

REVIEWS

FRIENDSHIP IN SAINT AUGUSTINE. By Marie Aquinas McNamara, O.P.
(The University Press, Fribourg, Switzerland; Swiss Fr. 16.60,
DM 16.)

This book is a study both of St Augustine's ideas on friendship, and of his experience of it. Most previous work on this subject has either been included in more general studies of Augustine's character or doctrine, or in considerations of his friendship with certain individuals—for example, with his mother, St Ambrose and St Jerome. It is valuable therefore to have a general study of the subject. But though the authoress claims to offer 'a more complete psychological study of both practical and theoretical aspects of the phenomenon of friendship in St Augustine', her analysis remains somewhat superficial. The constantly repeated pattern, reviewing Augustine's friendship with one person after another, becomes a little tedious; and there is also some repetition of matter. Nevertheless the book is excellently documented; references are full and quotations plentiful, revealing a good knowledge of all the revelant passages in St Augustine's writings, so that it will be of great service in any further studies on the subject. There is one printer's error on page 99 ('. . . Jeromein to . . .' for '. . . Jerome into . . .'); and on page 65, the date of Augustine's meeting with Simplicianus should be 386, not 396.

There are four chapters. The first three concern Augustine in relation to his family circle, to the friends of his youth, and to the friends of his adult life respectively. The fourth summarizes his conception of Christian friendship, which developed from the youthful expressions of an exceptionally affectionate character, through the classical idea of friendship as found in Cicero and which Augustine later adopted, into friendship transformed by charity and finding its fullest expression in the love of all men in Christ. God alone is the author and giver of friendship, and in him alone can it be stabilized. Consequently for the Christian the old pagan idea of friendship is transfigured by grace, robbed of its exclusiveness and its limitations, and made eternal in heaven, where alone it reaches its perfection. Augustine gave expression to this ideal by his deeds no less than by his words. His untiring efforts to win the confidence and love of St Jerome, and his grief at the apostasy and corruption of Count Boniface, are but two examples of the first; of the second we could quote: 'friendship is the return of love which another has offered; it is nothing other than love from which it draws its name, and it is faithful only in Christ, in whom alone it can be eternal'; or 'there is no true friendship unless You weld it

between souls that cleave together through that charity which is shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us'.

Augustine was not exceptional in having a character which needed and gave affection (though he did have this to an exceptional degree). And it is in this connection that this book may have a wider value. For those in whom, as in Augustine, friendship is a predominant trait, the way of sanctification lies precisely in the directing of their friendships towards God, not in the repressing of them. This is not easy to achieve; and it is a matter which must be approached with delicacy and balance. But in Augustine we see one who, under God, did achieve it; and in his writings we have his continuing guidance.

Apart, however, from his mother and his mistress, Augustine's close friends were all men. This is not surprising when one considers, first, that in his time women were still reckoned, even among Christians, to be of a lower status than men; and, second, that in view of his early life and his own character, Augustine resolved after his conversion to have as little to do with women as possible. But we must be careful not to draw a wrong conclusion from these facts. There is no hint that Augustine rejected the possibility or the propriety of friendship between man and woman. And nowadays, with the fuller recognition of the status of women, and the fuller development of the theology of marriage, we can place the whole of Augustine's teaching on Christian friendship at the heart of marriage, which we can then see as the fullest expression of that friendship that is possible on earth.

FABIAN RADCLIFFE, O.P.

IN THE BEGINNING. Some Greek views on the origins of life and the early state of Man. By W. K. C. Guthrie (Methuen; 18s.)

The main part of this book consists of a series of lectures given at Cornell University to a general audience; for more specialist readers, the text of the lectures has been supplemented by a considerable body of notes, giving references and much other valuable material, so that the book can be safely commended to readers of both kinds. It will, I think, be especially valuable to undergraduates, but at the same time deserves a much wider public. Professor Guthrie starts from the thesis that the particular value of Greek thought and civilization today is that classical Greece presents 'a microcosm, a small-scale working model of human society in all its phases' whence one may learn to understand more accurately modes of thought and historical processes which, though writ larger in the modern world, are essentially of the same kind; and he proceeds to exemplify this thesis by examining Greek ideas on the origins of the world and of man himself. This is one of the most fascinating aspects of Greek thought, but also one of