

BOOK REVIEW
of
St. Augustine,
Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love,
Gateway Editions, Regnery Publishing, 1966 [421].

This book is in the Evangel Library,
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

Augustine's *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and *On the Trinity*, may be more well-known than his *Enchiridion*, but according to the Introduction to this work, it has had wide readership since its composition in 421. The word "enchiridion" simply means "handbook." This "handbook," in response to questions by a new disciple, is Augustine's attempt at a brief summary of the Christian faith. It is, therefore, very illuminating as to what Augustine thought were the fundamentals of what a new disciple should believe and hold to. As noted below, it is also very illuminating as to what Augustine, apparently, did *not* hold as fundamental to the faith. This volume clearly shows why the Reformers held that Augustine was on their side in the debates between Protestants and Catholics during the Reformation. This volume includes a 14-page Introduction by Thomas Hibbs, and a 27-page Analysis by Adolph von Harnack.

From the title it may be supposed that about equal space would be given to faith, hope and love, but such is not the case. The first 131 pages are on faith, then there are three pages on hope, and then 6 or 7 pages on love. The reasons for this lopsidedness are that hope and love flow from faith, and also because they have been dealt with earlier in the process of explaining faith. "Faith," as Augustine uses the word, is concerned primarily with intellectual content rather than piety. Piety and emotional response should flow from "faith," but Augustine is more concerned with what would usually be called doctrine. To provide structure to his doctrinal presentation he follows the organization of the Apostles' Creed.

Doctrinal development perhaps reached its zenith during the 17th and 18th centuries by adherents of Reformed doctrine, such as Francis Turretin and Jonathan Edwards, so we should not be surprised to observe some inadequacies in Augustine's presentation. Nevertheless, many of the essentials of the faith are clearly there, which give credence to the claim of the Reformers that they were desiring to "reform" the doctrine and practices of the Church, not teach novel new ideas.

One of the important discoveries in Augustine's "handbook" is his reliance on Scripture. It is clearly his source of authority. He quotes Scripture more than 200 times in this short book, and quotes other Church Fathers but once. He never mentions a Pope nor a Church Council, but he does refer, in fact organizes his presentation around, the Apostles' Creed. Once he has explained the teaching of Scripture, nothing more needs to be said.

Augustine does refer to the Virgin Mary and clearly honors her (she's mentioned in the Apostles' Creed), but never once suggests that anyone should pray to her or that she is in any way an intermediary. He never suggests praying to anyone other than God, and Jesus Christ is the only intermediary. The Eucharist is never mentioned, nor any repeated sacrifice by priests. Much that we tend to associate with the Roman Catholic Church is completely absent from this handbook.

However, much that we hold to be dear and true is included. Universal original sin is taught on pages 32 and 33. Salvation by grace alone is taught on pages 36 and 37. Faith itself being a gift from God is taught on pages 38 through 41. Jesus Christ being the only mediator and offering one sacrifice is taught on pages 41 and 42. Faith without works is dead is taught on pages 78 through 82. Predestination to eternal life being wholly of God's free grace is taught on pages 112 through 116.

There are certainly more-recent works by reformed authors that more completely and systematically explain fundamental Christian doctrine. But this work by Augustine is an interesting read, and it provides strong evidence that the Protestant Reformation was not a schism but rather a return to the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."