

**AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO AND HIS MONASTIC RULE** by G. Lawless. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987. Pp. xix + 185. £25.

This important book fills a gap in Augustine studies. The author looks at the development of Augustine's monastic ideal during the years 386–96, attempting to set it in context in the world of thought in which he was then moving, and exploring the evidence for the existence of a monastic community at Thagaste between 388 and 391.

The author's thesis is that Augustine became convinced of the value and rightness of the ascetic life at the same time as his conversion to Christianity, and that it was already in the period before he was ordained that he was drawn to a life of celibacy as a servant of God. He explores this early formative period of Augustine's vocation, and the implications of becoming a bishop for his thinking, and for his practice of monastic life, in the opening and concluding sections of the book. Between are sandwiched editions and translations of the texts which make up the *Regula Augustini* and a series of studies of the disputed questions.

The great difficulty about the *Regula Augustini* is the lateness of its attribution to Augustine. Eugeippius, a hundred years after Augustine's death, is the first to say that he was the author of such a Rule, and the first mention of Augustine as author of the *Regula* itself occurs in a manuscript written more than a century and a half after his death. The Rule survives in four sets of regulations for monks and five pieces for nuns, including regulations and a reprimand for quarrelling nuns.

Lawless draws on the exhaustive work of Verheijen and others on the manuscripts, but he provides a clear and elegant conspectus of the *status quaestionis*, and English translations designed to be used by Augustinians of the present day for the purpose for which the Latin was intended: that is, to be read to the community once a week, and 'held up as a mirror' for those living under the Rule to see themselves, to remind them of the way they should be living (p. 118).

Among the 'disputed questions' considered here is the major one of Augustine's failure to mention a Rule, in his *Retractiones* or elsewhere. Lawless suggests that we should not perhaps expect him to do so. The Rule was a private pamphlet for domestic use. He assembles the varied corroborative evidence for a Augustinian origin. On the question whether the Rule was originally addressed to men or to women, Lawless takes the view that it was adapted for women, again with a careful review of the evidence, and of the debate until now. The third 'disputed question', on the date of composition, is similarly thoroughly and judiciously treated. There are two Appendices, on the later version of the Rule known as the *Regula recepta* and on the *Ordo monasterii*.

This is, then, a comprehensive reference book on Augustine's monastic Rule and its evolution both in Augustine's lifetime and afterwards; and on its claims to be truly Augustinian; and at the same time a practical handbook for those living by the Rule today. It deserves to become a standard work.

G.R. EVANS

**GROUNDWORK OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION** by D.A. Pailin, Epworth Press. Pp. ix + 258 1986. £8.50

In the forward of *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion* the author reveals that writing the book gave him a 'summer's fun', and his enjoyment of any enthusiasm for the subject matter is certainly evident. D.P. Pailin has written a spirited introduction to traditional problems and positions in the philosophy of religion, and shows a partiality for a notion of God understood along the lines of C. Harsthorne's process theology. Unfortunately, the level of rigor and clarity of Pailin's presentation does not match the level of enthusiasm.

405