figure is not immediately apparent. The next chapter looks at three topics and how his views were influenced by Donatism: Augustine's increased acceptance of religious coercion or correction, grace, and pneumatology. While there is some reference to Cyprian with regard to grace (in both the Donatist and Pelagian controversies) and to the Spirit, the idea of Augustine appropriating Cyprian is not as strong as it could be in this chapter.

The third section offers the greatest promise: Augustine's appropriation of Cyprian in the Pelagian controversy. Gaumer finds about one-sixth of Augustine's references to Cyprian in the writings dealing with this issue, not counting letters and homilies. The argument here is that Augustine sought to prove, more so against Julian than against Pelagius, that his views on divine grace and human free will were in line with Christian tradition and were not a mere African backwater opinion—particularly as they were found in Cyprian, but also in others. I was hoping to see some comment about how highly Cyprian was to be regarded in comparison with others, and this was indeed covered at some length. Cyprian seems second only to Ambrose as an authority on grace and free will for Augustine.

How does this volume relate to Gaumer's 2012 *Augustine's Appeal to Cyprian in the Donatist and Pelagian Controversies*, a work not mentioned in the bibliography? This was his doctoral dissertation from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Even a cursory glance at the table of contents reveals that the work under review is essentially that dissertation after some revision. This does not detract from the value of the present work, but in the interest of transparency it would have been good to acknowledge that this present work is the publication of a revised dissertation. The work contains ample footnotes and a good bibliography and reads well. There is great structure and direction to the volume, and it can be highly recommended as a valuable contribution to a topic that deserves much attention, as Gaumer points out in the conclusion, where further questions are addressed to scholars for their consideration.

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Ilaria L. E. Ramelli
*Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery:
 The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from
 Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity*
 Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016
 Pp. 344. £70.00. \$99.00.

Over the last twenty years, there has been a steady growth of studies on slavery in the ancient world. The majority of the newer studies have, and rightfully so, demonstrated the brutality of slavery and abuse—physical, mental, and sexual—of which slaves suffered. The emphasis on slavery as inhumane must be seen