THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE IN SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO'S *DE SERMONE DOMINI IN MONTE*

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Although Augustinian ethics in general have received wide attention, those of *De sermone Domini in monte*[1] have not. From the study of the comprehensive bibliography of *De sermone* prepared by the *Augustinus-Institut* of Würzburg in Germany, one can easily note that most of the entries are in the form of articles in reviews, and very few monographs have been produced on the work . Even so, the greater part of these studies discuss rather particular aspects of the commentary, the manuscript tradition or particular aspects of Augustine's ethics as applied in this treatise of 394. The majority of the entries in this bibliographical list on *De sermone domini in monte*, are commentaries on Augustine's commentary to the *Our Father* or the *Beatitudes* with particular emphasis on his theory of the sevenfold spiritual and ascetic ascent of the soul in Christian life. The ethics of St.Augustine's commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, have not yet been tackled in an exhaustive manner. The reasons for such lack of attention to this early work of Augustine could be various. The major being, in my opinion, the fact that it has always been considered as an early exegetical work rather than one belonging to Augustinian ethics.

One cannot exclude the fact either, that also Augustine did consider this treatise as an early attempt to interpret literally the most important section of the *Gospel of St. Matthew*, namely, intending to produce an exegetical commentary to the Lord's

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1. The best edition of the Latin text of St. Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte* is that of the Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina CChr.SLL), volume XXXV/VII, 2, edited by Almut MUTZENBECHER, (Turnhout; Brepols 1967) lviii/255. The problem of the choice of the best manuscripts underlying the CChr. SL text had already been discussed by the author in an article: "*Handschriftenverzeichnis zu Augustinus* 'De sermone domini in monte,'" in *Sacis Erudiri* 16 (1965) 184-197.

Sermon on the Mount as reported by Matthew in chapters five, six and seven. But the way he went about the task revealed another, far deeper objective, which is that of developing all along a kind of literary *sermo de sermone*.[2]

The major problem that presented itself at the initial stages of this research was the exact nature of the Augustinian commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. Augustine's ethics once again proved to be definitely an anti-Manichaean one; but the work *De sermone domini in monte* does not appear in Augustine's anti-Manichaean treatises listed down by Saint Possidius, bishop of Calama, in his *Operum S.Augustini Elenchus*, otherwise popularly known as the *Indiculum*.[3] The list of St.Augustine's anti-Manichaean works in the *Indiculum* is section IV *Contra Manicheos*.[4]

Although *De sermone domini in monte* is not primarily an anti-Manichaean treatise, several moral topics which Augustine deals with all in his commentary were meant to confute Manichaean ethics once again in 394. Thus, towards the end of the work, Augustine declares that: *"This error has already been subjected to thorough treatment in other books, and if that is still not enough, the discussion will continue."*[5] The text is sufficient proof that Augustine would be more than willing to take up once again, if need be, some aspects of Catholic morals to confute Manichaean doctrine.

2. My licentiate thesis "*La vita cristiana nel* De sermone domini in monte libro primo *di sant'Agostino*," presented to the Pontifical Lateran University of the AUGUSTINIANUM - Rome, 1991, i-xviii/1-172, was my first attempt to study the *De sermone*. Initially it was meant to be a study of only the first book of Augustine's commentary as the topics which Augustine discusses in this long work, "*tam longo uolomine*" (S.dom.m. 1, 23, 80: CChr.SL 35., 90, 1966), proved to be too vast for a licentiate thesis. This licentiate thesis was later on published in St. Augustine's *Opera Omnia* in the Nuova biblioteca agostiniana Città Nuova editrice as the introduction to the volume *Opera esegetiche* X/2 (1997), pp. 7-78. I therefore had to revise it in such a way as to include also a rather superficial study of book two. A couple of years later, I took up the study of the whole commentary for a doctorial dissertation under the supervision of Rev. Prof. Peter Serracino Inglott, Rector Emeritus of the University of Malta, and Rev. Prof. Robert Dodaro OSA, Vice President of the *Augustinianum*, Rome.

3. Jacques-Paul MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina cursus completus* (PL) vol. 46, cc. 5-22. Cf also the article by A. WILMART, "Operum S. Augustini Elenchus a Possidio eiusdem discipulo Calamensi episcopo digestus," in, *Miscellanea agostiniana* II (1931) 149-233.

4. Cf A. WILMART, "*Operum,*" 165-167.

5. S. dom.m. 2,24,79: CChr. SL 35, 177, 1796-1798: "*De quo errore in aliis libris et iam disputatum est uberius et, si adhuc parum est, disputabitur*".

As a result of a closer investigation of Augustine's works contemporary to *De sermone domini in monte* of 394, and a comparison with later works, it transpired that the rediscovery and the re-reading of the Pauline *Corpus* around the 390s, particularly the *Letter to the Romans*, gradually caused a complete shift in Augustine's theological and spiritual frame of mind which is also reflected in *De sermone domini in monte*. ·

Besides, in thus opting for a literal exegesis of Sacred Scripture towards the end of the fourth century, Saint Augustine was adopting a Western exegetical tradition, which, aware of the harsh criticism of the opponents of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, inaugurated by Origen of Alexandria, had adopted a strongly limited and mitigated allegorization of Sacred Scripture. Moreover, the surge of commentaries on the Pauline *corpus* had definitely opted for a literal interpretation of Paul, with only a next to insignificant recourse to allegorical interpretation. The Pauline text itself, given its pedagogical and parenetic slant, seemed to have suggested such an interpretation.

The sudden surge of extensive commentaries on the Pauline *corpus* was certainly not the result of some merely casual interest in the works of the Apostle. Paul became for Western Christendom the model of conversion and of a profound and committed Christian way of life, of spirituality and asceticism. But, above all, in face of the general feeling of anxiety and decadence in all spheres of ecclesial life that hit Christian society at the end of the fourth century, Paul seemed to provide the more plausible solutions to most of the deeper anthropological problems that cropped up, namely, those related to the idea of the spiritual life as a vertical ascent; of the renewal of the 'inner' man, the decay of the 'outer'; and the unresolved tension between 'flesh' and 'spirit'. In the wake of the extraordinary developments as a result of mass conversions, of the ascetico-monastic movements, and of the doctrinal polemics between Christians and Jews, and Christians and heretics, especially the Manichees, Paul seemed to offer the necessary solutions to the many existential problems especially in the field of ethics.

Augustine devoted two works to his attempt to reach a satisfactory interpretation of the letter to the *Romans*, and both of these were written contemporarily to *De sermone domini in monte*, namely, *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos*[6] and, *Epistula ad Romanos inchoata expositio liber unus*.[7]

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6. Ioh., DIVJAK, *Corpus Scriptum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL) (Vienna 1971), vol. 84, 3-52.

The contents of this Pauline letter definitely occasioned a great shift in Augustine's ethics, which can also easily be seen clearly in *De sermone Domini in monte*.

De sermone domini in monte: **Augustine's document for the evangelization of Hippo in 394.**

Another approach to the study of *De sermone domini in monte* was the reading of Augustine's commentary in the light of a document for the re-christianization and re-evangelization of Hippo in 394. This pastoral objective for *De sermone* came as no surprise when one considers what Augustine had preached earlier on infront of the bishops of the North African Church convened for one of their frequent plenary sessions at Hippo on the 8th of October 393, namely: *"This is the faith which the Symbol of Faith hands over to the new Christians in a few words. Short formulas familiar to them, so that in believing they may subject themselves to God, in thus subjecting themselves to God they may lead a good life, in leading a good life they may purify their heart, and in purifying their hearts they would attain the object of their faith."*[8]

In his *De sermone domini in monte*, St. Augustine intended to provide his flock at Hippo with a positive as well as a negative form of catechetical instruction. A positive catechesis, in the sense that he traced out for his fellow Christians, a seven-graded ascetico-spiritual path based on a right moral way of moral life would attain for them partial blessedness here on earth, and its completeness hereafter; a negative form of catechesis, one by which he helped Christians unmask some of the more insidious anti-Gospel situations competing for hearers alongside the Catholic Church at Hippo at the end of the fourth century. Donatism and Manichaeism were indeed rife in North Africa in 394: *"But in matters pertaining to divine things the counsellor becomes a source of scandal if under the name of religion and doctrine he tries to lead one to some insidious heresy."*[9]

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7. CSEL 84, 145-181.
8. Cf *De fide et symbolo liber unus 10, 25: Jos.,* ZYCHA, Vienna 1900, CSEL 41, 32: *"Haec est fides quae paucis uerbis tenenda in Symbolo novellis christianis datur. Quae pauca uerba fidelibus nota sunt, ut credendo subjugentur Deo, subjugati recte uiuant, recte uiuendo cor mundent, corde mundato quod crudunt intelligant."*
9. *S. dom. m.* 1, 13, 38: CChr.SL 35,41,886-888.

Augustine's acute sense of pastoral and moral psychology can be seen at its best in the positive form of catechesis which he meant to impart to his flock at Hippo in *De sermone domini in monte: "Nor do I wish to give myself the appearance of having said this to suppress a more thorough treatment of punishment for sins - how in Scripture they are called eternal; though by all means avoiding them should take precedence over knowing them."*[10]

The more pointed and sharp warnings which Augustine launches all along this form of positive catechesis in *De sermone* is levelled perhaps at the many so-called *"Christians in name"* only. The fourth-century phenomenon of mass-Christianization of North African society had resulted in the emergence of crowds of unprepared Christians. Augustine's comments against this new way of life of these "hypocrites" prove once more, if need be, the theory that the morals of the Christian life of most of North African Christianity had been eroded away. It is no surprise that Augustine in 394 could very well feel the urgent need of a new form of re-christianization and re-evangelization of the passive rank and file of North African society which had brought the lustre of Christian life there to a halt.

Finally, a *sine qua non* element of the discussion concerning this task of the evangelization of Hippo, would certainly be that pertaining to the problem of St. Augustine's relations with the Jews and Judaism within the community of Hippo. The topic is still very actual, and one which continually encourages fresh debates and arguments in the reassessment of Augustine's attitude towards the Jews and their faith.

From the study of this topic in St. Augustine's commentary to the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, one can certainly exclude any form of strictly anti-Jewish elements of debate. Augustine sees Jewish ethics from a very appreciative and pedagogical point of view, and assesses it as one belonging to an earlier, preparatory propaedeutic situation *vis-à-vis* the history of the world in the Divine Plan of salvation. The situation of Judaism is seen within the parameters of a typological discussion and evaluation of the Old Law in comparison to the finer teachings of Christ in the New

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10. Cf *ibid.* 1, 10, 30: CChr. SL 35, 32, 682-685: *"Neque hoc ita dixerim, ut diligentiorum tractationem uidear ademisse de poenis peccatorum, quomodo in tractationem uider ademisse de poenis peccatorum, quomodo in scripturis dicantur aeternae, quamquam quolibet modo sint, uitandae sunt potius quam sciendae."*

Law. Jews and Judaism are seen only topographically on a lower plane in a lower position in relation to the higher, theological and moral teaching of Christ in the New Law, which he is now imparting from on top of a mountain.

The Christ-like evangelizing spirit which Augustine was recommending to his confères at Hippo in *De sermone domini in monte* in 394, is best illustrated through his own words: "*quia bonis et malis apparuit bonis et malis euangelizatus est Christus.*"[11]

The *implied audience* of *De sermone domini in monte*.

From internal evidence alone it proves to be a very difficult task to state with any amount of precision whether Augustine's commentary to the Matthaean account of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount was the result of an editing of several sermons put together. Unless Augustine's final comment which closes the first book of *De sermone domini in monte* is to be taken rhetorically: "*But now I think it agreeable that at this point the reader tired by the length of this treatise, should breathe a little and freshen his interest for considering what is reserved for another book.*"[12] Therefore, it would be very near to the truth in stating that the commentary was written specifically as a piece of work meant to be read.

But, on the other hand, the freshness and immediacy of Augustine's commentary, for instance: "*But let us now see what the Apostle has to say so as not to say things unadvisedly,*"[13] arouses the problem of the addressees: who is this *lector* of Augustine's commentary? From internal analysis alone, it has proved hard to reach any satifactory conclusion. Up to now no study on *De sermone domini in monte* has indicated with some degree of precision the addressees of the commentary. But in the present thesis I have attempted to prove that, as a result of the method adopted of comparing Augustine's use of language and theological argumentation with those of works contemporary to *De sermone domini in monte*, it could be proved that the commentary does have an *implied audience*.

It has been shown already, however, that *De sermone domini in monte* was

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11. Ibid. 1, 23, 79: CChr.SL 35, 88, 1930-1931.
12. *Ibid.* 1, 23, 80: CChr. SL 35,90, 1966-1968: "*Sed iam commade fieri puto, ut hic lector tam longo uolumine fatigatus respiret aliquantum, et ad cetera reficiat in alio libro consideranda.*"
13. *Ibid.* 1, 16, 43: CChr. SL 35, 48, 1023: "*Sed consulamus apostolum, ne aliquid temere dicamus.*"

Augustine's charter drawn up by him for himself and his fellow evangelizers, most probably his *confrères* of the monastery at Hippo Regius, for the task of evangelizing the diocese. Augustine's insistence on the need of complete detachment on the part of evangelizers from worldly allurements and earthly rewards or human praise in the task of evangelization, points towards a particular type of *audience*, namely, fellow-priests at Hippo.

Moreover, his two attempts to interpret St. Paul's letter to the *Romans* in 394, were the result of discussions held on the Pauline epistle with his fellow-priests, but which oral discussion they specifically desired to have recorded down in writing: "*I was still yet a priest, when we came together in order to read the Apostle's letter to the Romans, and there I was being questioned by the brethren; whom I answered as best as I could, they desired, however, that they would rather have all that I said in written form as the spoken word would be lost.*"[14] The same situation applies for the other treatise, the unfinished commentary to *Romans*: "*It happened that it took us a lot of time as we were keen on solving a very difficult and intricate quotation regarding the question of the sin against the Holy Spirit.*"[15]

Augustine's *Latin* sources: Cyprian of Carthage – Hilary of Poitiers — Ambrose of Milan.

In 394 for *De sermone domini in monte* Augustine's sources were primarily Latin Christian works. The major works consulted were *De dominica oratione*[16] of St.Cyprian of Carthage for his commentary on the *Lord's Prayer*; the *Commentarius in Matthaeum*[17] which Hilary of Poitiers composed in 355; and, finally, *Expositionis euangelii secundum Lucam* of Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan,[18] written between 389 and 391. This research has once again confirmed that in 394, Augustine could not yet draw upon Greek Christian sources, as for example, St. Gregory of Nyssa's

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14. Cf *expositio quarundam propositonum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos, Retractationum libri duos,* 1, 23 (22): CChr.SL, Almut MUTZENBECHER, (Brepols (Turnhout 1984) 57.67: "*Cum presbyter adhuc essem, contigit ut apud Carthaginem inter nos qui simul eramus, ad Romanos apostoli epistola legeretur, et quaedam interrogabar a fratribus; quibus cum, sicut poterum, responderem, uoluerunt scribi potius quae dicebam sine litteris fundi.*"

15. Cf *Reter.* 1, 25 (24) CChr. SL 57, 73" "*Factum est quippe ut immoraremur, cum uellemus solure incidentem sermoni nostro difficillimam quaestionem de peccato in spiritum sanctum.*"

16. CChr.SL, Claudio MORESCHINI, Brepols; Turnhout 1976) 3, 87-113.

17. PL 9, 9019 - 1078

18. M. ADRIAEN–Ioh., COPPA, Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera (SAEMO) vols. 11/ 12, (Città Nuova Editrice; Roma; Bioblioteca Ambrosiana; Milano; 1978).

De Beatitudinibus Orationes VIII[19] which Gregory composed in 385, as Augustine still lacked a sound knowledge of the Greek language to be able to read Gregory in the original.

Moreover, Augustine's commentary to the Lord's Sermon on the Mount reveals some significant dependence on Hilary's *Commentarius*. A closer parallel study of both works, however, revealed this to be primarily a rather verbal form of dependence,as well as one or two instances of thought dependence of the former on the latter. This latter form of thought dependence seemed to have common sources, Platonism and Stoicism. Thus, for instance, the idea of subjection of body to mind and spirit, and this to God, is clearly of Christian Platonic extraction.[20] There is still, however, a lot more to be done by way of deeper parallel study of both works in order to assess the extent and nature of Augustine's thought dependence on Hilary.

Concerning the presumed dependence of St.Augustine on Ambrose of Milan for the exegesis of Matthew's account of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, it needs to be pointed out that Ambrose commented Luke's version of the Sermon. Ambrose, on the other hand, interprets the text in a strictly allegorical-moral fashion, whereas Augustine in his *De sermone domini in monte* resorts to this type of allegorical exegesis only when the strictly literal interpretation tends to sound ridiculous, exaggerated or even contradictory. It has also been proved that Ambrose has Hilary's *Commentarius* too as one of his sources. After all, both could have drawn on Origen's exegesis of Matthew, though this thesis is still a bone of contention among scholars.

Augustine's exegetical principles applied in *De sermone domini in monte*.

De sermone domini in monte is actually also an exegetical work of the early Augustine in which he has tried to interpret, for the first time a New Testament text, namely, the most important section of the *Gospel of Matthew*, the Lord's Sermon on the Mount in chapters five, six and seven. Around this time too, Augustine was putting to the test all his acquired exegetical abilities to interpret the Sacred Texts literally now. The way he went about this task revealed yet another objective,

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19. Jacques - Paul MIGNE, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca* (PG) 44, 1193-1301.
20. Cf Hilary of Poitiers, *Comm. in Matth. 4,2:* PL 9,932, and see also *S.dom.m.* 1, 2, 9: CChr.SL 35,6, 112-135.

that of developing also a parenetic *sermo de sermone* derived from Sacred Scripture.

In 394 Augustine had already been at the service of the Church of Hippo as a priest since 391; he had already by then produced quite a good number of works, but, with the exception of two works, both dedicated to the study of the book of *Genesis*, all these dealt primarily with philosophical topics.

Regarding one of these two works, namely, *De genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus* written in 393-394,[21] revised only one place before *De sermone domini in monte*, Augustine confesses that in the two books of his other anti-Manichaean work, *De genesi contra Manichaeos* written around Autumn of 388 and the end of 399,[22] he had been constrained to interpret the text in a strictly allegorical fashion. During that same year, in 394, in *De genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus*,[23] Augustine also confesses that in this work he really wished to bring into the task all his recently acquired exegetical powers to prove that those events narrated in the first three chapters of the book of *Genesis* could also be interpreted literally, and as *res gestae* too, that is historically; but he got immersed into so much pastoral activity that he could not get beyond the interpretation of the first twenty-six lines of the first chapter of *Genesis*! "*As I was in the process of composing the two volumes on Genesis against the Manichees, in which I was discussing the words of Sacred Scripture according to the allegorical interpretation, I did not dare then to interpret such natural things and secret mysteries according to the literal sense, now in this work I meant to show that the same could be very well interpreted according to the historical sense; for this engaging and most difficult exercise, I meant to put to the test all my abilities; but this preparation of mine in the exposition of Sacred Scripture gave way to the yoke of onerous tasks, and I could only get as far as the completion of only one book, and was thus unable to finish the whole task.*"[24]

Therefore, this declaration expressed by St.Augustine in the revision of the

21. Cf *Retr.* 1, 18 (17): CChr. SL 57, 54-55.
22. Cf *Ibid.* 1, 10 (9): CChr.SL 57, 29-33)
23. Iosephus ZYCHA, (Vienna 1894, CSEL 28/1, 459-503.
24. Cf *Retr.* 1, 18 (17): CChr. SL 57, 54: "*Cum de Genesi duos libros contra Manicheos condissem, quoniam secundum allegoricam significationem scripturae uerba tractauetam, non ausus naturalium rerum tante secreta ad litteram exponere, hoc est quemadmodum possent secundum historicam proprietatem quae ibi dicta sunt accipi, uolui experiri in hoc quoque nogotiosissimo ac difficillimo opere quid ualerem; sed in scripturis exponendis tirocinium meum sub tanta sarcinae mole succubit, et non perfector uno libro ab eo quem sustinere non poteram labore conquieui.*"

work immediately before *De sermone domini in monte*, provides us with a very good argument which enables us to gauge the importance of a correct evaluation of Augustine's exegetical intent in the interpretation of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount of the gospel of *Matthew*. Namely, Augustine now engaged in pastoral activity within a specific community, that of Hippo Regius, believed that it was about time now to turn his exegetical tools to a more practical purpose. What St. Augustine needed in 394 was a working document, drawn from Sacred Scripture, which would help him and his co-workers at Hippo, for the tough task of re-evangelization and re-christianization of this remote and small, but extremely active and sensitive community of Hippo.

Augustine now sought to interpret a New Testament text for the first time. He therefore set down to get to grips with one of the Gospels that of St. Matthew, presumably directed towards the life of a specific community. The choice of Matthew would incur Augustine in far fewer exegetical problems of interpolations normally levelled by the Manichees mainly against the numerous, and very often crude Latin translations of the Sacred Text. Most of the Fathers of the Church believed the Gospel of Matthew to have been written in Hebrew. The Greek translations were known to have been made directly from the Hebrew version and were therefore considered to be much more reliable. The Manichees would have fewer objections to the text of Matthew in that there were as yet, very few Latin manuscripts of Matthew available.

Augustine therefore sets out upon a literal, historical, word for word exegesis of chapters five, six and seven of *Matthew*. This *lectio continua* of the text lent Augustine a much wider scope for his exegetical tastes, namely, to indulge in many examples of those so-called school-room disquisitions made up of fine unprepared rhetorical elaborations on a given topic. Augustine then enshrines the whole of his *sermo de sermone* within a rather rigid seven-fold scheme of a graded ascetic ascent of the soul towards perfection.

In the persuit of this aim, he goes as far as to interpret the Eight Beatitudes, in terms of a perfect numeral, the number seven, in line with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit read in *Isaiah* 11,2-3, and the Seven Petitions contained in the *Our Father*. This numeral, representing also the seven days of the week, when multiplied by itself with the addition of one, the eighth (the Day of the Lord) would give another perfect numeral, fifty, which stood for Pentecost, the culminating event indicating the perfection of Christian life.

Augustinian ethics in 394.

One of Augustine's major achievements in *De sermone domini in monte* is that of having succeeded in formulating an ethics grafted upon Sacred Scripture. A very good example of this technique as applied in his commentary can be read at the point in which Augustine describes the three types of sin, namely, *in corde (in domo), de facto (extra porta),* and, *in consuetudine (in sepulchro iam putens)* as deaths, and compares them to the three types of vocal sounds which the Lord Jesus Christ made use of in restoring life back to three persons referred to in the Gospels, namely, *in domo,* to the girl in *Mark* 5,41, *extra porta* to the son of the widow of Nain in *Luke* 7,14, and finally, from the *sepulchro iam putens,* to Lazarus in *John* 11,33.[25]

The ethics of *De sermone domini in monte,* has also an anti-Manichaean slant, but one certainly suited for the purpose of guiding his flock towards a life of Christian perfection and beatitude attained as a result of a devout and pious submission to the demands of the Word of God as read in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount.

It is also an ethics with a highly pedagogical purpose. Augustine is still the teacher, the master, who warns both pastors and flock of the dangers of worldly praise *(laus humana),* pride expressed in all of its forms *(concupiscentia),* against all kinds of earthly material gains and rewards *(rerum temporalium),* civil corruption, lust for power and haughtiness. Augustine warns especially his fellow workers in the field of evangelization against being led astray by working with the aim of acquiring worldly material gains or empty human praise as reward. He reminds them of what could happen to them as *salt of the earth* and *light of the world,* if they were to fall short of their task.

Augustine's is also an ethics of intentionality, that of outwardly human actions coming from a pure and clean heart,[26] from a pure and serene intellect leading to a moral right way of Christian life all directed towards the praise, honour and glory of God.

25. Cf *s. dom. m* 1, 12, 35: CChr.SL 35, 38, 823-835.
26. Cf *ibid.* 2, 1, 1: CChr.SL 35, 91, 1-35.

Most of the moral topics which Augustine discusses in this treatise are not dealt with in great depth or in any exhaustive manner. Some topics are dealt with only *en passant*. For instance, the topic regarding the goods of marriage and adultery,[27] would be fully developed later on in the works *de bono coniugali liber unus*,[28] written in 401, and *de coniugiis adulterinis libri duo*,[29] composed in 420.

In *De sermone domini in monte* in 394, Augustine seems to have by now discarded the earlier fascination towards Stoic claims for invulnerability in ethics. Augustine's sensibility has undergone a marked shift from how he had dealt with the same topics in his earlier philosophical works and now in *De sermone domini in monte*. For example, the manner he has discussed the theme of *beatitude*, happiness, in *De beata vita liber unus*,[30] composed between the 13th and the 15th of November 386, and now in *De sermone domini in monte*. Thanks to a longer and deeper contact with Sacred Scripture after his conversion, Augustine's fundamental intuitions about the possibility of beatitude in this world of time and change has been definitely reshaped by 394.

His earlier ethics displayed some of that Stoic confidence that the war against all forms of external allurements could be won on the ground of human self-determination to lead a good and viruous life. By 394, in *De sermone*, this dangerous confidence has been gradually eroded away. In this treatise, regarding the danger of the habit of sinning, Augustine believes that: *"Whoever, therefore, perceives some carnal pleasure rising in rebellion against his better desire through habit of sin, and that if it is not checked it will use violence and drag him into captivity, let him recollect as best as he can what peace he has lost by sinning and let him cry out:* 'Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ' (*Rom* 7,24-25). *When he thus cries out that he is unhappy, by his grief he is imploring the help of the Consoler. Nor is this merely a slight approach to blessedness."*[31]

27. Cf *ibid.* 1, 14, 39: CChr.SL 35, 41, 893-1, 16,50: CChr.SL 35, 56, 1215.
28. Cf Jos., ZYCHA, Vienna 1900, CSEL 41, 187-230.
29. Ibid. 347-410.
30. W. GREEN, (Brepsol; Turnhout 1970), CChr. SL 29, 65-85.
31. Cf *s. dom.m.* 1, 12, 36: CChr.SL 35, 39, 843-853: *"Et ideo quisquis carnalem delectationem aduersus rectam uoluntatem suam rebellare sentit per consuetudinem peccatorum, cuius indomitae uiolentia sentit per consuetudinem, recolat quantum potest, qualem pacem peccando amiserit, et exclamet:* Infelix ego homo! Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius? Gratia dei per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum. *Ita enim, cum se infelicem exclamat, lugendo implorat consolatoris auxilium. Nec paruus est ad beatitudinem accessus."*

Appreciation of Augustine's *sermo de sermone*.

De sermone domini in monte is another example of those exquisite pieces of writing in which one can again appreciate Augustine's excellent mastery of classical rhetoric. Augustine had been trained as a professional rhetor. Christianity and conversion earlier on, had deeply affected the use he makes of the classical rules of rhetoric, bringing them to the benefit of the thought-forms and language of Sacred Scripture. Augustine thus makes great use of inter-textual allusions.

In this treatise, Augustine has made good use of many of those fine rhetorical modes of expression in order to help his readers understand better the text under discussion. He has made use of assonance, playing upon the double meaning of the Latin term *occidere*, namely, to kill, or referring to the setting down of the sun: "*Non occidat sol super iracundiam uestram;*"[32] alliterations: "*et plurimum a̱ddere a̱ffectibus a̱nimorum,*"[33] and simulated dialogue with his *implied audience,*[34] as well as of those fine school-room rhetorical disquisitions on unprepared topics, as for instance, *De soluendo autem nouissimo quadrante,*[35] or *De sacramento autem corporis domini.*[36]

The whole commentary Augustine has very neatly contained within the parameters of the same biblical quotation, namely, *Matthew* 7,24-27.[37] In this quotation, the antithesis between the wise man and the fool is the salient rhetorical aspect that must have caught Augustine's attention.

The parenetic objective which Augustine set to the whole commentary necessitated as a consequence, the precedence of the rhetorical *flectere* element over that of *delectare*, thus aiming at inducing Christians to actually feel the need of the change of morals and to convert to a better Christian way of life. For this aim too, Augustine introduces the use of *exempla* of men, *viri inlustri*, like Christ, Saint

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32. *Mt* 5:22 cf *s.dom.m.* 1, 10, 26: CChr. SL 35, 27, 587.
33. *S. dom.m.* 1, 21, 72: CChr.SL 35, 81, 1772.
34. *Ibid.* 1, 16, 43: CChr.SL 35, 48, 1023.
35. Cf *ibid.* 1, 11, 30: CChr. SL 35, 30, 655, and *De sacramento autem corporis domini* (cf *ibid.* 2. 7. 26: CChr.SL 35, 114-115, 537-556.
36. Cf *ibid.* 2, 7, 26: CChr.SL 35, 114-115, 537-556.
37. Cf *ibid.* 1, 1, 1: CChr.SL 35, 1-2, 11-20 - *ibid.* 2, 25, 87: CChr. SL 35, 187-188, 1995-2000.

Paul and Saint Stephen, who serve as excellent exemplary models of this perfect Christian way of life embedded in a complete harmony and coherence between their *dicta et facta* and which he is encouraging his readers to adopt.

The highly technical terminology which Augustine makes use of in the defence of this coherence and harmony between the *dicta et facta* of the lives of these Christian *viri inlustri*, pertains to the forensic language of ancient classical and rhetorical *genre* of the *genus iudicialis* in the court defence of persons. The discussion of *Mt* 5,25-26 is one excellent example from *De sermone domini in monte*, which suffices to prove this assertion: "Iudicem *intellego*...Ministrum *intellego*....Carcerem *intellego*...poenas...*quemadmodum etiam in hac* ordinatione rei publicae uel a *secretario* uel a praetorio iudicis *extra mittitur qui in carcerem truditur*."[38]

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38. *Ibid*. 1, 11, 29: CChr.SL 35, 30, 639-654.

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