

Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in His Sermones ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy. By Anthony Dupont. *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* 177. Boston: Brill, 2014. Pp. ix + 235. \$162.

Dupont's doctoral studies focused on the interplay between Augustine of Hippo's notions of divine grace and human free will during the Pelagian controversy and the ways in which the homilies provide some balance to the almost exclusive emphasis on divine grace in Augustine's doctrinal writings. This volume comes from his postdoctoral work, in which his interest has been extended to those homilies that were preached outside the time frame of the Pelagian controversy. D. examines homilies on liturgical feasts from the entire span of Augustine's preaching career and some 40 homilies preached during the time of the Donatist controversy, prior to the emergence of the Pelagian controversy. A question emerges: Did Augustine have a more positive approach to the question of human effort prior to the Pelagian controversy?

Any scholar coming to Augustine's homilies must take into account the challenges presented by several articles published by Hubertus Drobner in *Augustinian Studies* in 2004, only one of which is listed in D.'s bibliography, about the problems of securing a chronology for Augustine's homilies. Even though Drobner's critique of the efforts to secure a dating for Augustine's homilies may not be quite as fatal to the endeavor as he suggests, the fact that D. does not really take the challenge seriously is a flaw in the methodology of the work. With the homilies for the liturgical seasons this is not really a problem as the sample analyzed is large enough that they must cover quite a wide time frame of Augustine's preaching career. D. is able to show quite well that the notion of divine grace and human free will and effort is present in a balanced way in many of the homilies for liturgical feasts (homs. 9–159) that put special emphasis on Pentecost (homs. 90–136).

It is all well and good to show that both themes of divine grace and human effort are to be found in many of these homilies, but the question arises about Augustine's idea of the relationship between these two themes. Did he discuss in all of his homilies the possibility of human effort as only possible in the light of a prior divine grace, or only in those homilies dating from the time of the Pelagian controversy, when such a question became more pressing? Or did he not bother about this in his homilies at all?

Of course this can be addressed in considering the anti-Donatist homilies (i.e., homilies preached before the emergence of the Pelagian controversy) (homs. 160–98), provided the question of dating can be resolved, but that remains the unaddressed problem. D. is more interested in whether Augustine's understanding of grace differs in time because of the nature of the controversies he addressed. It should not surprise us that it did. Thus, the relationship between sin (with all its implications for ongoing church membership for the Donatists) and grace is of primary concern. The question of human effort in the light of grace, which did receive some attention in the earlier pages of the volume, does not get the attention it deserves here to really address one of the methodological questions D. raises in his introduction.

There is much to like in this volume and it is clear that D. has a fantastic grasp of a vast array of resources, which anyone coming to Augustine must master because of his dominant position in early Christian studies. There is certainly a wealth of information packed into a relatively compact monograph. The idea that there is continuity in Augustine's thinking about grace throughout his long career as a preacher is a welcome conclusion from this research. This volume will be a valuable addition to a burgeoning scholarly interest in Augustine's homilies and provides balance to an over-reliance only on his doctrinal output. This is not the last work on this topic, but it does lay solid groundwork for those who wish to delve into this fascinating question in a most important period of Christian theology.

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Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement. By Catherine Keller. New York: Columbia University, 2015. Pp. vi + 394. \$35.

Keller is a constructive theologian at Drew University. This volume is aptly named because by the end of the book the reader might not know what to make of her theological "apophaticism." Note: not agnosticism! "Apophatic" is the most frequently used term in the book. The inspiration for her theological angle of vision, if one chooses to consider it that, is Nicolas of Cusa, a 15th-century cardinal. His *docta ignorantia*, as K. puts it, "nicknamed" God as *posse ipsum*, Possibility Itself. Cusa supplies K. with the image of the Cloud with which she undertakes her theological construction.

One might gain a sense of the ethos of this book by learning that it is part of the Columbia University Press's series entitled *Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics and Culture*. That series, which now numbers more than 20 books, describes itself as "bringing the tools of philosophy and critical theory to the political implications of the religious turn . . . Without advocating any specific religious or theological stance, the series aims nonetheless to be faithful to the radical emancipatory potential of religion."

K.'s prose is alluring, even brilliant, but it keeps bordering on the obscure. Several times it seems that Jesus will come to the rescue and bring some clarity, but he doesn't. "If I speak so little and late of Jesus, it is the silence of solidarity" (292). Or another puzzler: "This book honors the Nazarene it largely unsays, that is, respects with silence" (315). So, neither Jesus nor the doctrinal tradition of the trinitarian God, as these have been understood and handed down in traditional Christian theologies, helps to alleviate the non-knowing of God which her text articulates.

Both Judith Butler and Alfred North Whitehead have helped her to move beyond what might seem the narrow doctrinal tradition of the past. They have replaced "the metaphysics of substance" and brought her into a "relational ontology" that understands identity in terms of who and what one is in relation to. Of the two, she especially appreciates Butler, whose field is feminist philosophical ethics. "I know of no other current thinker who so explicitly captures the relation between unknowing and