CHAPTER 12

Unitas Omnibus Linguis Loquitur
An Unidentified Augustinian Sermon on Pentecost

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1 Introduction

The short Ps-Augustinian sermon on Pentecost (Serm. 183) which is in the focus of this paper was printed for the first time in the year 1494/1495 by Amerbach in his edition of the opera omnia sancti Augustini.1 But when, 80 years later, the Theologi Lovanienses recognized that it contains a longer piece of an authentic Augustinian sermon on Pentecost (Serm. 271), they regarded it as inauthentic and moved it to the appendix of their edition.2 Their judgment was repeated and confirmed by Vindingus,3 the Maurists,4 and Grégoire who, in his analysis of Latin homiliaries, designates the sermon as an Augustinian cento, that is to say a patchwork compiled from various texts of Augustine.5 This verdict has been taken over into modern works of reference6 and, due to the unchallenged judgment of its inauthenticity, the sermon has faded out of scholarly interest and has not received the attention it deserves.

1 Johann Amerbach, Plura ac diversa divi Aurelii Augustini Sermonum opera, v: Sermones de tempore (Basel, 1494/1495), f. 23v2–24r2 (Sermo 188).
2 Tomus X. operum D. Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis episcopi, continens sermones ad populum et clerum (Antwerp, 1576), 692(2)–693(1) (Sermo app. 61): Fuit de tempore 188, sed conflatus ex 187 – The reference is to Serm. 271.
3 Bernardus Vinding, Criticus Augustinianus castigatus (Vallameriae: Mundellanus, 1621), 179: Nihil habet s. Augustini nisi ex praecedente quod censores Belgae pridem annotarunt. – Vindingus is referring to the verdict of the Lovanienses on Serm. 271.
5 Réginald Grégoire, Homéliairies liturgiques médiévaux: Analyse de manuscrits, BStMed 12 (Spoletio: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo, 1980), 120: “centon augustinien.”
6 Roger Gryson, Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques latins de l’antiquité et du haut moyen âge, vl 1/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 282: “Cento aus AU.”
2 Summary of Content

Before discussing the problem of its authorship and its relationship to Augustine, I will provide a brief analysis of the sermon's contents. It is divided into four chapters: (1) In the first chapter the preacher informs his audience about the significance of that day: ten days after Christ's ascension, Christ sent the Holy Spirit whom he had promised saying, "If I do not go away, he will not come to you" (John 16:7). The 120 persons who received the spirit spoke in all languages. This was how God signified the presence of the Spirit. Two questions arise, which are discussed in the subsequent two chapters: (2) First, why did Christ say, "If I do not go away, he will not come to you" (John 16:7)? Did Christ ascend to heaven in order to give way to the Spirit? No, because the Spirit cannot be separated from the Son. Rather, Christ showed to his disciples the form of a servant in which alone he was visible for those in the flesh; his divine form is only thinkable for those in the Spirit. Christ had promised that the Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth. Therefore he had to turn their eyes from his bodily presence to his spiritual presence and to prepare their hearts by the Spirit. (3) Second, why was it, at that time, a sign of the Spirit's presence that everyone who received him spoke in all languages? Now too the Spirit is given, but those who receive him do not speak in all languages as the disciples did. But what one person did in those days by the gift of the Spirit is now done by the unity of the Church which is congregated by love. Therefore, anyone confronted with the objection of not being able to speak in all languages should answer that he is a member of Christ's body, the Church, which speaks all languages. In the miracle of Pentecost, Christ's promise that new wine would be poured into new wineskins is fulfilled. The disciples speaking all languages prefigured the future Church which was to be disseminated throughout all language-areas. This is also why heretics, separated from the Church, do not have the Spirit. (4) In the closing chapter the preacher exhorts his audience to celebrate Pentecost as members of Christ's unity, the Church, which is filled with the Spirit, grows all over the world, and is the bride of the Lord. According to the precept of Paul, the preacher urges his flock to bear with one another in love, being eager to maintain unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This is the house of God built up with living stones, a house in which God rejoices to live.

3 Relation to Augustine's Preaching and Theology

First, I wish to examine the way in which the text depends on Augustine's preaching and theological thinking. Since the sermon is supposed to be an Augustinian cento, it should be easy to identify the sources and investigate the