

causing violence and conflict to reverberate through the course of human history. 'On the Canaanite woman' begins with this chaotic social condition, but this woman, who 'seized the boldness of invincible faith' and thereby triumphed in the struggle, provides an exemplar comparable to Mary.

Through the lens of Narsai's homily 'On the soul', set against a broad canvas of ancient thought, J. Edward Walters explores Narsai's understanding of the relation of body and soul. He highlights the care of the soul for the body, the origin of the soul, its 'control of bodily senses, the capacity for speech and reason, and creativity/artistry' and its fate at death. The body/soul relationship is often described in Christological or Trinitarian language since for Narsai as for many of his contemporaries, these complex and mysterious unions pose analogous intellectual challenges.

PRINCETON

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*Rhetoric and Scripture in Augustine's homiletic strategy. Tracing the narrative of Christian maturation.* By Michael Glowasky. (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 166.) Pp. viii + 195. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2021. €104. 978 90 04 44668 7; 0920 623X

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One of the most promising and fruitful developments in patristics has been the rediscovery of Augustine as a rhetorician. In many ways, scholars for too long took the bishop of Hippo at his own word (at least as found in works like the *Confessions*) by focusing their attention more on his intellectual debt to Plotinus than to Cicero. In so doing, even eminent Augustinians have typically passed over the fact that Augustine was only ever what might be termed an amateur philosopher, while he was educated, trained and employed as a rhetor. Indeed, as Paul Kolbet persuasively argued in his excellent *Augustine and the cure of souls*, his approach to Neoplatonism was really very much in the tradition of some strands of late Roman rhetoric.

The new emphasis on Augustine the rhetor is due in no small part to growing interest in Augustine the preacher, itself encouraged in part by the discovery of some of his sermons. The very nature of sermons, delivered in a particular setting and to particular congregations, should have grounded work on Augustine's rhetoric in his social and historical context. Strangely, however, this has not generally happened – at least not in a thorough-going way – but instead his rhetoric has been analysed according to the influences that underpinned it or to its impact on his theology. So, for example, much ink has been spilt arguing about Augustine's relationship with Cicero or how the mechanics of rhetoric shaped Augustine's hermeneutical strategy. Not surprising, *De doctrina Christiana* has loomed large in these studies.

The brilliance of Michael Glowasky's book is that it foregrounds Augustine's audience. By focusing on his *Sermones ad populum*, Glowasky seeks to explain Augustine's rhetorical strategy by acknowledging the character, concerns and needs of his target audience. He argues that these congregations can generally be divided into three categories: catechumens being prepared for baptism, the recently baptised neophytes and the more mature faithful. Far from preaching more generally, Augustine, so Glowasky argues, used different forms of rhetoric

that he deemed most appropriate for each group's stage of Christian maturity. As a result, Augustine emerges clearly as a pastor in relationship with his congregation and as a rhetorical strategist deeply informed by a Catholic sense of polity.

As is usual with such studies, Glowasky faces three main difficulties. First, he has to decide how best to categorise the *Sermones ad populum* according to the intended audience. This is not always clear, and so he devotes extensive debate to explaining how he has assessed the sermons in light of Augustine's overall strategy. A greater challenge is in providing a convincing portrait of Augustine's various audiences both in terms of their doctrinal maturation and their social context. This is where the book provides a commendable example for other scholars working on Augustine's rhetoric because it situates his writing within a particular context and explains its features and peculiarities in light of that context. Glowasky's book might, therefore, be called a study of placed rhetorical.

The most difficult challenge, however, is provided by Augustine himself, who nowhere articulates this strategy. If, as Glowasky argues, Augustine committed himself to a well-developed strategy, rooted in classical rhetoric, for imparting the Church's teaching to people according to their exposure to the faith, it is surprising that he should not have described it anywhere. The most Glowasky can say is that it (and especially the role of *narratio*) operates in the background of *De doctrina Christiana*. In order to sustain his argument, Glowasky therefore has to engage in extensive textual detective work, which he generally does convincingly. Still, occasionally one has a sense of particular scholars being favoured for their resonance with the book's main argument rather than on their own merits. This is perhaps just a way of saying that this book is too short.

Finally, while this book is intended for an academic audience, it could also be useful for clergy and preachers. If Glowasky's argument is right, then Augustine devised a thorough-going homiletic strategy aimed at advancing his congregation towards a more mature faith. Augustine emerges as a preacher who was part teacher, part persuader, and who was concerned as much with the connection between his sermons as he was with the content within each sermon. Glowasky's presentation of strategy provides material and insights for clergy who might be reflecting on the role and purpose of preaching within the wider life of their Churches. At the least, the study highlights how rarely such a well-developed rhetorical strategy is to be found in modern-day churches.

Even if one does not accept the totality of Glowasky's argument, the book is well worth reading simply for the enjoyment of encountering Augustine the preacher, pastor and rhetor amidst his congregation and dedicated to their formation in the faith. Both emerge in a well-rounded and even evocative fashion that should not only inform future research but also inspire preachers today as they seek to use their own sermons for the formation of their congregation.

BRECON CATHEDRAL

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