

His latest biographer, Professor O'Meara, accepts the common judgment that Augustine didn't know how to plan a book. Hence the tangled jungle of the *City of God* and the ill-assorted jumble of the *Christian Doctrine*; hence also this incongruous tail to the *Confessions*. But it would perhaps be truer to say that Augustine had such a keen sense of pattern and design that he could never fit his books into the obvious or merely conventional scheme. On top of this, his unflagging pursuit of the intricacies of a pattern effectively obscure its main lines for the reader, by making him giddy with mental fatigue.

The *Confessions* then will not fit the conventional category of religious autobiography. As the Xth book shows, Augustine combined a staggering power of self-examination, a most lively awareness of himself, with a complete lack of self-consciousness. So he was not in the least interested in his own religious experience for its own sake, but quite fascinated by it as manifesting a design—the design of God's redeeming grace. The confession of his own sins is only a means for the confession of God's praise. And the design which he sees worked out in the microcosm of himself, of a being created by God (like Tristram Shandy he begins the story of his life from the womb), broken away from God, and then created anew by God in grace, this design he contemplates again in the macrocosm as it is shown us in the Genesis story of creation. His meditations on it, culminating in its allegorical interpretation, might be called a treatise on God the one author of nature and grace. And so in Book XI, c. 2, he prays for grace to understand the Scriptures in these words: 'I beseech thee by thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ . . . thy Word through whom thou madest all things, and amongst them me also; thine only begotten Son, by whom thou didst call to adoption the multitude of believers, and me amongst them, by him do I beg this grace . . . in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These same treasures do I seek in thy books.'

E.H.

LA GRANDE PRIÈRE EUCHARISTIQUE. Par J. A. Jungmann. Traduction de l'allemand par Marc Zemb. (Cerf; n.p.)

In four sections this book consists of the best type of liturgical commentary, taking and expanding four key phrases from the Ordinary of the Mass: *Memores, Offerimus, Plebs Sancta, Socia Exultatione*. *Memores*: if we are to appreciate fully the sacrifice of the altar we must bear in mind that God the Father has once and for all accepted Christ's sacrifice (Heb. IX, 24-28); we may overlook this if we insist exclusively on immolation and forget the commemoration. *Offerimus*: it is truly our sacrifice with Christ; in opposition to the Gnostics the early Fathers of the Church had to emphasize the holiness of the material we offer.

*Plebs sancta*: we are a holy people and therefore must physically share in the celebration. This does not necessarily demand an altar facing the people: Fr Jungmann is only in favour of this for small congregations, because the traditional orientation of the altar has its own significance. *Socia exultatione*: as the blessed in heaven share the joy of the Mass, so at the other end of the scale we must see that our liturgical embellishments do not exclude the rank and file of the congregation.

This is a stimulating commentary because the author is enthusiastic without being a fanatic. He would like to see the congregation filing to the altar to offer their hosts for consecration but appreciates the difficulties: he would like sufficient vernacular in the Mass of the Catechumens to remind the faithful how God has accepted Christ's sacrifice. To the discussion he brings a wealthy array of learning, theology, history, art; but we are never overawed because all is subordinated to the purpose of making the Mass more real in our lives. This is helped not a little by his gift for dramatic presentation: 'Nous voyons l'Eglise gravir la montagne sainte, si l'on peut dire. Sur le sommet de la montagne, elle reçoit l'offrande des mains du Seigneur et présente le sacrifice avec lui.' Only once or twice do the suggestions for liturgical 'reform' sound like special pleading. This is a thoroughly stimulating book, as practical as it is learned.

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GESCHIEDENIS VAN DE VROOMHEID IN DE NEDERLANDEN. Vol. II: *De Eeuw van Ruusbroec*. By Stephanus Axters, O.P. (De Sikkel, Antwerp; 380 fr. belg.)

This second volume, *The Age of Ruusbroek*, of Fr Stephanus Axters' *History of Piety in the Netherlands*, must be read as a sequel, if its methods and conclusions are to be duly esteemed. In the first volume, dealing with the 'Frankish period' (the fifth to tenth centuries) the author discusses in some detail several groups of highly significant texts. One of the earliest is 'The Book of Visions' in the *Vita Aldegundis* (St Aldegunde of Mauberge, ob. 684: Acta SS Jan. iii), perhaps originally composed in the Frankish vernacular, in which a man appears to the saint to announce that Christ is to be her Bridegroom, and she replies in our Lady's words to the angelic messenger; and later Axters describes the *Pigmenta* of St Anscharius (ob. 865), a 'garland' of 150 devout orisons which he used to recite as adjuncts to his psalter, 'ut ei psalmi hac de causa dulcescerent'. Without doubt in the 'Book of Visions' we have an exceptionally early manifestation of the *Brautmystik* which has characterized Netherlands piety throughout its history; and in the concept of the *Pigmenta*, the admixture of the wine of the liturgy, the *opus Dei*, with the honey of private devotions, we have one of the seeds from