

The Seven Maccabees, the Three Hebrews and a Newly Discovered Sermon of St. Augustine (Mayence 50)¹

Recently a valuable collection of sermons by St. Augustine was discovered at Mayence (Mainz, Stadtbibliothek I 9). Compiled ca. 1470-75, it contains the *princeps* text for a sermon which was entirely unknown before : Mayence 50, preached on the feast day of Quadratus, bishop of Utica². François Dolbeau edited this sermon and has dated it to August 397³. This new sermon treats a theme distinctive to St. Augustine : the comparison of the Seven Maccabees and the Three Hebrews, a topic St. Augustine handles in fourteen texts. Significantly, Mayence 50 gives new and early evidence for Augustine's normative diction in contrasting the two groups, evidence which allows a much earlier *terminus ad quem* for one of the fourteen texts, the second sermon on Psalm 33, which had been dated only to the eleven-year span of 395-405⁴. The

1. This research has greatly benefited from use of the Augustine Concordance Project of the University of Warburg, also located at Villanova University. Information on access to the database can be obtained by writing to Fr. Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A., Villanova University, Department of Religious Studies, Villanova, PA 19085 U.S.A. It should perhaps be noted that the designations "Three Hebrews" and "Seven Maccabees" are used here by modern convention : they do not occur in the writings of St. Augustine. He terms them the *tres pueri* or, rarely, *tres viri* and simply *Machabaei*.

The author is indebted to François Dolbeau for a valuable critique of this essay and especially his bibliographic advice.

2. François DOLBEAU, «Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour les fêtes de martyrs», *Analecta Bollandiana* 110 (1992) 263.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 265. As it is one of four sermons St. Augustine preached on this saint, Dolbeau assigns it no. 306E. The text is on fol. 152-56 of the manuscript.

4. Seraphinus M. Zarb gave the initial arguments for dating the second sermon on Psalm 33 to the decade of 395-405, and that dating has not been challenged or refined. The *enarrationes* as a whole were written between 392 and 418. The first thirty-two were composed in 392, and the sermon written last was that on Psalm 118. Eligius DEKKERS, O.S.B., and Johannes FRAIPONT, eds., *CCL* 38 (1956) xv and v, relying on Seraphinus M. ZARB, O.P., *Chronologia Enarrationum S. Augustini in Psalmos* (Malta, 1948), conclusions summarized on pp. 253-56. For the evidence of Possidius, Cassiodorus, and Walafrid Strabo, see Dekkers and Fraipont, p. xiii-xiv.

contrast of the two groups of Old Testament heroes has already drawn some scholarly attention : Jan den Boeft briefly describes it in a paragraph, drawing on six texts, in the course of discussing Augustine's views on martyrdom⁵. The present full study of this theme demonstrates his pastoral concern and some of his homiletic techniques and is the first application of the evidence to the question of dating.

Although numerous Early Christian commentaries, poems, letters, and prayers treat the Three Hebrews with other Old Testament figures who were miraculously rescued⁶, Augustine was virtually alone in comparing the trio with the Maccabees⁷. The dramatic difference between the experiences of the two groups, with the three boys in the furnace miraculously saved but all seven Maccabee brothers dying by torture, prompts Augustine to explain why God would have saved one group but not the other. Pastoral concern underlies the question, for Augustine sees that failure to explain this could tempt a Christian who calls to God for help to doubt either his own worthiness to be helped or God's care, if the call seems to go unanswered.

5. Jan DEN BOEFT, «'Martyres sunt, sed homines fuerunt' : Augustine on Martyrdom», in *Fructus centesimus: Mélanges offerts à Gerard M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, ed. A. A. R. BASTIAENSEN, A. HILHORST, C. H. KNEEPKENS. *Instrumenta Patristica* 19 (Steenbrugis : In Abbatia S. Petri, 1989), pp. 121-22.

6. For instance, AUGUSTINE, *In Ps. 21*, second sermon, par. 6 (CSEL 38, pp. 124-25) ; PAULINUS OF NOLA, *Carmen* 26, 11. 255-75 (CSEL 30, pp. 255-56) ; JEROME, letter 1, par. 9 (CSEL 65, p. 6) ; CYPRIAN, *Epistulae* 58.5, 61.2, 67.8 (CSEL 3.2, pp. 660-61, 695-96, 741-42) ; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromata* 1.21.123.3-5 and 2.20.103.2-104.1 (GCS 52, 3rd ed., pp. 77 and 170) ; and Apostolic Constitutions 5.7.12 (SC 329, p. 26). For a variety of texts citing the Three Hebrews with the other heroes from the book of Daniel (Susanna and Daniel), see Hans Reinhard SEELIGER, *Palai martyres : Die Drei Jünglinge im Feuerofen als Typus in der spätantiken Kunst, Liturgie und patristischen Literatur*, in *Liturgie und Dichtung : Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium*, 2 vols., ed. H. BECKER and R. KACZYŃSKI (St. Ottilien, 1983), 308-09. For a prayer citing the Three Hebrews with other Old Testament and New Testament heroes, consider the *Proficiscere* of the *Commendatio animae* ; Damien SICARD, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'église latine des origines à la Réforme carolingienne*, *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen* 63 (Münster, 1978), esp. pp. 355-61 ; Frederick S. PAXTON, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1991), esp. pp. 117-20 ; and Catherine TKACZ, *Commendatio Animae*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium (ODB)*, 3 vols., ed. Alexander P. KAZHDAN (New York, 1991), vol. 1, p. 488.

7. Hippolytus of Rome compares the two sets of heroes in his *Commentarii in Daniele* 2.35. Note that, unlike Augustine, Hippolytus does not contrast the two groups at length, nor does he epitomize the contrast within a single sentence, as Augustine often does. Later Caesarius of Arles contrasts the pair in parallel clauses comprising a single sentence, recalling similar expressions in Augustine and using the contrasting pair of terms he favored in this context : «Si oculis carnis quaeris deum, vide tres pueros de igne liberatos: si fide quaeris deum, vide machabaeos in igne coronatos» ; CAESARIUS OF ARLES, *Sermo* 21 7: 1 (CCL 103-104), emphasis mine. The new (1991) electronic CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts (CLCLT) was indispensable for verifying the rareness of this epitomized contrast in Latin texts. The CLCLT database includes the works of 210 authors and collections of texts ; see list in user's guide, pp. 69-93.

This is his point of departure in what is arguably his earliest handling of the contrast of the two groups. The topic obviously held his interest and proved valuable for pastoral ends, for he discusses it in some detail in fourteen texts (thirteen sermons and a letter) written over the course of twenty-nine to thirty-three years⁸. He addresses the theme of benefit, covering all aspects – the relative benefits to the Three and the Seven, the benefit of conversion of Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus's failure to deserve such benefit. In this aspect and in others, the development of Augustine's thought and expression on the topic can be discerned in these fourteen texts, especially the sermons.

The same sort of textual comparison which allowed Henri Rondet to date other of the *enarrationes* more precisely allows the tentative refinement of the date of the second sermon on Psalm 33. In 1950 he suggested a method for refining the dates of Augustine's works, and in 1960 he published a study employing this method⁹. He describes his analytical method as follows : "essayer de suivre à travers l'œuvre entière d'Augustin le cheminement d'une idée, d'une image, d'un texte scripturaire et de ses diverses exégèses¹⁰". While such analysis is essentially hypothetical and therefore cannot yield dates that are certain, nonetheless it can adduce useful evidence. This type of evidence is often used in dating. For instance Dolbeau determined the *terminus ante quem* for Mayence 50 by examining the ways St. Augustine refers to the Epistle to the Hebrews¹¹. With regard to the fourteen texts considered in this study, this method reveals four patterns, three of which suggest an early date for Augustine's second sermon on Psalm 33. Individually any one of these patterns is not compelling. When taken together, however, their agreement strengthens the probability of the dating here suggested. It must be noted that the present

8. Most dates are accessible through Pierre-Patrick VERBRAKEN, *Études critiques sur les Sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, Instrumenta Patristica 12 (Steenbrugis, 1976) and his «Mise à jour du Fichier signalétique des Sermons de saint Augustin», in *Aevum inter utrumque. Mélanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders*, Instrumenta Patristica 23 (Steenbrugis 1991), 483-90. The latest text is *Sermo* 286, dated by La Bonnardière to 425 and by Perler to 426-30 ; see Anne-Marie LA BONNARDIÈRE, «Tu es Petrus. La péricope <<Matt. 16, 13-23>> dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin», *Irénikon* 34 (1961) 462, and Verbraken (1976) 46 and 128. The earliest securely dated text is *Sermo* 343, 7-13 May 397 : Cyrille LAMBOT, «Le sermon CCCXLIII de saint Augustin 'De Susanna et Ioseph'», *Revue Bénédictine* 66 (1956) 21. Possibly earlier is *In Ps.* 33, second sermon, dated by Dekkers and Fraipont to 395-405, and redated in this essay to 395-7/397. Although Dekkers and Fraipont, following Zarb, assigned *In Ps.* 148 to April 395 in their edition (*CCL* 38 [1956] xv), La Bonnardière has since suggested that it refers to laws in existence in 405-08 ; the later dating is used in this essay ; *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, V^e section, 86 (1977-78) 340.

9. Henri RONDET, S.J., «Bulletin d'histoire de la théologie», section on Augustine, *Recherches de science religieuse* 37 (1950), 626-33 and «Essais sur la chronologie des <<Enarrationes in Psalmos>> de saint Augustin», *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 61 (1960), 111-27 and 258-86. Rondet is in some cases confirming, in other cases improving upon the datings offered by earlier scholars, especially Seraphinus M. ZARB, O.P., «Chronologia Enarrationum S. Augustini in Psalmos», *Angelicum* 12 (1935) 52-81.

10. RONDET, *Essais* (1960) 630.

11. DOLBEAU (1992) 294.

study relies on datings adduced by other scholars ; therefore if their datings should be disproven, the present research would also need to be reconsidered.

Whereas Augustine discusses the Three Hebrews often, and treats the Maccabee brothers in twenty-two texts¹², his most frequent discussions of the latter involve comparing them to the Three Hebrews. In fifty-five passages Augustine uses “Machabaei” and its inflected forms. Of these, six refer to the biblical *libri Machabaeorum*¹³. He mentions the mother of the brothers at least ten times, sometimes with full treatment of her sufferings and role¹⁴. Once only he mentions the brothers’ tutor, Eleazar¹⁵. Occasionally, Augustine argues that the Maccabees, the Three Hebrews and Daniel are Christians *antequam Christus in terra*¹⁶ or, similarly, that the Maccabees were in fact *martyres Christi* who had confessed him *in occulto*¹⁷. Four other works include references to the martyrdom of the Maccabees without comparing them to others ; of these, one uses *occulto*¹⁸. Four others cite the seven brothers and the *tres pueri* briefly, pointing to similarities¹⁹. Finally, in fourteen works, some of which use the surname two or three times, Augustine discusses the

12. For the twenty-two texts treating the Seven Maccabees, see notes 18-20 below.

13. Augustine refers to the *libri Maccabaeorum* in *De anima* 1.13 ; *De natura boni* 26 ; *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 3 ; *De doctrina christiana* 2.13 ; *ep.* 204.6 ; and *Contra Gaudentium* 1.36.

14. Augustine mentions the mother of the Maccabees, not by name but as *mater Machabaeorum*, in at least ten texts : *De anima* 1.23 and 25 ; *De correptione et gratia* 41 ; *ep.* 243.6 ; *Contra Gaudentium* 1.36 (CSEL 53: 235) ; *Contra Julianum* 5.53 ; *In Ps.* 68, second sermon, par. 3 (CCL 39: 918-19) ; *Sermo 17* (PL 46: 879) ; *Sermo 100*, par. 2 ; *Sermo 300* (PL 38: 1379-80) ; and *Sermo 301* (PL 38: 1380). All 253 occurrences of “Salomone” and its variant forms in Augustine’s writings refer to King Solomon, not to the mother of the seven martyred brothers.

15. Of Augustine’s twenty-three uses of the name Eleazar, only one is to “exemplo Eleazari Macchabaei” ; *Breviculus conlationis cum Donatistis* 3.25.

16. *Contra Pet.* 2.205. The three sets of Old Testament heroes are also mentioned together, as exemplars of those who revere the sacraments figurally, in *Contra Faustum* 19.14 (CSEL 25.1: 511) ; Augustine also records Petilian’s grouping of the same figures as Old Testament heroes persecuted by kings, in *Contra Pet.* 2.202 (CSEL 52: 123).

17. *Sermo 300*, par. 1, 5-6 (PL 38: 1379-80).

18. The Maccabees’ martyrdom treated solo : *ep.* 40.6 ; *ep.* 111.5 (with *occulto*) ; *Contra Gaudentium* 1.36 (CSEL 53: 235) ; *Sermo 17*, par. 7 (PL 46: 879). Although the latter is also delivered “in solemnitate SS. Machabaeorum”, in only a single sentence are the seven brothers and their mother mentioned.

19. *Contra Faustum* 19.14 (CSEL 25.1: 511-12), written by 398 (Peter BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo : A Biography* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, rpt. 1975] 184) ; *Contra Pet.* 92.202 (CSEL 52: 123, lines 5-10), written by 405 (BROWN, *Augustine*, 184) ; *In Ps.* 78, par. 8 (CCL 39: 1104), written 414-16 (DEKKERS and FRAIPONT, p. xvii) ; *Sermo 350* (PL 39: 1533-35) emphasizes the common action of charity within the two groups, although their experiences were different.

differences between the experiences of the Maccabees and that of the Three Hebrews²⁰.

Fortunately for our interest in dating, these texts reveal a development in thought and vocabulary. Specifically, four patterns of development will be examined. One undated text compares the two groups. *Epistle* 111, because it is a letter, not a text intended to be preached, differs from the thirteen sermons in being discursive. Thus, *Epistle* 111 lacks the tight parallelism developed in the sermons. Also, its dictional patterns are inconclusive for dating. As a result, no date will be proposed for it in this study. In contrast, the most important finding here suggests that *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, is prior to Mayence 50. This eliminates eight and a half years from the span previously identified as the possible period of composition for the second sermon on Psalm 33 : instead of 395-405, this period is simply “395-17 Aug. 397”.

Constant features

Before considering developments in Augustine’s fourteen treatments, identifying constants within them is useful. In every comparison of the two groups of martyrs Augustine heightens the contrast by omitting unnecessary details. Specifically, he simplifies the sequence of the various tortures which afflicted the Maccabee brothers individually into simply *ignes* (and sometimes *flamma*), with no mention of the fact that they were killed seriatim²¹ ; also he never mentions the angel in the fiery furnace. A simple instance of Augustine’s contrast is in his *Sermo* 350 :

“In tribus pueris blandos ignes innocenter exspectat : in Machabaeis saevos ignes fortiter tolerat²²”.

The contrast is thus clearly on the difference of outcome for two groups who suffered by fire for their faith, with “Sidrach, Misach et Abdenago” unhurt but the seven brothers dead. Typically Augustine presents the contrast between the two groups in short parallel clauses : “Illos aperte liberavit, istos occulte coronavit²³”.

20. Augustine’s fourteen works comparing the Three Hebrews and the Seven Maccabees : six *enarrationes* – *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, par. 22 : *In Ps. 36*, third sermon, par. 9 ; *In Ps. 68*, second sermon, par. 3 (*fratres*) ; *In Ps. 90*, second sermon, par. 11 ; *In Ps. 137*, par. 14 ; *In Ps. 148*, par. 11 – as well as *Sermo* 32, par. 15 ; *Sermo* 286, par. 6 ; *Sermo* 301, par. 2 ; Mayence 50, par. 9 ; *Sermo* 343, par. 2 ; *ep. 111.5* (to Victorianus) ; *In Evang. Io.* 11.14 ; and *In Ioan. ep. P., tr. 8*.

21. Rarely Augustine uses a word other than *ignes* for the torture of the seven Maccabees, and only when he is not contrasting these brothers to the Three Hebrews : *tormenta* in *Contra Pet.* 2.20 (*CSEL* 52:32) ; *saeva tormenta* in *In Ps. 78*, par. 8 (*CCL* 39:1104) ; *martyres* (no means indicated) in *ep. 40.6*, to Jerome (*CSEL* 34:75-77). In one contrast of the Three and the seven, he mentions the fire of the three young men, but no means of torment for the Maccabees ; *In Ps. 90*, second sermon (*CCL* 39: 1276-77).

22. *Sermo* 350 *PL* 39: 1534).

23. *In Ps. 148*, par. 11, 1.34 (*CCL* 40: 2174).

The linking of the two groups and the simplification to fire, one should note, are scriptural. The Maccabee brothers' ordeals are described twice, briefly in 2 Mac. 7 and in detail in fully twelve chapters of the Fourth Book of Maccabees. At the conclusion of the latter account, the brothers' tortures are referred to collectively as fire (14: 10), which accounts for their occasional depiction together in one fire in art²⁴. Further, the Three Hebrews are referred to four times (4 Mac. 13: 9, 16 : 13 and 21-23, 18: 12-14). Each time the Three Hebrews are provided as inspirational examples of faithfulness and courage for the seven brothers to emulate. Thus, the biblical text has laid the groundwork for Augustine to compare the two groups, alike in faith and trial, yet so different in physical outcome.

As for considering and comparing the responses of the two persecutors, some of the preparation for this is biblical, some is traditional. Early Christian commentators construed the fourth figure in the fiery furnace as either prefiguring Christ or, sometimes, actually as Christ himself²⁵. Among arguments against Christ's being bodily present was the idea that the heathen persecutor did not deserve to behold Jesus. As for Antiochus, the persecutor of the seven brothers, the Bible itself introduces the topic of the outcome for him, for some of the tortured brothers warn him that the torments with which he afflicts them are negligible, but earn him eternal torment. For instance, the last and youngest boy who is killed asserts to Antiochus that "eternal fire and tortures" are prepared for him because of his cruelty (4 Mac. 12: 12). As the theme of the "Tormentor Tormented" this becomes a commonplace in hagiography, often enhanced with rhetorical word echo to emphasize the psychology of sin ; such rhetorical counterpoint is found in 4 Maccabees, when

24. This is seen in the decorated initial tau of Vat. gr. 463, fol. 411r, which shows the seven brothers in a furnace ; this image is "patterned after a similar presentation of the Three Holy Children in the Fire" ; George GALAVARIS, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzanus* (Princeton, 1969), p. 110, n. 277. See also Mt. Sinai, MS Vatopedi 107, fol. 48r, reproduced in Robert L. McGRATH, «The Martyrdom of the Maccabees on the Brescia Casket», *Art Bulletin* 47 (1965) 259, n. 30, and fig. 5. (Pace McGrath, it is the Three Hebrews on the Brescia Casket ; see, e.g., Myrtila AVERY, «The Alexandrian Style at Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome», *Art Bulletin* 7 [1924-25], 141). As a rule the Seven Maccabees were depicted undergoing their individual sufferings, usually with their mother and tutor as witnesses ; see AVERY and John H. LOWDEN, Catherine TKACZ, *Maccabees*, *ODB* 2: 1261.

25. The apostolic constitutions treat the event as a foreshadowing of Christ's resurrection, as does Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235), *Comm. Dan.* 2: 28 and 3: 31. Jerome explains the meaning of the fourth figure in the furnace as the descent into hell : "in typum praefigurat... filius Dei Dominum nostrum Iesum, qui ad fornacem descendit inferni in quo clausae et peccatorum et iustorum animae tenebantur, ut absque exustione et noxa sui eos tenebantur inclusi mortis uinculis liberaret" ; *Comm. Dan.* 1.3.92b (*CCSL* 75A: 807-08). See also Henri LECLERCQ, «Hébreux (Les Trois Jeunes)», *DACL* 6.2 (1925) 2107-26 ; Klaus WESSEL, «Jünglinge im Feuerofen», *RBK* 3 (1978) 668-76 ; Catherine TKACZ, John H. LOWDEN, Anthony CUTLER, «Three Hebrews», *ODB* 3: 2081.

Antiochus's rage is described in terms of fire (e.g., 18: 20). This is done in Daniel 3 as well, for the first half of the account²⁶.

As diction will prove useful in analyzing Augustine's fourteen treatments, it is important to note that in his sermons and commentaries on scripture, he tends to adorn his presentation rhetorically and to make his point memorable by repeating a word, often the predicate, from the biblical passage he is explicating. As a result, repeated words within such passages often represent varying expressions of a constant rhetorical technique, not a development in diction associated with Augustine's exploring the comparison between the three young men and the Maccabee brothers. Thus, in his treatment of Ps. 33: 22, which uses *eruit*, he repeats the verb sixteen times (and the verse's *justus* six times). When explicating Ps. 36: 9, he reiterates the verse itself six times and also repeats and varies its verb *derelinquet* nine times. He echoes cognates of *tribulatione* from Ps. 90: 11 and repeats the similar sounds and sense of *turbaris* and *turbari* in his discussion of that verse. His comments on Ps. 137: 14, *salvum me facit dextera tua*, include fourteen iterations of *salvum* and cognates, eleven of *dextera*, and three of *fecit*. In the newly recovered Mayence 50, he comments on Ps. 117: 8, quoting the whole verse twice at the start and then paraphrasing it three more times, applying it to Daniel before the lions' mouths, the three boys in the fire, and the Maccabees in the fire. Thrice more he uses the Psalm's phrase *morti tradidit*, concluding his paragraph on the verse with the words²⁷. Given Augustine's practice of reiterating diction from the verse he is explaining, it is notable when he sets aside that technique to repeat instead diction associated with the theme he is developing. He does this in a later text, the sermon on Ps. 68, written in 414. The verse uses the verb *erue*; he reiterates the verse with the verb seven times but uses *eruit* only once in his comments; the reasons seem to be that the developed vocabulary associated with his theme is more important. Previously he had used *liberare* in five comparisons of the two groups. Discounting *In Ps. 137* which echoes the terms of the Psalm verse, from 414 on Augustine uses *liberare* in every sermon treating the theme. In the sermon *In Ps. 68* he uses *liberatio* twenty-four times, twenty-five if the bracketed passage, attested in only one manuscript, is included²⁸.

With these constants identified, we can turn now to the four patterns pertinent to the comparison of the two groups of Old Testament heroes.

26. See Catherine TKACZ, *The Topos of the Tormentor Tormented in Selected Works of Old English Hagiography* (Ph.D. diss.: University of Notre Dame, 1983) and «The Topos of the Tormentor Tormented in Aelfric's "Passio sancti Vincentii martyris"», *Ball State University Forum* 25 (1984) 3-13.

27. *In Ps. 33*, par. 22 (CCL 38: 296); *In Ps. 36*, par. 9 (CCL 38: 374 75); *In Ps. 90*, par. 11 (CCL 39: 1276-77); *In Ps. 137*, par. 14 (CCL 40: 1987-88); Mayence 50, par. 9 (DOLBEAU [1992] 302-03).

28. CCL 39: 918-19.

Adverbial contrasts

In each of the thirteen sermons, St. Augustine uses a pair of adverbs or adverbial phrases contrasting the two groups of Old Testament heroes. As will be seen, the development in this suggests an early date for the second sermon on Psalm 33. Please note that throughout this essay pertinent terms in block quotations are italicized.

“Si te non eruit *corporaliter*, eruet *spiritaliter*... sed tres pueros *sic* eruit, ut et carnales confunderentur ; Machabaeos autem ideo *non sic* eruit, ut illi qui persequerentur in poenas maiores irent...” *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, 395[-405]²⁹

“Ut evaderent flammis tres viri, Nabochodonosor praestitum est, ut crederet in Deum eorum. Nam qui eos potuit *in manifesto liberare*, potuit et *in occulto coronare*. Sed si illos in occulto coronasset, regem, qui saevierat, non liberasset... Machabaei torquebantur...” *Sermo 343*, May 397³⁰

“Illos ergo *aperte liberavit*, illos *occulte coronavit*...” Mayence 50, Aug. 397³¹

“Illi de igne evaserunt, illi ignibus cruciati sunt. Utrique tamen in Deo sempiterno vicerunt”. *Sermo 32*, Sept. 403³²

“*Visibiliter* non dereliquit tres pueros, *occulte* non dereliquit Machabaeos... *occulte coronavit*.” *In Ps. 36*, third sermon, Nov. 8, 403³³

“Illos *aperte liberavit*, istos *occulte coronavit*”. *In Ps. 148*, 405-08³⁴

“Illi *aperte liberati* sunt, illi *coronati* sunt”. *In evang. Io.*, tr. 11, around Easter 407³⁵

29. *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, section 22, ll. 1-19 (CCL 38: 296). The predicate is drawn from the verse he is explaining. In this and the other editions of Augustine’s works cited in this article, the editions cited italicize the scriptures which Augustine is quoting to comment upon. In the present study, however, quotation marks enclose the scriptures and all italics are mine, added to emphasize key words and phrases.

30. *Sermo 343*, ll. 75-84, ed. LAMBOT (1956) 30-31. The quotation is from Lk. 18: 14. For date, see n. 8 above.

31. DOLBEAU (1992) 303. For date see p. 265.

32. *Sermo 32*, lines 284-85 (CCL 41: 406). For the date, see Adalbert KUNZELMANN, «Die chronologie der Sermones des hl. Augustinus», *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 2: *Studi Agostiniani* (Rome: Vatican, 1931) 498 ; and VERBRAKEN (1976) 61.

33. *In Ps. 36*, third sermon, par. 9, ll. 35-38 (CCL 38: 375). For date, see CCL 38, p. xv.

34. *In Ps. 148*, par. 11 (CCL 40: 2174). For date, see n. 8 above.

35. *In evang. Io.*, tr. 11, par. 14 (*Bibl. Aug.* 71: 622-23). It is now agreed that this tractate was preached around Easter in 407. Anne-Marie La Bonnardière placed it on Sunday, April 7, 407 ; *Recherches de chronologie augustiniennne* (Paris, 1965) 50-52. Marie-François

“Ideo Deus quosdam *liberavit visibiliter*, quosdam *non liberavit visibiliter*: omnes tamen *spiritualiter liberavit*, *spiritaliter* neminem deseruit”.

*In Ioan. ep. P., tr. 8, April 21, 407*³⁶

“Et illos eripuit, et illos : illos *corporaliter*, ut infideles confunderentur ; istos *spiritaliter*, ut fideles imitarentur”. *In Ps. 90, second sermon, Sept.-Dec. 412*³⁷

“Illi ergo *in occulto coronati*, isti *in aperto liberati* ; omnes tamen salutati”.

*In Ps. 68, Summer 414*³⁸

“Aliquando ergo non salvat in sinistra sanctos suos ; sed semper salvat in dextera. Impios autem plerumque salvat in sinistra, non salvat in dextera”.

*In Ps. 137, Dec. 5, 414*³⁹

“[Deus] utrisque adfuit : illis *in aperto*, istis *in occulto*. Illos *visibiliter liberabat*: istos *invisibiliter coronabat*.”

*Sermo 301, ca. 417*⁴⁰

“... *occulte coronarentur*.... Illos de igne *liberavit*, illos in igne mori facit”.

*Sermo 286, 425*⁴¹

As shown above, Augustine often echoes diction from the verse he is explicating. He does so in four passages contrasting the two groups – *In Ps. 33, In Ps. 36, In Ps. 90, In Ps. 137*. Of the ten remaining sermons, he uses the contrasting verbs *liberare coronare* in seven and *liberare* alone in an eighth. This contrasting pair of verbs is so recognizable a constant that when Caesarius of Arles later drew upon Augustine in discussing this theme, he used the same

Berrouard draws on this in his edition (*Bibl. Aug. 71* [1969] 29-36) ; but see also his more general conclusion in «La date des *Tractatus I-LIV in Iohannis Evangelium* de saint Augustin», *Recherches Augustiniennes 7* (1971) 107-09, 119. Suzanne Poque places the sermon on March 3, 407, the first Sunday of Lent ; «Trois semaines de prédication à Hippone en février-mars 407, *Le Tractatus In Iohannis Evangelium XI* et l'appel aux catéchumènes», *ibid.*, 183, 186-87.

36. *In Ioan. ep. P., tr. 8.7* (SC 75: 354). He quotes Heb. 12: 6 in this passage. The *omnes tamen* clauses following a pair of contrasting clauses recall the *Utrique tamen* clause in *Sermo 32* (Sept. 403). For date, see La Bonnardière (1965) 51, 53, and Othmar PERLER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969) 264, 450-51. This revises the date of Eastertide, 415, proposed by Maurice Le Landais in 1953 and accepted by the editor of the text, Paul AGAËSSE, S.J., *Sources Chrétiennes* vol. 75 (1961) 9-12.

37. *In Ps. 90*, par. 11, ll. 11-13 (CCL 39: 1277). For date, see CCL 38, p. xvi.

38. *In Ps. 68*, second sermon, par. 3 (CCL 39: 918-19). For date, see CCL 38, p. xvii.

39. *In Ps. 137*, par. 14, ll. 32-34 (CCL 40: 1988). For date, see CCL 38, p. xvii.

40. *Sermo 301*, cap. 3 (PL 38: 1381). For the date, see VERBRAKEN (1976) 133.

41. *Sermo 286*, cap. 7 (PL 38: 1300). For the date, see n. 8 above.

diction, *liberatos / coronatos*, and, again like Augustine, emphasized the terms by final position⁴².

Turning from Augustine's verbs to his modifiers, we see that the adverbs and adverbial phrases form a complex but comprehensible pattern. Because of the difficulty of the material, a synopsis of it is useful before its full analysis. In brief, then, Augustine uses two basic contrasts, and one is flawed. The clearest and most often used contrast is *aperte / occulte*, introduced in 397 and used fully or in part in eight sermons. Four texts use it in full. In addition, *aperte* is used alone in one text, *occulte* is used alone in one, and *occulte* is used with *manifesto* in one and with *visibiliter* in one. Two other sermons lack such adverbial contrasts: *Sermo 32*, and *In Ps. 137*, which uses the psalm's image of right (and left) hand instead. The remaining three sermons concern the problematic pairing of *spiritaliter / corporaliter*; in the latest text of the three, Augustine revises the contrast to *spiritaliter / non spiritualiter* and clarifies it with *visibiliter / non visibiliter*. The problem with *corporaliter / spiritualiter* is that it can imply a false dichotomy, as if God would free some saints only bodily, without regard to their souls. Arguably Augustine initially used the misleading dichotomy in an unemphasized position, and so it passed unnoticed; then he created the appealing *aperte / occulto* contrast in 397 and generally used it with some variation through 407 or 408. When after five or six years he returned to the theme in 412, he happened to use the old *corporaliter / spiritualiter* contrast, but this time in an emphasized position. Seeing its potential to confuse, he never used it again, and the only time he subsequently used *spiritaliter* in this context, he deliberately clarified it to prevent its being misunderstood.

Here, then, is the full analysis. In the second sermon on Ps. 33, before contrasting the two groups, Augustine assures the congregation that, when they pray to God, "si te non eruit corporaliter, eruet spiritualiter⁴³". He then cites the examples of the Three Hebrews, who were rescued *sic*, so that (*ut*) carnal men might be confounded, and the Seven Maccabees, who were rescued *non sic* so that (*ut*) their tormentors might themselves go into greater punishment. Note that the *corporaliter / spiritualiter* opposition, which presents a potentially misleading dichotomy, is not applied to the two groups directly. The dichotomy is false because, while God rescues some saints spiritually and not bodily, Augustine does not mean to imply that God rescues any saints only bodily and not spiritually. From his discussion of Peter, which follows immediately, one can infer that the seven were permanently rescued spiritually, whereas the three would still face temptations. Nowhere in this sermon does he make it explicit that both groups were rescued spiritually, and arguably this is because he has not yet noticed that the *corporaliter / spiritualiter* opposition can be misleading.

In *Sermo 343*, dated to May 397, he uses diction that will become familiar, though in this initial appearance it is not found in the contrast of the three to

42. Text in n. 7 above.

43. *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, section 22, ll. 1-19 (CCL 38: 296). The predicate is drawn from the verse he explaining.

the seven. Rather, he links the - rescue of the three heroes to God's desire to convert Nebuchadnezzar and notes that God could equally "in manifesto liberare... et in occulto coronare". He then treats the Seven Maccabees and Antiochus. The structure of the discussion is such that there is no possibility of an auditor thinking a false dichotomy is intended.

Exciting new evidence is provided by the recently recovered Mayence 50, which may well have been preached in 397 between August 18 and 21⁴⁴. Thus this sermon contains Augustine's first use of the normative pairing, *aperte liberavit, occulte coronavit*; it was preached at least eight years before *In Ps.* 148 (405-08) and ten years before *In evang. Io.* (407). In Mayence 50 Augustine focuses on Ps. 117: 18, "Emendans emendavit me dominus, et morti non tradidit me". In a dramatic series, he treats Daniel in the Lions' Den, the Three Hebrews, and then the Seven Maccabees. Capitalizing on paradox, he finds the martyrs, non the rescued saints, the best exemplar of the verse. He emphasizes that all of the heroes had the same God. Then, in three parallel sentences (11. 11-16) he cites God's handling of the dangers each faced ("Ora leonum claudendo... . Ignis refrigerando... . Faciendo Machabaeos in igne..."); each time Augustine concludes, "sed morti non tradidit eos". Rather than explaining this paradox at once, Augustine reasserts it positively: "Omnes enim illi vivunt". Then he identifies the type of death to which God did not consign them: "morti... secundae, morti aeternae, non transitoriae". He concludes the paragraph with the normative pair of clauses, with a third clause recalling the verse he is using to frame his present discussion, Ps. 117: 18: "Illos ergo *aperte liberavit, illos occulte coronavit, nec hos nec istos morti tradidit*".

Six years later, in September 403, *Sermo 32* again expresses the contrast in two parallel clauses, though not the same ones. He repeats "fire" rather than using contrasting adverbs and verbs: "Illi de igne evaserunt, illi ignibus cruciati sunt". Note that the next sentence after this contrast rules out a false dichotomy: "Utrique tamen in Deo sempiterno vicerunt". Two months later in his third sermon on Ps. 36, he uses *occulte* and pairs it with an adverb preventing the false dichotomy. Echoing the verb from the verse he is explaining, Augustine uses *dereliquit* rather than *liberare / coronare* in the parallel clauses. He also, however, includes the phrase *occulte coronare*, which he had introduced to the theme in 397 in Mayence 50: "*Visibiliter non dereliquit tres pueros, occulte non dereliquit Machabaeos... occulte coronavit.*"

In his sermon on Ps. 148, perhaps delivered in 405-08, he uses in full the neat parallelism of the paired clauses of Mayence 50: "Illos *aperte liberavit, istos occulte coronavit*". The theme is also treated in two homilies delivered near Easter in 407. In the eleventh tractate on the Gospel of John he modifies the syntax while retaining the diction and the pattern of the two concise contrasting clauses: "Illi *aperte liberati sunt, illi coronati sunt*". Note that the presence of *aperte* again prevents a misleading dichotomy. A few weeks later is the eleventh sermon *In Ioan. ep. P.*, dated to Eastertide 407. He is again entirely explicit, leaving nothing to chance:

44. DOLBEAU (1992) 295.

“Ideo Deus quosdam *liberavit visibiliter*, quosdam *non liberavit visibiliter* : omnes tamen *spiritaliter liberavit*. *spiritaliter* neminem deseruit”.

So far, all texts but the second sermon on Ps. 33 avoid the misleading dichotomy. In *In Ps. 90*, second sermon, dated to September-December 412, however, Augustine uses the misleading dichotomy. Whereas in the second sermon on Ps. 33 it was in unemphasized position and not used of the two groups of heroes directly, now it is said of them directly :

“Et illos eripuit, et illos : illos *corporaliter*, ut infideles confunderentur ; istos *spiritaliter*, ut fideles imitarentur”.

Augustine seems after this to have realized that the *corporaliter* / *spiritaliter* contrast could be misleading. Whether this realization was due to his own reflection or perhaps to his discovering that someone in his congregation had actually been misled is probably impossible to determine. In any case, after this overt use of the misleading dichotomy, in all subsequent texts he precludes his auditors' being confused on this point. He had already done this occasionally, as in *Mayence 50* (“omnes enim illi vivunt”) and *Sermo 32* (“Utrique... in Deo... vicerunt”). Now it will be emphasized in his handling of this theme.

When next he treats this theme, in the summer of 414, it is again an enarratio, this time on Ps. 68. He uses the formulaic sentence “*Illi ergo in occulto coronati, isti in aperto liberati*” and at once unequivocally asserts “omnes tamen salutati”. Later that year, on December 5, 414, he is again unambiguous on this point in his sermon *In Ps. 137*. Drawing on the Psalm's diction (“salvum me fecit dextera tua”), he drops the usual pattern of contrasting adverbs and verbs, instead associating bodily rescue with God's left hand and spiritual rescue with his right :

“Aliquando ergo non salvat in sinistra sanctos suos ; sed semper salvat in dextera. Impios autem plerumque salvat in sinistra, non salvat in dextera”.

Ca. 417 Augustine's *Sermo 301*, in the Maccabees, contrasts them to the Three Hebrews, again using concise parallel phrases and clauses, the usual pair of verbs and of adverbial phrases, as well as the parallel contrast of *visibiliter* / *invisibiliter* : “[Deus] utrisque adfuit : illis *in aperto*, istis *in occulto*. Illos *visibiliter liberabat*: istos *invisibiliter coronabat*”. Each pair of adverbs rules out a misleading dichotomy. In *Sermo 286*, on the martyrdom of Protasius and Gervasius, written in or after 425, he varies his customary use of the contrasting adverbs by placing them in separate sentences. He uses language that does not imply a false dichotomy : “...*occulte coronarentur*... Illos de igne *liberavit*, illos in igne mori fecit⁴⁵”. Thus the definite inference is that after the overt false dichotomy in *In Ps. 90*, second sermon, in late 412, Augustine takes pains to avoid ambiguity on this point.

From this data two points about dating the second sermon on Ps. 33 may be inferred. First, it precedes the second sermon on Ps. 90, which is dated to late 412. We have seen that after the latter sermon, which used the misleading dichotomy of *corporaliter* / *spiritaliter* when speaking of the two groups of Old

45. As in *Sermo 32*, the contrasting role of fire for the two groups is used instead of the usual contrasting adverbs.

Testament heroes, Augustine carefully avoided such a potentially confusing opposition. It is plausible that the false dichotomy of *corporaliter* / *spiritaliter* escaped notice in its unstressed use in the second sermon on Ps. 33 : Augustine uses it there generally of the two ways God can rescue his people, not of the different experiences of the Three Hebrews and the Seven Maccabees ; for that he used *sic ... non sic*. That is, only when he reprised this pair of adverbs in 412, this time in direct connection with the two groups of heroes, did the false dichotomy become obvious, and after that text he consistently avoids it, both by direct statements precluding ambiguity on this point and also by avoiding the *corporaliter* / *spiritaliter* pairing itself. This inference simply yields a dating of “before late 412”, which is consonant with, but less precise than Zarb’s eleven-year span of 395-405.

Significantly, the second inference draws on Mayence 50 to refine Zarb’s dating dramatically. For this data indicates that the *sic* / *non sic* adverbs mark the second sermon on Ps. 33 as being written before the customary contrast of *aperte liberavit* / *occulte coronavit* was devised. That is, before August 18-21, 397, when Mayence 50 was probably preached. The two inferences are clearly compatible, and the second is truly illuminating. If these surmises are correct, then Zarb’s span of 395-405 can be shorn of nearly a decade and revised to “395-17 Aug. 397”. Hereafter the date of this sermon will be given as 395-7/397[-405], to remind readers of both Zarb’s dating and the newly suggested one.

Diction expressing God’s purpose

The next pattern useful in dating the second sermon on Psalm 33 is Augustine’s explanation of God’s purpose for his treatment of one or both of the two groups of saints. Whereas the contrast in treatment itself is a constant in these fourteen texts, purpose is expressed in just half of them. In only three does Augustine directly contrast God’s different purposes in the two cases. Such expressions are intermittent, rather than typical of a specific time span. The six dated texts identifying purpose are assigned to 395-7/397[-405], 397, 403, 412, 414, and in or after 425. Nor is the syntax enlightening : gerundive phrases are used in 403 and 414 and subordinate clauses in 395[-405], 397, 412 and after 425. Intermittent features are not surprising, of course ; for instance, Augustine quotes Heb. 12: 6 in only three of the fourteen texts : *In Ps. 36*, third sermon (403), *In Ioan. ep. P.* (407), and *Sermo 286* (in or after 425).

The mere fact, then, that a text identifies purpose does not help to refine its date. On the other hand, the diction used to identify purpose appears to undergo refinement and so offers modest evidence for dating.

Of the seven texts identifying purpose, the newly recovered, early sermon, Mayence 50 (8/397) describes God’s general purpose : to manifest his power (9.11). He focuses on the saints’ experiences, not mentioning their persecutors. In contrast, the other six texts which refer to purpose treat providence and the persecutors. Two sermons give a purpose only for the rescue of the Three

Hebrews⁴⁶. A third text, though treating the purpose for each group of heroes, is the discursive *Epistle* 111 and lacks the concise parallelism found in the sermons⁴⁷. The other three texts treating purpose, however, seem to show a progressive refinement of expression. In each, Augustine states the contrast in the manner of rescue and immediately follows it with the contrast in purpose underlying each manner. This is done in parallel, subordinate phrases or clauses ; *confundere* is used in each passage :

“... sed tres pueros sic eruit, *ut et carnales confunderentur* ; Machabaeos autem ideo non sic eruit, *ut illi qui persequebantur in poenas maiores irent...*”

In Ps. 33, second sermon, 395-7/397[-405]

“Visibiliter non dereliquit tres pueros, occulte non dereliquit Machabaeos ; illis etiam dedit uitam temporalem ad *confundendos infideles* ; illos autem occulte coronauit ad iudicandam impietatem persecutoris”. *In Ps. 36, third sermon, Nov. 8, 403*

“Et illos eripuit, et illos : illos corporaliter, *ut infideles confunderentur* ; istos spiritaliter, *ut fideles imitarentur*”. *In Ps. 90, second sermon, 412*

Initially Augustine uses *confundere* with the alliterating *carnales* ; the issue of faith and belief being more appropriate, he drops *carnales* and replaces it with *infideles* ; next he strengthens the parallelism and contrast by juxtaposing *fideles* to *infideles*. As this development involves a small amount of material in only three texts, it constitutes only modest evidence for considering the second sermon on Ps. 33 to be prior to Nov. 8, 403, the date of the next text in this series of three. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this inference is entirely compatible with the other patterns examined.

The theme of benefit

The third pattern pertinent to this analysis concerns the theme of benefit, a natural extension of purpose. That is, God’s purpose results in various benefits to different individuals and groups. Eight sermons and *Epistle* 111 treat this theme, and Augustine exhausts its ramifications. The diction of *plus ... quam, prodesse* and *meritum / meruere* is found passim, and other terms link pairs of sermons. As will be seen, *gehenna* and *saevio* used in the fullest treatment of the benefit to Nebuchadnezzar (*Sermo* 343), are recalled when his benefit is touched on (*In Ps. 68*). Also the dangers of this present life are recounted in

46. Treating purpose for only the rescue of the Three Hebrews : “Est quaedam publica et manifesta : haec propter inimicos eorum fit, siue puniendos, siue liberandos” ; *In Ps. 68, second sermon, par. 3, ll. 20-23, using diction (inimicos) from the verse under discussion (CCL 39: 918) ; and “Nabochodonosor praestitum est, ut crederet in Deum eorum” ; Sermo 343, par. 2, l. 76 (ed. LAMBOT [1956] 31).*

47. Here Augustine expresses God’s purpose toward Nebuchadnezzar in an *ut* clause using *credere*. The next two sentences give the contrast in purpose : first explaining that, concerning Nebuchadnezzar, God wished *consuleret ad salutem* ; then stating the contrasting purpose regarding Antiochus, whom God *noluit ita consulere* ; *Epistle* 111 (*CSEL* 34: 651.16-652.1).

the same terms in Augustine's last two sermons comparing the Seven Maccabees and the Three Hebrews.

In *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, Augustine compares two experiences of St. Peter, one in which (like the Three Hebrews) he was rescued by an angel, and another in which (like the Seven Maccabees) he was not rescued. Augustine concludes, "Forte *plus* eum exaudivit postea *quam* prius, quando illum vere de omnibus pressuris eruit⁴⁸". In this very early treatment of the comparison of the Seven Maccabees and the Three Hebrews, Augustine uses *plus ... quam* to compare, not their two experiences, but Peter's analagous experiences. The language *plus ... quam* will be used later to compare the two groups, and full discussion of benefit will be developed.

Somewhat surprisingly, his fullest early treatment of the theme of benefit focuses on neither group of saints, but on their persecutors. This is in *Sermo 343*, dated to May 397. Ten years later, in *In evang. Io.* he will treat the topic, using some of the same diction (*saevio, gehenna*), while contrasting Nebuchadnezzar to Christian kings. In *Sermo 343*, however, the benefit to the Babylonian monarch is treated in its own right. As in the sermon on Ps. 33, Augustine uses *plus ... quam* :

"Ut evaderent flammam tres viri, Nabochodonosor *praestitum est*, ut crederet in Deum eorum. Nam qui eos potuit in manifesto liberare, potuit et in occulto coronare. Sed si illos in occulto coronasset, regem, qui *saevierat*, non liberasset. Salus corporis illorum, salus animae facta est illius. Illi Deum laudando *evaserunt*, sed praesentes *ignes*: Ille in Deum credendo *evasit*, sed aeternas *gehennas*. *Plus* ergo illi, *quam* illis *praestitum est*. Antiochus autem non erat dignus cui talia praestarentur, a quo Machabaei torquebantur : ideo illis igne tormentisque consumptis, exsultavit : sed 'qui se exaltat, humiliabitur'⁴⁹".

Here both persecuting kings are named ; Nebuchadnezzar is benefited by witnessing the miracle which compels him to believe in God, but Antiochus was not worthy⁵⁰. Augustine has used irony and paradox in this passage to make his point memorable.

Benefit is discussed in September of 403 in *Sermo 32*. At one point he has his auditors imagine being tempted to bear false witness because someone powerful threatens to harm them otherwise. He notes that God can avert such harm, but does so purposefully:

"si hoc illi videretur *prodesse* tibi ; et si nollet avertere, intellegere deberes quia non tibimitteret evenire nisi et hoc sciret *prodesse* tibi⁵¹".

Immediately after these statements about benefit, Augustine speaks of the Three Hebrews and then the Seven Maccabees. As in the homily of 395, he does not yet speak of the benefit to them of their experiences, but he does treat both benefit and them in the same passage.

48. *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, par. 22, 11. 24-26 (CCL 38: 296).

49. *Sermo 343* (ed. LAMBOT [1956] 30-31). The quotation is from Lk. 18: 14.

50. Hippolytus of Rome makes the same point ; see n. 7 above.

51. *Sermo 32*, par. 15, 11. 278-81 (CCL 41: 406).

On November 8 of the same year, 403, he preached his third sermon on Psalm 36. When focusing on the verse, “Quoniam Dominus amat iudicium et non dereliquit sanctos suos”, he notes that God chastises each son whom he receives and urges his hearers to be among those who merit (*merentur*) to be received. He speaks of the two groups of heroes. Not yet does he directly address their respective benefits, but he concludes : “Et nihil magnum acceperunt tres pueri, si non in aeternum conservarentur⁵²”.

This has similarities with *In Ps. 148* (405-08). Augustine again drew on the contrast of the two groups without mentioning benefit. It is interesting to note that he referred to merit in a related context, asking by what deaths martyrs deserved (*meruerunt*) to die⁵³.

About the time of Easter in 407 Augustine recalls ideas and diction from *Sermo 343* when he compares the Three Hebrews and the Seven Maccabees in the eleventh treatise *In evang. Io.* He mentions benefit, still tangentially to the two groups, indicating that Christian kings have greater benefit than Nebuchadnezzar. Augustine thus criticizes Christian kings who do not protect Christians, comparing them unfavorably to Nebuchadnezzar who, converted by the miracle in the furnace, raged (*saevit*) to prohibit blasphemy. Augustine then compares the two groups of Old Testament heroes and asserts, “*Plus est liberari de flamma gehennarum quam de fornace potestatis humanae*”. He marvels that Christian kings, who do not merely see the three boys freed from the fire but who are themselves freed from hell, fail to prevent martyrdoms⁵⁴.

Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion is touched on in the sermon *In Ps. 68*, written in the summer of 414. In it Augustine compares the two groups in a full paragraph, discussing *saeviens* Antiochus and briefly citing Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion as the fruit of the Three Hebrews’ delivery (*fructus liberationis*)⁵⁵.

In Augustine’s sermon *Sermo 301*⁵⁶, ca. 417, he rounds out his comparison of Antiochus and Nebuchadnezzar by distilling it into the same sort of short, parallel clauses he characteristically uses to compare the two groups of Old Testament heroes : “Nabuchodonosor *meruit* converti, Antiochus *meruit* obdurari”. Notably, only *Sermo 343* and *Sermo 301* name both persecutors and discuss what each deserved⁵⁷. This latter sermon connects the theme of benefit directly to merit. Augustine explicates the basis on which the seven brothers merited some suffering : both by “paterno merito” (2 Mac. 7) and for “peccata propria” they suffered “merito”. Then he moves, in caput 3, through the familiar contrast of open and secret liberation, and, exhorting his audience, *sicut christiani intelligite*, he describes the greater benefit the Maccabees

52. *In Ps. 36*, third sermon, par. 9, ll. 12-17, 40-41 (CCL 38: 374-75).

53. *In Ps. 148*, par. 11, line 27 (CCL 40: 2174).

54. *In evang. Io.*, tr. 11, par. 14 (*Bibl. Aug.* 71: 622-23).

55. *In Ps. 68*, par. 3, ll. 37-41 (CCL 918-19).

56. *Sermo 301*, cap. 1-3 (PL 38: 1380-81).

57. Both persecutors are named in *In Ps. 68*, second sermon (summer 414), but only the benefit to Nebuchadnezzar is indicated (CCL 39: 918-19).

enjoyed. Then he addresses the different treatments which Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus merited :

“Illos visibiliter liberabat : istos invisibiliter coronabat. Illi quidem de morte liberati sunt ; sed in *hujus vitae tentatione manserunt*: ab igne liberati *ad pericula reservati* ; uno tyranno victo, adhuc certaturi cum diabolo. Fratres mei, sicut christiani intelligite. Machabaei melius et tutius liberati sunt. Ab illis tribus viris, caeteris remanentibus, illa una *tentatio* superata est : ab istis ista vita finita, quae tota *tentatio* est. Deinde divino *judicio, occulto* procul dubio, sed tamen justo, Nabuchodonosor meruit converti, Antiochus meruit obdurari. Ille invenit misericordiam, iste auxit superbiam.”

Note that in comparing the two groups of Old Testament heroes he adds a new point : the three boys are freed from death “sed in *hujus vitae tentatione manserunt* : ab igne liberati *ad pericula reservati*”.

The same point is made with the same details and diction in his next and last sermon on the subject : “*tentatio*” and “*ad pericula istius saeculi servati sunt*” recur in *Sermo 286*, in honor of Sts. Gervasius and Protasius, preached in or after 425⁵⁸. The *caput* devoted to the two groups bears the heading “*Martyribus et Machabaeis plus praestitum, quam tribus pueris ab igne liberatis*”. Augustine first describes the benefit to Nebuchadnezzar, observing that if the three had died in the fire, “*huic non prodesset*”. Then Augustine compares the two groups and asks if God loved the three more than (*plus quam*) the seven. He at once continues :

“Major corona data est Machabaeis. Certe illi *evaserunt ignes, sed ad pericula istius saeculi servati sunt*: illi in ignibus omnia pericula finierunt. Non ulterius restabat ulla *tentatio*, sed sola coronatio. Ergo plus acceperunt Machabaei⁵⁹”.

Note that the *pericula* in which the Three Hebrews remain are in contrast to *omnia pericula* which the Machabees have ended, and that *tentatio* is contrasted with rhetorical neatness and rhyme to *coronatio*, both emphasized by final position. This appears to be a development from *Sermo 301*. Thus, Augustine’s last handling of the theme of the two groups contains his fullest statement of the benefits to them.

Statements about God

Another pattern of interest in Augustine’s handling of this theme is in statements about God. Of the fourteen texts considered in this study, only six

58. These Milanese martyrs were celebrated in the Carthaginian calendar and in martyrologies on “die junii decima nona” ; *PL* 38: 1297, note b. Augustine was present in Milan on June 17, 386, when the martyrs’ corpses were discovered and a blind man who touched their cerements regained his sight. For the date, see BROWN, *Augustine*, p. 74. Augustine describes the healing three times : in *Confessiones* 9.7, second paragraph, written around 397 (for date, see BROWN, p. 161) ; in his discussion of miracles in *De civitate Dei* 22.8.37-44 (*CCL* 48: 816) ; and in the sermon for their feastday. The passage in the *Confessiones* has modest similarities with the sermon, but they are insufficient to suggest anything about the date of the latter.

59. *Sermo 286*, cap. 7 (*PL* 38: 1300).

have two-part sentences identifying the God of the three boys as the God of the Maccabees.

“Adfuit ergo Deus eorum ; numquid defuit Deus Machabaeorum ?”

Sermo 343 (May 397)

“Non enim alius deus istorum, alius illorum, aut istis adfuit, istos defuit, aut istis est opitulatus aut istis iratus. Idem ipse deus est...”

Mayence 50 (Aug. 397)

“Idem ipse fuit Deus trium puerorum, qui fuit Machabaeorum”

Sermo 32 (403)

“Numquid non ipse est Deus Machabaeorum, qui et trium puerorum ?”

In evang. Io. (407)

“Ergo illis Deus aderat, hoc deseruerat? Absit ; imo utrisque adfuit...”

Sermo 301 (ca. 417)

“Ipse fuit Deus trium puerorum, qui fuit Deus Machabaeorum.”

Sermo 286 (in or after 425)

Only the two sermons from 397 use *adfuit... defuit*. The two clause pattern is set in *Sermon 343*, and in *Sermo 32* it is refined so that *Machabaeorum* is balanced by *trium puerorum*. The paired clauses in *In evang. Io.* use *numquid* and the question format of *Sermo 343*⁶⁰. *Sermo 301* also uses a question and uses the contrast of *adfuit... de-* found in both sermons preached in 397. With *Sermo 286* Augustine recaps the positive assertions of *Sermo 32*. The closeness of the statements in *Sermo 286* and *Sermo 32* is striking ; they differ only in that each has one word not in the other.

Conclusion

The discovery of Mayence 50 allows a significant refinement of the date of *In Ps. 33*, second sermon. Mayence 50 introduces Saint Augustine’s normative manner of contrasting the treatments of the two Old Testament groups. Because *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, lacks even a trace of the normative diction from its statement of the same contrast, it is probable that it was written before Mayence 50. This narrows Zarb’s eleven-year span to simply 395-7/397.

60. *Numquid* is used in eight passages treating the two Old Testament groups ; in the first six it is used in (or, in *Sermo 32*, right before) sentences comparing them, and in the last two, from 414, it is used in a sentence about the rescue of saints generally in *In Ps. 68* and in a sentence about St. Crispina in *In Ps. 137* ; *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, par. 22.12-13 (CCL 38: 296) ; *In Ps. 148*, par. 11.32-33 (CCL 40: 2174) ; *In Ps. 36*, third sermon, par. 9.28-31 (CCL 38: 375) ; *Sermo 32*, 281-84 (CCL 41: 406) ; then come *In evang. Io.* and *Sermo 343*, par. 2, quoted above ; *In Ps. 68*, second sermon, par. 3.14-15 (CCL 39. 918) ; and *In Ps. 137*, 14.26-27 (CCL 40: 1988).

Without Mayence 50, Zarb's dating could only be confirmed, not refined, by the evidence of the contrast in the eleven other sermons. Corroborating the inference made on the basis of Augustine's statements contrasting the treatments of the Seven Maccabees and the Three Hebrews is the modest evidence of how he expresses God's purpose, which suggests that *In Ps. 33*, second sermon, was probably written before November 8, 403. Because this evidence is too slight to provide in itself a firm basis for dating, again, it is the existence of Mayence 50 which is crucial to refining the date of the second sermon on Psalm 33.

In creating the theme of the contrast between the Seven Maccabees and the Three Hebrews, Augustine shows pastoral insight, for he thereby removes a potential doubt for his auditors. In his fourteen treatments of the theme over the course of twenty-nine to thirty-three years, he explored all its implications and paradoxes. To the benefit enjoyed by Nebuchadnezzar because he beheld the miracle in the furnace, Augustine returned often, treating it in *Sermo 343*, *In evang. lo.*, tr. 11, *In Ps. 68*, and *Sermo 301*. Comparing the lots of the two groups of saints, Augustine gradually ekes out the full paradox of their different fates. Consistently he asserts the central paradox, that both groups were equally loved and in the presence of God, despite the difference in what happened to them. In 403 he makes it clear that in the miraculous rescue of the Three Hebrews they would have received *nihil magnum* if they were not also saved eternally. Finally, in his last treatment of the theme, he argues that the seven brothers received more, because they were beyond temptation and sure of heaven. Thus does the thoughtful Augustine explore the mystery of the two sets of saints whom God *aperte liberavit* and *occulte coronavit*.

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RÉSUMÉ : C'est un thème propre à saint Augustin que le contraste entre les Sept Maccabées qui subirent la torture et la mort, et les Trois Jeunes Hébreux gardés sains et saufs dans la fournaise ardente. Augustin montre la sollicitude du pasteur, l'engagement du théologien, et le goût du rhéteur pour les paradoxes lorsqu'il traite ce thème dans treize sermons et une lettre. Il explique pourquoi Dieu sauva un groupe de saints dans leur corps tandis qu'il laissa périr l'autre, car Augustin sait bien qu'une compréhension erronée de ces événements pourrait ramener un chrétien qui prie pour obtenir le secours à douter de sa propre valeur ou de l'amour de Dieu, au cas où la prière semble rester sans réponse. Dieu sauva les âmes des saints des deux groupes, mais seuls les trois Hébreux furent sauvés *aperte*. Augustin, en neuf textes, épuise le sujet des bienfaits conférés par les deux groupes. Il fait remarquer que Nebuchadonozor profita du miracle, car il se convertit après l'avoir observé, tandis qu'Antiochus, manquant de mérite, n'en profita pas. Augustin se heurte à ce paradoxe, que Dieu semble avoir aimé également les Maccabées qu'il laissa mourir sous la torture et les jeunes Hébreux qu'il sauva de la mort. L'évêque d'Hippone fait remarquer que les jeunes Hébreux n'auraient pas reçu grand'chose en restant intacts dans leur corps s'ils avaient perdu leur âmes. D'autre part, les sept Maccabées reçurent le meilleur don en étant libérés de toute tentation. Ce qui est même mieux,

Nebuchadonosor reçut le don de la foi. L'ensemble des quatorze textes révèle l'élaboration par saint Augustin d'un thème peu commun ; de plus, ils aident à dater les œuvres du grand saint. En particulier, le développement de la formulation et des idées nous aide à préciser la date du second sermon sur Ps. 33 : 395-7/397 au lieu de 395-405. Le sermon Mayence 50, récemment découvert, fournit des éléments importants en faveur de cette datation nouvelle.

ABSTRACT : A theme virtually unique to St. Augustine is his contrast of the Seven Maccabees, who died under torture, with the Three Hebrews, who were miraculously unharmed in the fiery furnace. St. Augustine demonstrates a pastor's concern, a theologian's fascination, and a rhetorician's love of paradox in treating this theme in thirteen sermons and a letter. He explains why God saved one group of saints bodily, but not the other, for Augustine sees that failure to understand this could tempt a Christian who calls to God for help to doubt either his own worth or God's care, if the call seems to go unanswered. Both groups, he argues, were preserved spiritually, though only the three were saved *aperte*. In the course of nine texts he exhausts the related topic of benefit, treating the differing advantages of the two groups of saints, the benefit to Nebuchadnezzar who converted upon seeing the miracle, and Antiochus's failure to deserve benefit. Augustine confronts the initial paradox, that both groups were equally loved by God though one group died hideously, and moves through the paradoxical realities of benefit : the Three Hebrews received nothing great in being unharmed bodily if they were not also preserved spiritually ; the Seven Maccabees received something greater in being freed from all possible temptation ; Nebuchadnezzar received the gift of faith, which is even better. These fourteen texts besides revealing Augustine's elaboration of an unusual theme, also prove valuable for dating. Specifically, Augustine's development in diction and ideas help refine the date of his second sermon on Ps. 33 from 395-405 to 395-7/397. The newly discovered sermon Mayence 50 offers crucial evidence for this revised dating.