

Ministerium Sermonis.
An International Colloquium on Saint Augustine's
Sermons on the New Testament and their Context.
Rome September 15-17 2011

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ABSTRACT: The article is a chronicle of the Colloquium about St. Augustine's *Sermones ad Populum* on the New Testament, held in the Academia Belgica of Rome on September 15-17, 2011. It makes an overview of all the papers presented at the Colloquium, and underlines their contribution to the Augustinian Studies.

KEYWORDS: S. Augustine, *Sermones ad populum*, Biblical exegesis, manuscript tradition.

RESUMEN: El artículo es una crónica del Coloquio celebrado en la Academia Belgica de Roma sobre los *sermones ad Populum* sobre el Nuevo Testamento de san Agustín, del 15 al 17 de septiembre de 2011. El artículo hace una presentación general de cada una de las contribuciones presentadas en el *Colloquium*, acentuando su aportación a los estudios agustinianos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: San Agustín, *Sermones ad populum*, exégesis bíblica agustiniana, tradición manuscrita en los códices.

On September 15-17, 2011, the research units *History of Church and Theology*, *Literary Studies: Latin Literature* and *De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy* of the Katholieke Uni-

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versiteit Leuven organized in collaboration with the *Augustinian Historical Institute* (Heverlee/Leuven) an International Conference on Augustine's New Testament sermons and their reception. This conference, was supported by the Scientific Committee of the *Series Latina* of the *Corpus Christianorum* (Brepols Publishers) and the reviews *Revue bénédictine* (Maredsous), *Augustiniana* (Heverlee/Leuven) and *Augustinus* (Madrid).

This conference was meant to be as a sequel to the conference organised in Leuven and Turnhout: '*Ministerium sermonis. An International Colloquium on Saint Augustine's Sermones ad Populum*' (May 30-31, 2008), the proceedings of which have been published in the series *Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia* 53 (Brepols, Turnhout 2009). While the previous conference focussed on Augustine's *sermones ad populum*, the 2011 conference was dedicated to Augustine's sermons on the New Testament (*sermones* and *tractatus*) and their *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

The Colloquium took place in Rome, at the *Academia Belgica*, and approximately 30 scholars participated in the Colloquium.

A walk through 'Il Pincio'

On September 15 we left punctually the Collegio Internazionale sant'Ildefonso that the Augustinian Recollects have in via Sistina. Among the people in this group were: François Dolbeau, Isabelle Bochet, Volker-Henning Dreccoll, Uta Heil, Pierre-Marie Hombert, Paul Mattei, Diana Stanciu, Paul van Geest, Clemens Weidmann and Enrique A. Eguiarte. Since it was a nice sunny day, we decided to go to the *Academia Belgica* walking; we went through via Sistina, leaving behind Trinità del Monti Church, as well as the famous Scala di Spagna. Afterwards we passed by the Palazzo Medici and finally we entered in Il Pincio, the biggest park of Rome. Walking through its gardens we left behind the pond where a reconstruction of the Temple of Asclepius is, to arrive to via Omero y and to the *Academia Belgica* after a thirty minutes walk. The Colloquium was held in a beautiful room of the Academia, decorated with Old Flemish Tapestries.

At ten o'clock the Colloquium started with the welcome and Greetings words of Walter Geerts, Director of the Academia Belgica. After him Rita Beyers, from Brepols, and Gerd Van Riel from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, welcomed all participants.

Hubertus Drobner and the “jigsaw”

The first session was chaired by Enrique A. Eguiarte, and started with Hubertus Drobner’s lecture: “*The transmission of Augustine’s sermons. A critical assessment*”. Drobner said that what we know about Saint Augustine’s sermons is like a jigsaw from which we keep few pieces, to pinpoint that is more what we ignore about his sermons than what we know about them. Afterwards, he dealt directly with Augustine’s collection of sermons known as “*Halleluia*”, giving a lot of information of these sermons, inviting to reconsider some assessments which are considered valid nowadays. After the lecture there were questions and a debate was held.

Wim François: A travel in time

Afterwards Wim François presented the paper: “*Non habent nisi ista Tria. The threefold Concupiscence according to Augustine’s Second Homily on the First Epistle of John, and its Reception in the Early Modern Commentaries of J. Hessels, Cajetan, and W. Estius*”. François showed the long tradition in the reception of Augustine’s Second Homily on the First Letter of Saint John, underlining that J. Hessels clearly uses this work and Book 10 of *Confessions* to explain 1 Jn 2, 16. François remarked that although Hessels was influenced by Thomas of Aquinas, he follows the insights of the Fathers of the Church, as it is clear from his interpretation of the *concupiscentia oculorum*. Nevertheless when Hessels explains more closely the *concupiscentia*, he will follow Augustine’s *Contra Iulianum*. François also remarked that Estius follows Cayetan’s commentary and the *Summa*, despite he departs from Augustine. He explained how Estius differs from Augustine’s view on *concupiscentia*, where this is understood not as greed but as *curiositas*.

Dupont and the grace in Saint Augustine

After lunch, Mathijs Lamberigts chaired the session which started with Antony Dupont’s paper: “*Gratia in Augustine’s Sermones ad Populum on Christological Liturgical Feasts*”. He asserted that Augustine’s sermons on Christological Liturgical Feasts, namely Christmas, Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Easter and Easter week, stress the Unity of the Church, the sacraments, and the grace that has been obtained by the death of Christ the sinless, to redeem the sinner humanity. Nevertheless he stressed that scholars have noticed that Augustine also deals with this topics in other cir-

cumstances; despite of this, Dupont stressed that the grace is in the core of the sermons in the Liturgical Feast Days, although it is not presented in a polemical way. In the other hand, Dupont said that Augustine stresses the ethic responsibility of every Christian as an imitation of Christ. He also asserted that from the content of a sermon it cannot be definitely put in a specific chronological frame.

Isabelle Bochet: The attraction of Christ

Isabelle Bochet read the paper: “*L’exégèse augustinienne de Jn 6, 44 et la théologie augustinienne de la grâce: le Sermon 131 et la 26ème Homélie sur l’Évangile de Jean*”. She said that according to M.-F. Berrouard sermon 131 marks a definite change in the augustinian exegesis of Jn 6, 44: “*Nemo venit ad me, nisi Pater qui misit me traxerit eum*”, and this led Augustine to a change of his ideas about the grace, and that this could be seen in Homily 26th of the Gospel according to John, where the attraction of Christ respects human free will and is not a force that constrains, because the “violence”, is made directly to the heart. She also disserted on the role that the intelligence and the will have in Augustine’s theology, especially when he considers the effects of grace on the human being, and wondered if an evolution in Augustine’s insights should be considered, particularly in his polemic with the Pelagians.

Alicia Eelen and Predestination

After the afternoon break, Alicia Eelen presented the paper “*La prédestination et la justification. Augustin sur Rom. 8, 30-31. Analyse des sermons 158-159*”. She said that she was now researching Augustine’s *sermones ad populum* 151-183, trying to find the argumentative structures used by Augustine, as well as the different kinds of audience to whom the sermons were addressed and the image that Augustine gives from himself. She focused on sermons 158 and 159, asserting that both have been transmitted only by the collection *De Verbis Apostoli*, where it can be seen that the first words of s. 159 show that both sermons (158 and 159) were preached in consecutive days and for the same congregation. She also said that both have similar topics, namely the justification, and perfect justice. She also noted that when Augustine deals with both topics, he also deals briefly with predestination. She also presented the analysis of argumentative structure of

both sermons when Augustine deals with predestination and justification. Finally she stressed the information about the audience of the sermons that we can get from the text of the sermons.

Diana Stanciu, the Sacraments and the Unity of the Church

The last paper of this first day was presented by Diana Stanciu: “*Augustine’s Sermon 227 on the Sacraments and the Unity of the Church*”. She asserted that *sermo* 227 was preached on the Easter day to the *infantes*, and is focused on the Eucharist, despite it has several references to Baptism. Two important biblical quotations within the sermon are: 1 Cor 10: 7, related to the Unity of the Church; and 1 Cor 11: 27 linked to the capacity of the human being to receive with dignity the sacrament. She stressed that it is possible that Augustine had in mind other biblical texts such as Mt 26: 26; 1 Cor 2: 27; 1 Cor 10: 21; 1 Tim 4: 5; Ef 4: 9-16. She discussed about how the sermon deals with the Unity of the Church, making a comparison with Augustine’s anti-donatist sermons. She also presented the topic of the internal transformation and the spiritual ascension through the Eucharist, underlining the sacramental and ecclesiological elements. She also asserted that it was a sermon which is related to Augustine’s antipelagian works.

Dinner in Rome’s *Academia Belgica*

At eight o’clock a dinner was offered by Walter Geerts, Director of Rome’s *Academia Belgica*. Before dinner, Mathijs Lamberigts gave him as a present the Preecedings of the Conference held in Belgium in may 2008. After that an Italian dinner was served.

A morning dedicated to ecdotics: Dolbeau and the Collections of Sermons about Psalms

The first Morning session was chaired by Rita Beyers. The first speaker was François Dolbeau who lectured about: “*Un recueil homilétique sur les Psaumes, en relation avec les psautiers de Vérone et su Sinai*”. He discussed about the transmission of Augustine’s *sermones ad populum*. He began pointing to a fifteen Century manuscript: Gdansk, Mar. F. 227 (= *g*) which links two collections of sermons with a similar length: ff. 1-42 the *Homiliae quinquaginta* (= *Q*); ff. 43-83, a group of 37 *sermones* (= *R*), forgot-

ten by the critics. *Q* and *R* have a common index in ff. 182v-184; nevertheless, *R* keeps its own personality with different numbers and initial and final rubrics. From the analysis, two sections could be distinguished: In one hand, 13 authentic Augustine's sermons; in the other 21 Pseudo-Chrysostom's sermons. He stated that almost all explain a psalm, and its classification follows, *grosso modo*, the Psalter's order. He also said that *Q* can be traced back to Caesareus of Arles. Nevertheless, *R* is a collection attributed to Augustine. Dolbeau also pointed to a München's manuscript, namely, Clm 1445 ff. 1-42, from the 11 century (= *m*). He said that this manuscript has the first 16 texts of *R* following the same order. The testimony of *m* gives a *terminus post quem non*, while *g* reveals the content of the pages lacking from *m*. Dolbeau said also that *R* could not be the direct source of the Cistercian *De diuersis rebus*, because once that Augustine's sermons and Chrysostom's mixed, none medieval scholar would have been able to deduce from it the authentic sequence of Augustine. He said that the most probable hypothesis is that *Rz* would have circulated in an isolate way, as well as the Morin's collection about Chrysostom.

The manuscript of the 11 century, *m* gives us a *terminus post quem non*. He said that neither *R* nor *Ra* have been dated. *Ra* and *Rc* comment the same Psalter, linked to Verona's and Sinai's Psalter, which is a testimony to make a global attribution to Augustine. Since *R* presents as an Augustine's sermon, an authentic sermon of Caesareus of Arles, its formation is not previous to the first half of the sixth Century, despite that this is not an obstacle to date later the model of the section *Ra*.

Pierre-Maurice Bogaert: The Hippo's Library

Since Pierre-Maurice Bogaert was not able to be present in the Colloquium, his paper was read by Alicia Eelen. The paper was: "*De la bibliothèque d'Hippone à Fulda: les sermons 4 et 88*".

The departing point of the paper was that two sermons, *s. 4* and *s. 88* have been transmitted by a collection of old texts probably copied in Fulda. It is a codex in which *s. 4* is presented before *s. 88*, and a part of *s. 88* is mixed with *s. 4*. In the other hand, Possidius' *Indiculum* presents one after the other. For this reason Bogaert in his paper tried to study which are the consequences from this characteristics in the so called Pithou manuscript. In this way Bogaert concludes that the *sermones 4* and *88* were associated in the collection of *sermones* in Hippo's Library. It is probable that the manuscript that was the model for the Pithou manuscript could have come di-

rectly from the Hippo's Library, passing by Rome, remembering what P. P. Verbraken and A. Chavasse said about the Pithou manuscript, namely, that it contains a group of strange compositions. Bogaert also stressed the importance of Possidius's *Indiculum*, something which was confirmed with the discovery of the Dolbeau sermons, since the collections *Lorsch* and *Grande Chartreuse*, follow a sequence which is parallel to the *Indiculum*. The same happened with the new Erfurt's sermons. He said that the *Indiculum* would help not to check if the title of a certain sermon is there, but to check the sequence.

Clemens Weidmann and the Pseudo-Augustinian texts

Clemens Weidmann lectured about: "*Discovering Augustine's words in Pseudo-Augustinian Sermons*". He said that Augustine's sermons were used frequently to make new homiletic texts. Nevertheless, since the authentic sermons have been transmitted only by one or few manuscripts, the great number of the anonymous or Pseudo-Augustinian sermons are important to reconstruct the authentic texts. He explained how words from the authentic *sermones* could be corrected with the indirect tradition, and also some *lacunae* could be filled with this method. He said also that the textual problems of the Pseudo-Augustinian sermons could be solved making a comparison with its sources.

Shari Boodts & Gert Partoens: Ecdotica ante prandium

Shari Boodts and Gert Partoens presented the paper: "*The manuscript transmission of the 'De uerbis Apostoli' Collection. A new perspective*". They said that in the research about the collection *De uerbis Apostoli*, the ideas have shifted from the certainty of Verbraken to the point of recognizing that the old conclusions should be reviewed today. They also said that, after all, they considered *gama* not as a hyperquetype of *De uerbis Apostoli*, but as the archetype of all the collection, attributing the correct readings of *Vb 1.2.26.27* to a secondary contamination from a *Sessorian* source. Hence there are three consequences. First, that the superior regions of *De uerbis apostoli's stemma*, remains unknown. Groups can be distinguished but not Branches, hence the relationship between these groups in a higher level could not be determined. In a practical level this means that when selecting the witnesses for the edition of the less pure of the sermons of *De uerbis Apos-*

toli's collection, it is necessary to include at least one representant of each group to have a balanced point for the critic text. Secondly, the apparently *Sessorian* origen of the correct readings, find the difficulty that a lost witness of the *De uerbis Apostoli's* collection belonging to the *AI* Branch of De Coninck, could be the source of this correct reading. Thirdly, eliminating the hyparchetype *gama* has a bad effect especially over *Vb1.2*, that has been reputed as the purest form of Verbraken's B-Branches. They said also that this two manuscripts do not show any visible linking with other witnesses and seem to escape from any classification. That is why it is necessary to deal with them with care, something which is necessary when dealing with *De uerbis Apostoli's* collection.

Volker-Henning Drecoll: S. Matthew's quotations in Augustine's sermons

After lunch, Vittorino Grossi was chairing the session. The first speaker was Volker-Henning Drecoll, who presented the paper: "*Der Gebrauch der Alttestamentlichen Zitate in Augustins Predigten über das Matthäusevangelium*". He underlined the use that Augustine makes of quotations of the Gospel according to Matthew in his sermons. He examined the text of JI 2: 32 in sermons 57, 1; 56, 1. Afterwards he spoke about the theological implications of Ps 89: 1 in *sermo* 55, 1-3. 5. He presented also the theological importance of the prophetic and sapiential texts in *sermones* 53A, 6; 51, 13-15; 53, 13-15.

Uta Heil and the arrians

Uta Heil presented the paper: "*Antiarrianisches in den Predigten von Augustinus –eine Problemanzeige*". She said that since Augustine dealt with Arianism in the last part of his life, this probably affected to his sermons in that period, and also she asked herself if this Antiarrian polemic marked his exegesis of certain biblical texts. She also said that the Augustine's Antiarrian polemic has been neglected by scholars, who say that it is a secondary concern. Heil said that Augustine had a lot of interest on this topic and that it is not a secondary concern in some of Augustine's sermons.

Andrea Bizzozero: Les trois naissances

Andrea Bizzozero presented the paper: "*Les trois naissances du Christ: une christologie des Sermones de saint Augustin*". Bizzozero said that the

Sermones ad Populum should not be considered as the presentation of Augustine's "simple" theology, but as one of his highest expressions. To demonstrate this, Bizzozero said that when Augustine deals with the moment when Christ was born, he distinguishes three moments. First as the Logos which was generated by the Father since all eternity. Secondly as the Incarnate *Logos* in the womb of Mary, and finally as the *Logos* who is born by the faith in the heart of the believer.

Jonathan Yates, the last but not the least

Jonathan Yates delivered the paper: "*Preaching a Good and Immutable God: Augustine on James 1, 17.*" Yates said that Augustine always defended the Immutability of God. On the text of Jam 1: 17, he said that Augustine used this text forty times, with the final part of verse 17 as: "(...) *apud quem non est commutatio nec momenti obumbratio*". Then he made a comparison between the way in which Augustine uses this text in his philosophical, polemic and dogmatic works, and the way he uses it in his *sermones ad populum*. He discussed whether or not Augustine has changed his doctrine about the Immutability of God when he was preaching to the simple people.

S. Iuliani Flanderensium and the Isola Tiberina

After the talks we went together by foot through Rome's beautiful streets to the Church of *S. Iuliani Flanderensium*, where we had a concert of Belgian music, prepared and masterly played by Prof. Paul Tombeur. After the concert Fr. Hugo Vanermen, who is in charge of the Church, explained briefly the history of this church in the heart of Rome. After the concert we had a very Roman dinner in one of the most famous restaurants in Rome, "Sora Lela" in the mythical Isola Tiberina.

Saturday September 17th and Paul Mattei

The first session was chaired by Salvino Caruana and the first speaker was Paul Mattei, with the paper: "*Note sur le sermon 153. La Loi et la chair. De la lutte contre les manichéens à la controverse anti-pélagiennes: les choix d'Augustin*". He exposed the different parts of *sermo* 153 according to the rules of Rethorics, underlining the main topics and also the ideas about

Morals which are within the *sermo*. He stated that both things are important to know the purpose of the sermon. He stressed the turning point of the sermon where it changes the polemics against the Manicheans, for the polemics against the Pelagians, stressing against these heretics that the Law alone is not enough to be just. The precepts of the Law are excellent but when they are presented, they show the human concupiscence and the need of the Grace to accomplish them. In the last part of the sermon we can find also some ideas about the original sin, its transmission, and its consequences in all human beings.

As in other anti-Manichaean works, in s. 153, the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament is stressed. He also made some comparison between the s. 153 and *Contra Faustum*. He stressed that the polemics with the Pelagians is clearly reflected within the sermon as the main polemic, since Augustine used his sermons to explain to his congregation the dangers of the heresies, and s. 153 is an excellent example of this.

Pierre Marie Hombert and the Rethoric of sermons

The second speaker of the morning was Pierre Marie Hombert, with the paper: “*Homo-Deus. La prédication sur le Verbe incarné Dans les sermons augustiniens pour Noël et l’Ascension. Rhétorique et théologie*”. He stated that Augustine’s *sermones ad populum* preached on the great Liturgical Feasts as Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, are not only shorter, but they also have the purpose to explain the mystery of faith which is celebrated, and so they have a dogmatic topic. He uses in this sermons some rhetorical techniques, linking Rhetoric to dogmatic theology. He stated that both the sermons about Christmas and the Ascension, give an explanation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the *Logos*. He then made an explanation of the rhetorical structure of sermons 186, 192, *Mai* 98, underlining the deep theology which is presented within them.

Stan Rosenberg: Oral and Textual Cultures

The third speaker of the morning was Stan Rosenberg, he presented the paper: “*Beside Books: Approaching Augustine’s Sermons in the Oral and Textual Cultures of Late Antiquity*”. He stated that speaking, writing, dictating, are all possible mediums for accessing the world of the preacher and the congregation. Yet our ability to use the first of these is constrained

by materials extant, scholarly traditions, and methodological assumptions. Oral communication raises two challenges: first, discovering the ways in which dictation -as distinct from writing-, shaped the formation of doctrine, education, and culture; second, uncovering the ways in which preaching can supplement or revise scholarly interpretation of the speakers and their listeners. He examined the second challenge, stating that recently there has been greater interest in sermons and a desire to engage them as something more than as interesting supplements. We lack, though, an agreed methodology for handling them and their use is still overshadowed both by earlier prevailing attitudes about their viability as source material and the tendency to treat these as essentially analogous to books often naming them miscellaneous texts (or variants of this title) in patrologies and conferences. He discussed the viability of using sermons –Augustine’s sermons in particular–, as gateways into the oral and textual cultures of both the elite and the populace of Late Antiquity, and the distinctions one should draw between sermons and books, along with some of the implications thereof.

Peter Van Nuffelen and Petitioning God

The last speaker of the morning was Peter Van Nuffelen, with the paper: “Asking, Seeking, Knocking. Petitioning God in Augustine’s Sermons”. He stated that petitions were an ubiquitous feature of late antique society: not just the Emperor but also governors, bishops, and holy men were petitioned. After a brief introduction to the late antique petition system, he showed in a first section how God, as the supreme ruler, was construed as being receptive to petitions and how holy men could act as intermediaries, transferring demands from humble people and relaying the Lord’s answers. Nevertheless, the bulk of his paper was dedicated to Augustine’s sermons on the Lord’s prayer which he construes as a petition (56-59). He argued that, by setting the sermons side by side with bureaucratic practice, light is shed on both. On the one hand, one can note a subtle reconstruction of the relationship between God and the individual Christian on the lines of that between the emperor and his subject. In particular, the asymmetry between asker and giver is highlighted. On the other hand, Augustine’s sermons show that the ideological foundation of the petition system is a specific identification of hierarchy and morality.

Marleen Verschoren and the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*

After lunch, Marleen Verschoren presented the paper: “Scriptural exegesis: Old Testament and New Testament themes on sinfulness in Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmum* 118”. She stated that her paper focused only on two sermons where Augustine explains Psalm 118, and after presenting the literary analysis of these sermons, she stressed the theological topics that Augustine presents in these sermons, linking these topics with other works of Augustine, to give a broader perspective of the importance that these sermons have.

Paul van Geest and the ‘Logik des Schreckens’

The last speaker was Paul van Geest, presenting the paper: “Confident Reverence. The principal functions of fear in some of Saint Augustine’s Sermons”. He stated that in his standard work about the hour of death Philippe Ariès blames Augustine for affecting the Christians’ original trust in God’s mercy and increasing their fear to end up in the power of Satan for all eternity. He also quoted the words of Kurt Flasch, who reproached the church father with setting in motion a ‘Logik des Schreckens’ by minimizing human autonomy, freedom and individual responsibility, by stressing God and his arbitrarily bestowed grace. Flasch did not hesitate to characterize Augustine’s teaching on grace, as it is formulated in *Ad Simplicianum* 1.2., as a terrible shade across Europe.

He then argued that he did not think that these judgments on Augustine as the great terrifier of Europe are justified. If Augustine is thought as a mystagogue, who initiates the faithful into a life of prayer and prepares them into the encounter with the ineffable and incomprehensible Mystery, God, paradoxically near in Christ, only then we will be able to assess the role and function Augustine assigns to fear. He stressed that Augustine intensified fear in order to evoke hope in the end. The ‘Logik des Schreckens’, which came into effect in the course of the centuries, is far less present in his work than was recognized in the centuries after him. He also discussed how Augustine describes or defines fear (*timor, metus*). He therefore considered with what objective Augustine intensifies fear in certain sermons, giving some examples of this and focusing only on few sermons.

Mathijis Lamberigts and the Conclusion

To close the *Colloquium*, Mathijis Lamberigts made a summary of the different elements and topics within the different papers presented during the *Colloquium*, making an invitation to continue researching and working with Augustine's Works. He also gave thanks to all the persons and Institutions that helped to organize and to make this Conference possible. He also thanked all speakers for their interesting contributions.

Piazza del Popolo and the "Last Supper"

At the end of the Conference all participants went to the Piazza del Popolo to go together to a very roman restaurant to have a very roman dinner with pasta and *abacchio con pollo* (lamb and chicken). It was the time to thank to all and to recognise that Augustine and his Works, especially the *sermones ad Populum*, have still a lot of things to be studied.

