

Cédric Giraud, Spiritualité et histoire des textes entre Moyen Âge et époque moderne. Genèse et fortune d'un corpus pseudépigraphique de médiations, Turnhout (Brepols) 2016, 549 p., 1 col. ill., 1 b/w fig., 14 tabl. (Collection des Études augustinienes. Série Moyen Âge et Temps modernes, 52), ISBN 978-2-85121-281-8, EUR 69,00.

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Medieval texts falsely attributed to a famous author, whether St Augustine, St Anselm or St Bernard, invariably suffer from scholarly neglect, compared to those texts deemed by scholars to be authentic. This neglect often reflects a positivist disdain for authors assumed to be less serious or original than those whose authenticity is asserted to be without question. In this massive volume, Cédric Giraud investigates a body of literature quite different from his earlier major book, »Per verba magistri«, about the theological *sententie* attributed by twelfth-century scholars to Anselm of Laon (d. 1117). Giraud transfers his encyclopaedic capacity to classify and explain the significance of vast numbers of manuscripts to a set of Latin texts of spiritual devotion, which he interprets in terms of a technology of the self. They are all inspired in varying degrees by the writings of Augustine, and some in particular by Anselm of Canterbury or Bernard of Clairvaux – without forgetting the larger body of Greek Fathers (in particular Origen), whose influence on Latin Christianity was profound, even if often indirect. The literature of spiritual edification is often treated as homogenous. Giraud sketches out the complexity of responses to the literature of meditation, making clear that between the 12th and 16th centuries, the outpouring of such writing effectively constitutes a science of the self, parallel and complementary to the science of theology that emerged at the same time. Also of great importance is the fact that although the texts which he studies are from the Latin middle ages, they indirectly shed light not just on such devotional classics as »The Imitation of Christ« of Thomas à Kempis and other texts of the »Devotio Moderna«, but on neglected aspects of the spiritual tastes of the early modern period, even into the 19th century when the spiritual texts on which he focuses were reprinted and re-arranged as the work of various authors.

Giraud focuses in particular on three groups of texts, which he sees as shaping this pseudepigraphical corpus. The first two, the »Manuale« (Migne PL 40, cols 951–968) and the »Soliloquia« (ibid., cols 863–898), were both circulated under the name of Augustine (and respectively), although the »Manuale« was also copied as a work of St Anselm and Hugh of St Victor. The third group circulated as the »Meditationes« of Bernard of Clairvaux (Migne PL 184, cols 485–508). If there is a difficulty with this style of detailed monograph, it lies in the sheer richness of detail and the challenge of identifying core themes, relevant to an outsider to medieval religious literature. Nonetheless, Giraud does well to open with an excellent opening chapter about the literary context of this corpus, from John of Fécamp to Bonaventure, the other that could stand as a monograph on their own. Some of the best insights, relevant to the monograph as a whole, occur within the discussion of Bonaventure, in a section which he titles »the autonomy of spirituality« (p. 113–117), in which, having brilliantly presented the originality



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of Bonaventure's transformation of the Augustinian spiritual tradition, he suggests that Bonaventure was effectively defining a science of the soul or the self, parallel to the emergence of that science called theology. This is an insight which could be taken to refer to the entire period. Whether autonomy is the best term can be debated. Spirituality cannot be separated from theology. Nonetheless, it is hugely important to recognize that the study of the self and its development was just as important for medieval thinkers as reflection on Christ and on the divine nature, as well as on scripture. Giraud focuses on how Augustine's »Confessiones« provided, in varying degrees, a continuous source of inspiration for all these authors. The role of many of these pseudepigraphical texts is to provide core phrases and images for meditation, nourished by writings of Augustine (as also, in certain cases, by writings of Anselm and Bernard), but without obliging readers to absorb the full complexity of their original writings. In many ways, they all follow his understanding of the corruption of the will, and thus serve to re-orientate the will by allowing an infusion of grace. Giraud observes that these writings make available the core insights of Augustine, as also of Anselm and Bernard (not to forget a host of other writers, like John of Fécamp as well as the Greek and Syriac Fathers) to a wider audience.

The »Manuale« Giraud can date only vaguely to between 1150 and 1250. The »Soliloquia« he suggests could be the work of a Premonstratensian canon, in particular, he suggests, Milo of Trainel, abbot of St Marien, Auxerre from 1155 to 1204. The »Meditationes« attributed to Bernard Giraud assigns to a cloistered environment between 1160 and 1190. There are a wealth of other widely copied, but little studied pseudepigraphical texts from this period, like the »De spiritu et anima«, widely circulated as by Augustine, but in fact a response to a treatise on the same subject by the Cistercian Isaac of Stella, whom we know was in dialogue with Alcher of Clairvaux, active in the same decades, immediately after the death of Bernard of Clairvaux. It is important to situate these meditational texts, which lay the foundations for a science of the soul, within currents of religious renewal, fostered by Cistercians and Premonstratensians. They offer a much more personal and practical guide than the burgeoning literature about the soul provoked in the schools by the reflections of Avicenna and Aristotle. The fact that Aquinas attracts only the briefest references in the index suggests that these devotional texts were not part of the Dominican scholastic curriculum.

The greater part of this monograph is devoted to documenting the diffusion of these texts across the centuries. In the age of manuscript, Giraud notes that while the »Meditationes« attributed to St Bernard were widely copied in the 13th century (92 exemplars, compared to only 13 each of the »Manuale« and »Soliloquium«), they were even more popular in the 14th and 15th centuries, although more often outside rather than within the major mendicant orders. Totally new for most readers will be his exploration of their continued influence between the 16th and 19th centuries, following the successful transformation of a largely unknown fourteenth-century Augustinian canon, Raymond Jordan, whose compilations were widely printed in the early period as the work of a certain Idiota – a term that elevates a non-intellectual as of greater understanding than any scholastic. Historians of the spirituality of the 16th and 17th centuries (and of even of the modern period) will find a rich mine of information about the continuing vitality of this devotional tradition, which sometimes attracted official suspicion at the time of the Council of Trent, even though it subsequently became part of the anti-modernist rhetoric of the Church in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Giraud's monograph is to be commended for the wide sweep of its historical perspective.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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