

## Confessions VII, IX, 13 - XXI, 27

### Reply to G. Madec

It is now some three years since G. Madec published his « Notes Critiques » on my two books on Augustine<sup>1</sup>. Fifty-eight spirited pages, no less — and what a spirit of avenging fury pulses through them ! I must call attention to this to explain my long delay, and my reluctance even now to deal with his critique in full detail : when one has been brought to task by turns for *exagération*, *fantaisie*, *escamotage*, to say nothing of a succession of only slightly less felonious transgressions of the scholar's code, one may soberly question whether a genial atmosphere has been created for lucid dialogue. Besides, I think it will suffice to illustrate what I judge to be a systematic flaw that vitiates much of Madec's critique. Briefly put, it comes to this : he has seldom taken my proposals seriously enough to examine seriously what they do, and do not imply. This has led him into a series of logical mis-steps, and more often than not, into attacking, not me but some bogey-man of his own fabrication<sup>2</sup>.

Let me illustrate this from two points of view.

As a first instance, consider the section in *Confessions* VIII where Augustine recounts his visit to the old priest Simplicianus. Toward the end of his article, Madec takes issue with my remarking in a note that « I find little support in the text [of *Confessions* VIII, 1-4] for Courcelle's interpretation<sup>3</sup> of these conversations with Simplicianus as a series of

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1. « Une lecture de *Confessions* VII, IX, 13-XXI, 27 », *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 16 (1970) pp. 79-137. The books in question are my *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386-391*, and *St. Augustine's Confessions : The Odyssey of Soul*, both published by Harvard University Press, in 1968 and 1969 respectively. (I shall refer to these as *Early Theory* and *Odyssey*).

2. I leave it to the reader to judge whether the argument of *Early Theory*, pp. 227-232 depends so heavily on *De ordine* II, 52 as Madec (in his « échantillon », p. 81) implies ; and also, whether I truly paint an Augustine « qui déconsidère sa mère ou la prière » : those harsh terms are Madec's, not mine !

3. *Recherches sur les « Confessions » de saint Augustin*, Paris, de Boccard, 1950, pp. 168-174.

relatively speculative discussions on the consonance between Neo-Platonism and the Prologue of St. John's Gospel<sup>4</sup>. » It is true, Madec admits, that the *Confessions* recount but one such visit, in which the main topic of conversation was the example of Marius Victorinus' conversion. (It might be noted that subsequent paragraphs go on to spell out the powerful effect this *example* had on Augustine). « *Mais* » Madec is quick to add, « P. Courcelle allègue *un autre texte* [italics in the original] de la *Cité de Dieu*, qui prouve que ' ce n'est pas une visite, mais une série de visites, qu'Augustin lui a rendues (*solebamus*) ', et qui suggère que ' le sujet ordinaire de leurs entretiens fut le rapport entre le système néo-platonicien et le prologue johannique<sup>5</sup>. ' »

Now the illusion could easily have been created that my failure to mention that « one other text » that Madec has underlined for attention was not only a piece of sloppy scholarship on my part, but also an injustice done to Courcelle. Why did I merely direct the reader to the pages in Courcelle, and let the matter stand at that? My reason was, quite simply, that I did not find myself in the mood to embarrass unnecessarily a fellow-scholar whose work on the *Confessions* we have all found brilliant, suggestive, source of so much enriching controversy, but which more than one reviewer has characterized as often springing prematurely from a shred or two of evidence to quite sweeping conclusions<sup>6</sup>. The argument drawn from the single text of the *City of God*: what does it « prove<sup>7</sup> »? The answer is, either nothing, or so very very little, that it constitutes a glaring weakness in Courcelle's book, one that were best passed over in silence. Madec — possibly with Courcelle's approval<sup>8</sup> — will not permit me silence.

Well then, what does the text in question say? The heart of it recounts that « we were in the habit of hearing » (*solebamus audire*) from Simplicianus that a certain *Platonicus* used to say that the Prologue of St. John's Gospel ought to be written in words of gold and posted in the most prominent place in every [Catholic] church<sup>9</sup>.

4. *Odyssey*, p. 94, n. 1; cf. MADEC, *art. cit.*, p. 136.

5. *Art. cit.*, p. 136.

6. See, in addition to numerous subsequent discussions, Christine Mohrmann's review in *Vigiliae Christianae* 5 (1951) pp. 249-254; and the remarks of Fr. Henri Rondet in *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 41 (1953) pp. 272-278.

7. Madec, be it noted, quotes from Courcelle at all the crucial turnings in this argument, and in such a way it becomes difficult to know how closely he allies himself with Courcelle's conclusions; yet he repeatedly brings the « influence » of Simplicianus into play when criticizing my views on Augustine's early Christology, *art. cit.*, pp. 108, 113, 135-6.

8. Madec (*art. cit.*, p. 79, n. 1) draws attention to the fact that this article was originally the substance of an exposé in Professor Courcelle's seminar at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*; he acknowledges having received helpful suggestions from Courcelle on that occasion.

9. *De Civitate Dei* X, 29; cf. MADEC, *art. cit.*, p. 136, n. 298.

Now what does Courcelle proceed to draw from this text ? The inferential train might be said to run this way :

1. The *solebamus audire* indicates that Simplicianus made this observation à plusieurs reprises ;

2. Courcelle then translates : « Comme je l'ai souvent entendu raconter, etc. » [italics mine]. Thus he creates the *impression* that Simplicianus made this observation to Augustine himself, and (the *impression* runs) to Augustine when alone ;

3. Hence Augustine must have made more than one visit to Simplicianus, *une série de visites* in fact, and :

4. The *purpose* of his visits was (at least partially) « en vue de s'instruire sur le néo-platonisme chrétien. »

The trouble is not with the first step : let that be granted. The trouble begins with the second step : why does Courcelle translate the plural *solebamus* with the singular *je l'ai souvent entendu raconter* ? G. Combès, in the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* edition of the *City of God*, translates it : *nous l'avons souvent entendu*<sup>10</sup>. Is Augustine using some kind of plural of majesty, modesty, or whatever ? The unwary reader would assume so, since a scholar of Professor Courcelle's stature can be counted upon to know of these things. Yet a glance at the *City of God*, indeed, a glance at the very section from which this text is drawn, makes it clear that Augustine does not hesitate, when speaking in his own name, to use the first person singular : *sed quid faciam... Scio me frustra loqui mortuo... quid, inquam, vobis incredibile dicitur... ut verbis utar, etc.*, are all expressions drawn from the immediate environs<sup>11</sup>. But had Professor Courcelle translated the plural by the plural, the impression his hypothesis prompts him to create would largely have evaporated. For his hypothesis has persuaded him to establish a close continuity between the *Confessions* VIII account and this ostensibly autobiographical reminiscence in the *City of God* ; only then can his inferential train move smoothly to its third step : Augustine made not one, but *une série de visites* to Simplicianus, and, since the visit recorded in the *Confessions* was for spiritual counsel, and presumably rendered by Augustine *alone*, it is important to sustain the impression that the Augustine of the *City of God* is speaking for himself : « *je l'ai souvent entendu.* »

There is, then, no evidence from this single text to warrant the conclusion of Step 3. But even had there been, what would follow ? That (step 4) Augustine's *purpose* in these visits was what Professor Courcelle's hypothesis requires it to be — that he went there *en vue de s'instruire sur le néo-platonisme chrétien* ? He could still have gone to Simplicianus for spiritual counsel — exactly as the *Confessions* relates, and as I conten-

10. BA 34, p. 536. Interestingly enough, Madec refers his readers to this edition.

11. In fact, they are all drawn from section X, 29 itself.

ded — even gone there several times (though the « evidence » for that has vanished) and several times heard Simplicianus make the kind of remark alluded to. A remark, from the look of things, that could easily have been made parenthetically, almost as an aside ; a remark that the old man might have made to other Milanese Catholics as well — *solebamus audire* : « we were accustomed to hear » — but then, do we have the slightest warrant for inferring a « series of relatively speculative discussions on the consonance between Neo-Platonism and the Prologue of St. John's Gospel » — to which Augustine betook himself with this as the object he had in mind ? In my somewhat terse note, I averred simply that there was « little support » for such a view. That judgment strikes me as a kindly one.

I have begun my inventory of Madec's objections with this example because, among other things, it is revelatory of wider issues that are at stake between us. What can possess a world-renowned scholar to build such a shaky tower of inference on so slender a straw of evidence ? — and apparently convince, at least to some degree, so astute — and critical — a reader as Madec ?

The answer lies, I think, in the way a scholar's hypothesis inevitably functions in his reading of evidence<sup>12</sup>. Stated most baldly the psychology of the matter is this : once a hypothesis has begun to form in the scholar's mind, a tendency sets in to find evidence that supports it, to maximize the force of such evidence, to minimize or (in extreme cases) literally overlook, simply not-see, what counter-evidence there may be. This is one reason for the essentially « social » nature of the scholarly endeavor. We all have our « lenses » and they can all come to function as occasional « blinders ».

But the moral of the tale does not end there. Every scholar is more or less aware of the different grades of certainty with which he suggests solutions in different problem-areas. In every book a man feels he has put forward a core of truth for which he is ready, so to speak, to go to the stake. But then, as his working hypothesis begins to demonstrate its fruitfulness, he ventures further out with it, testing its illuminatory power in wider and wider circles, but conscious, if he is wise, that this is also a venture onto thinner and thinner ice. He begins to deal with items, more and more peripheral to his original concern, where counter-hypotheses already have staked their claim for illuminatory power. He faces up to the risky challenge of pursuing the adversary into his own camp.

So, for instance, having gained confidence that my own « Plotinian » hypothesis had illumined such central concerns as Augustine's view of man as fallen soul, of faith and its relation to both understanding and reason, I was tempted to try — others would say « push » — my luck,

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12. See *Early Theory* pp. XI-XII, and especially *Odyssey*, pp. VII-IX, where I drew my reader's attention to this temptation as it might affect my own work.

and see if territory that is customarily viewed as possessed by the rival « Porphyrian » hypotheses, could be recaptured. It is here, where my lines are admittedly spread thinnest — on Augustine's alleged « Photinianism », on his accusations of « idolatry » — that Madec has been astute enough to concentrate his greatest volume of fire. He has a perfect right to do so : provided, that is, he takes the time and trouble to identify the enemy properly, and aim his barrage accurately. All too often, this is precisely what he fails to do. Ammunition is not his problem — he has a devastating supply of file-cards ; occasionally it lulls him into assuming that his adversary has far fewer than he actually has — but in any case, an impressive ammunition supply cannot always make up for careful sighting.

Madec accuses my « lenses » of being, on occasion, « blinders ». He does not seem to advert to the opposite possibility, that his own lenses may have blinded him to what I was trying to provoke him into seeing.

To illustrate this possibility, consider his treatment of my suggestion concerning Augustine's perplexing observation that he found in the *libri platoniorum* an analogue to St. Paul's reflections on God's omnipresence. The phrase he uses is *Sicut quidam secundum eos dixerunt*<sup>13</sup>.

This puzzle, Madec rightly observes, had already exercised Henry, Chatillon, Courcelle, and more recently, Folliet. My complaint against the current solutions was, as he expresses it, that they « would do violence to Augustine's « Latinity »<sup>14</sup> : my point was that they uniformly force *us* to translate *secundum* by « among ». A queer translation of that word to begin with ; its queerness in Augustine's case had been underlined by the only study of Augustine's use of Latin prepositions relevant to the point. That study Chatillon had lightly dismissed as « from the land of Ford and Gallup », but it had concluded that « *secundum* » unexceptionally meant for Augustine what the dictionary suggests it should have meant : « according to »<sup>15</sup>.

Madec at this point claims that I have shown myself, rather than Chatillon, « léger » : I seem « not to have noticed » that Chatillon made it clear that Augustine is « respecting » the text of the *Vetus Latina* translation of the Bible ; Augustine's citation of *Acts* runs to the word *dixerunt* with only one word changed : *vos* became *eos*. What evidence he has for such an oversight on my part is never produced. He would have been less far from the mark had he complained that I had never paid close attention to the *argument* that Chatillon was mounting while making that observation ; but the fact is that I had, found it unconvincing, and still do. Why ?

13. MADEC, *art. cit.*, pp. 90-93, referring to *Early Theory*, pp. 103-109.

14. *Art. cit.*, p. 90.

15. CLEMENT L. HRDLICKA, *A Study of the Late Latin Vocabulary... in the Confessions of St. Augustine*, Washington D.C., 1931, pp. 137-138 ; cf. F. CHATILLON, « *Quidam secundum eos* : note d'exégèse augustinienne », in *Revue du Moyen Age Latin*, 1 (1945) pp. 287-304.

It should first be made clear that Chatillon *starts* with the very conviction that I am questioning : that the Latinist at grips with this *secundum eos* is forced to recognize its « intrinsic unintelligibility » ; that the phrase, from his point of view, is a *non-sens*<sup>16</sup>. Having posited this, Chatillon is then compelled to present us with a hypothesis designed to explain how Augustine could have made some sense of it.

The phrase in the Greek version of *Acts* would have read : τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς [ποιητῶν] εἰρήκασιν<sup>17</sup>. There is manuscript evidence for the possibility of ποιητῶν having been omitted, hence the brackets I insert about it. What is the force of *kath umas* ? It is one of at least three instances in the Greek New Testament where *kata* functions in a decidedly un-classical way ; the phrase becomes a periphrasis for ὑμῶν or ὑμετέρων i.e., a genitive. So the translators of the *Vetus Latina* should have translated it with a genitive, — « as certain of your [poets ? thinkers ?] » have said. But they, poor men, found themselves embarrassed by that *kata*<sup>18</sup>, and with the « quasi-mechanical servility » characteristic of the *Vetus Latina*, they translated *kata* by (its much more normal equivalent) *secundum*, — thus producing the « nonsense » phrase<sup>19</sup>.

But Augustine knew the Greek that lay behind the *Vetus Latina* translation ; indeed, he « se représentait confusément derrière chacune des singularités du vieux texte latin, quelque chose de l'original grec qui l'avait engendré et qui en fondait sa valeur<sup>20</sup>. » At the same time, he had such a respect for the *Vetus Latina* that he preferred not to change its wording, — even if the phrase did not make good sense in Latin, he cites it regularly with the offending *secundum* intact. But he cites it knowing full well that the Greek periphrasis for the genitive gives it genitive force in Latin : he « se donnait, innocent plaisir, l'air de parler un peu le grec. » He is only citing : « Il cite... il ne prend pas la grammaire à son compte<sup>21</sup>. »

Evidently Madec finds this a much more satisfying solution than I do. But why does it not satisfy me ? First, there is the initial supposition, exactly the supposition that I question, that *secundum eos* does not make sense. Secondly, the solution is ingenious : but I mention this not so much as an objection, — it should be evident that in a puzzle of this sort, one that has exercised so many scholars, some trace of ingenuity may be necessary in any plausible solution. But that brings me to my third objection : the solution does not strike me as all that plausible. It might

16. CHATILLON, *art. cit.*, pp. 287 and 286, n. 1.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 289, and 289 n. 1. Observe that Chatillon credits Augustine with a knowledge of Greek superior, in this regard, to the translators of the *Vetus Latina* : « Je veux croire », he writes (with disarming honesty) « qu'il en comprenait le sens » (*ibid.*, p. 291).

19. I assume that the phrase *secundum vos* would appear as difficult to render as *secundum eos*.

20. CHATILLON, *art. cit.*, p. 292.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 292-3.

conceivably work for the Augustine who, by the time he wrote his *De doctrina Christiana*<sup>22</sup>, was relatively practiced in seeing the Greek transparent behind each Latin term of the *Vetus Latina* ; but would it work for the *early* Augustine, with his very wavering knowledge of Greek ? And (a question that Chatillon throws up in an aside, but never, to my way of thinking, satisfactorily answers) would it have worked for his hearers and readers, — Latin-speakers, many of them without his (supposed) knowledge of the Greek New Testament ? How were *they* to be expected to understand this *secundum*<sup>23</sup> ? Were they, to borrow a term from Madec's criticism of my proposal, able to perform this feat of mental gymnastics with Augustine ?

Evidently Madec is more willing than I to answer all those questions in the affirmative ; for this reason he appeals to the affirmations inherent in Chatillon's *hypothesis* as though they stood as quasi-factual objections to my view : the logic of this, once again, is simply awry — what I have questioned is the initial conviction of « *non-sens* » that provoked the hypothesis in the first place !

What, then, did I propose ? I suggested that the phrase in the *Confessions* should be read as punctuated this way : *Sicut quidam, secundum eos, dixerunt*. Then it would translate : « As certain [poets ? thinkers ?], according to them [i.e. on the report of the *Platonici*], have said. » « *Ingénieux à souhait* » Madec exclaims<sup>24</sup> : but any more « ingenious » than what Chatillon has offered ? And, once the initial ingenuity is accepted, how plausible is it ?

Here I must avow my gratitude to Madec, who has actually helped me rethink this problem in more careful fashion. To start with the translator of the *Vetus Latina* : to judge from his Latin version, he very likely had before his eyes a Greek text in which mention of « the poets » had been omitted, or possibly — as Chatillon surmises — deliberately suppressed. He would read the crucial phrase, therefore, as :  $\tau\iota\nu\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\theta'\ \delta\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\rho\eta\kappa\alpha\sigma\iota\nu$ . He has, moreover, just read of Paul as roaming the Athenian marketplace, arguing with « those who chanced to be there » (*Acts* 17, 17). He could easily, naturally assume that the discussions involved were not a one-way street : these people had things to say to Paul as well as he to them. And among the things they might be understood as *reporting* to him — « report » is the key word — is the sentiment uttered by  $\tau\iota\nu\epsilon\varsigma$  : « certain men », that God is omnipresent. And so — what more natural — when speaking to them of the God he preaches, he uses that sentiment to serve his cause : it is true, he assures them, that in God

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 291-2, and notes.

23. Chatillon poses this question, *ibid.*, p. 291 ; he then asks us (p. 293) to imagine that the (public) reader would so inflect his tone on reaching the puzzling *secundum* as to imply a « *Nous n'y pouvons rien.* » This would call attention to the problem, admitted, but hardly clarify the meaning for the hearer.

24. *Art. cit.*, p. 91.

« we live and move and have our being, as even certain men, *on your own say-so*, have said. » The καθ' ὑμᾶς has come out quite naturally as a Latin *secundum vos*, and with no embarrassment whatever to the translator ; and, given the context I have recalled, that *secundum vos* would offer no difficulty to the plain Latin-speaker, entirely innocent of the Greek that lay behind it. From the first time he read it, this is the meaning Augustine could have found in it, even after learning about (what Chatillon admits to be) the fairly unusual *kath umas* that lay behind it ! All the implausibilities of Chatillon's hypothesis have vanished.

But we must consider the series of objections Madec has thrown at my suggestion. What are they ?

First, my proposal is « ingenious » : but so is Chatillon's ; so must any solution to such puzzles initially seem ; so, especially, must any solution to this particular puzzle strike a reader, long inured to understanding that *secundum* as equivalent to « among » : it forces him to suspend his habitual understanding entirely, to take off the very « lenses » that here function as « blinders », preventing him from « seeing » the evidence in a totally new light. But once he does that, the initial impression of « ingenuity » vanishes — unlike Chatillon's, the solution turns out to be simplicity itself.

Secondly, it would make Augustine « do violence to the meaning of the text from *Acts*, in order to be able to apply it to a precise passage of Plotinus, all the while respecting both the letter of the *Vetus Latina* and [the rules of] good Latin. » Here the argument is beautifully circular : it assumes to be true exactly what is in question ! For « violence » has been done to the « meaning of the text from *Acts*, » if and only if we pre-suppose its meaning to be the only one Madec's imagination can countenance ; he does not seem to have seen that it was precisely Chatillon's, and implicitly his *initial conviction* that was being overturned : i.e. that *secundum* could not possibly yield any sense when translated, and understood, in the ordinary way, — that it must *therefore* be accorded the force of « among ». But if, as I propose, it could so be understood, that understanding permits Augustine, without the slightest forcing, to apply that *secundum* to Plotinus' own report of the opinion of the « ancients » in *Ennead VI, 5, 1*. And while applying it quite naturally there, he would all the while be respecting what he understood to be the meaning of *Acts* according to the (« good ») Latin usage he was familiar with. « Must we suppose », Madec crowns this objection, « that he went through this same gymnastic performance each time he had occasion to cite this text ? » He is obstinately unable to clear his imagination : there is, of course, no gymnastic exercise involved !

But that « each time he has occasion to cite this text » is already an entry into Madec's next objection. Let me put it this way : *dato, non concesso*, that this solution *might* conceivably work for the occurrence of the phrase in *Confessions VII, 15*, Madec affirms that I have « not made



the slightest allusion » to the additional eight times this phrase from *Acts* occurs in Augustine. Six of those texts had already been quoted by Chatillon, two more uncovered since, by Folliet. This affirmation leaves me frankly bewildered : I had cited Chatillon's discussion of the matter<sup>25</sup>, then two pages later proposed that « each occurrence of the term from which Chatillon argues that Augustine is not using it [*secundum*] in the accepted way does, with a little patience, yield perfectly good sense when translated in the accepted way<sup>26</sup>. » A generous critic could have inferred that I just *might* have based that judgment on an examination of the texts that Chatillon adduces. He might then have shown that « little patience » I called for, and tried the suggested experiment, — with those six texts, then with Folliet's additional two. I may be excused for wondering whether Madec ever took my suggestion seriously enough to try it. I suggest that the reader whose courage has brought him this far now turn to the eight texts Madec presents as test-cases : he will find that they are all instances wherein Augustine cites the text from *Acts* with which this entire explanation began — and that each time the perplexing *secundum* occurs, the very same adjustment of punctuation does the trick.

But Madec still has three volleys left. Two of the texts in question show Augustine in one case changing that thorny *quidam secundum eos* into a *quidam eorum*, in the other case, changing *quidam secundum vos* into *vestri quidam*. « Admettons un instant », Madec proposes, that Augustine *could* have understood the *secundum* as I have suggested — must we « imagine » that Augustine calls to mind (*se remémorer*) the text of Plotinus he was referring to in *Confessions* VII, 15, each time he cites St. Paul's own phrase with the *secundum* intact ? Again (we are back on the ground covered in my preceding argument) a moment of reflection, after taking my hypothesis seriously, would have shown Madec that this is not at all a necessary requirement for my solution. I *start* with the proposal, implicitly in my book, explicitly here, that Augustine could quite naturally have understood the *secundum* of *Acts* as referring to « Greeks... [of] centuries before [Plotinus]. »

But, Madec argues, these two texts show that Augustine « understood the text as both P. Courcelle and F. Chatillon have translated it, » i.e., understood *secundum* to mean « among. » Again, he has leapt a bit too hastily : nothing of the sort is necessarily implied.

An illustration will make this clear : let us say an American travels to Paris ; in the course of a conversation with a group of Parisians, they report to him a sentiment of some French thinkers. He can then say, « certain French thinkers, according to you, hold this to be true. » If no such report were being referred to, he would never dream of using the

25. *Early Theory*, p. 103, n. 4.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

phrase « according to you », — it would be a *non-sens*. And still, he could easily identify the Parisians who reported it as Frenchmen, and hence representative of the wider « they » that includes the « French thinkers » previously referred to. One can imagine him recounting the incident to his compatriots in the terms : « certain among them [i.e. French thinkers] are of such-and-such a view, » — the move of the mind is a natural, unstrained move ; it is the move required by my hypothesis ; but Chatillon's hypothesis requires the *opposite* move, and a moment of reflection shows it will not work. It is asking a lot to require us to imagine Augustine, wishing to *mean* « among », using the term *secundum* : especially if we consider that he was speaking to, and writing for Latin-speakers who (even were we to grant the Biblical erudition Chatillon supposes in Augustine) would understand his Latin as moderately cultivated Latin-speakers would.

Why, then, would he have chosen the term *secundum* ? Out of respect for the old Latin translation ? But Madec, perhaps unaware that he was removing one of the props to his own case, has called attention to the fact that Augustine's « respect » did not need to go quite that far : he is not bashful about switching to *vestri*, or *quidam eorum*, when changing the *Vetus Latina* wording is the modest price he has to pay for saying what he wants to say, and of being understood by readers and hearers who were without the (supposed) knowledge of the Greek that lay behind his Latin speech.

« *Enfin* » — Madec is down to his final thrust — « in the present case, if it be evident that [Augustine] is thinking of Neo-Platonic teaching, nothing permits our preferring *Enn.* VI, 1, 5 to *Enn.* VI, 9, 9, the passage proposed by P. Henry and P. Courcelle. » Again, he seems to have lost track of my whole point : if *secundum* is to be permitted to mean « according to », then Augustine must be referring to a « report » about *others'* holding this doctrine, and not merely to Plotinus' personal profession of the belief. And — I will accept correction on this, if wrong — the only such « report » I know of occurs in *Enn.* VI, 5, 1.

Now what has happened here ? Why this persistent effort to « make me say what I did not say », make me imply what my contention does not imply at all ? It all goes back to the way Madec has treated my hypothesis : he has never suspended all the preconceptions his own hypothesis furnishes to his eye, and looked for a moment at the landscape through the lens that I am using. Had he done that, he would perhaps have seen that landscape of « evidence » rearrange itself, take on an entirely different set of emphases, lines of force and priority — much in the way a *Gestalt* figure can represent one thing to the viewer, then suddenly « jump » into representing quite another. Only after « seeing » things my way would he be enabled to see, as well, what my view implies, requires for its plausibility, and what it doesn't.

Thus far, I have handled only two relatively minor points in Madec's

lengthy indictment. But I have written enough to show how many pages it takes to untangle what a few swift paragraphs of hasty criticism can inextricably tangle. My position is far from an enviable one, and I do not care to occupy it much longer. Just a few observations on the three more substantial issues raised by his article : on the general structure and intent of *Confessions* VII, 13-27 ; on the question of Augustine's early Christology ; and on his concept of idolatry.

Let me first dispense with the last-mentioned point : here, we all owe Madec a debt for the work he has done, and for having almost kept his head throughout this, to my mind much the best, section of his long article<sup>27</sup>. What, however, has he accomplished ?

There was a twofold intention presiding over this section of my work<sup>28</sup> ; the first was negative ; I meant to challenge the suggestion proposed by J. J. O'Meara, that the authors of the *libri platonicorum* Augustine read in 386 A.D. « distinguished themselves by idolatrous practises in the literal sense<sup>29</sup> », hence that Porphyry was likely one of the authors Augustine read at that time. Madec's learned study proves at least this much, that Augustine did not mean « idolatry » in the literal sense, so my negative intention has been fulfilled. Partially to sustain his judgment that my objection to O'Meara was « *simplement inconsidérée*<sup>30</sup> », Madec quotes the summary conclusion that occurs on p. 162 of O'Meara's study of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* — there no mention of idolatry is made. It might have been fair to quote also from the preceding page, where despite his reserves on how literally the Scriptural allusions to idolatry are to be taken, O'Meara nonetheless concludes, not once, but twice, that in these works « cult was allowed (or prescribed) for idols », and that « these Platonist books taught » among other things « of the corruption of the pure worship of the Father and the Son with a mixture of idolatry. » As to *De Trinitate* XIII, 24, which Madec adduces to pin this accusation on the *Platonici*<sup>31</sup>, I have serious doubts about its appositeness in this debate ; but it would take too long to explain why.

But the drive of my hypothesis tempted me to establish a further, positive point : that « idolatry » for Augustine involved a (Plotinian) moment of « self-idolatry ». It is crucial to the argument I was mounting that Augustine does, despite Madec's denials<sup>32</sup>, accuse himself of having, while a Manichee, made his soul the « temple of its idol » : this, I still suggest, is the force of the *rursus* in *Confessions* VII, 20, line 12, where he

27. *Art. cit.*, pp. 93-106.

28. *Early Theory*, pp. 87-111.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 110 ; cf. J. J. O'MEARA, *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine*, Paris, 1959 ; Madec is quite justified in correcting the pagination of my reference to pp. 161-162.

30. *Art. cit.*, p. 105.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 103 and n. 115.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 94 ; cf. *Early Theory*, p. 88.

says that having retreated from Manichaeism (*inde rediens*) into a more Stoic concept of things, he accuses himself of « again : *rursus* » falling into that error.

But again, while not entirely satisfying my mind, I wish to insist that Madec has given us much to think about in this still-confused area of « idolatry », in St. Augustine.

On Augustine's early Christology, I have to think he has been considerably less successful<sup>33</sup>. My argument brought me round to suggest that the Augustine of the *Confessions* was being unnecessarily « severe » on his Milanese view in dismissing it as « Photinian<sup>34</sup>. » Madec twists my description of that error into implying that I deem Photinianism orthodox<sup>35</sup>; then takes me to task (« escamotage ») for not having documented what Augustine meant by « Photinianism » — I had, in his view, moved too swiftly to discussing the wider Christological background of the period as Grillmeier analyzes it — and then proceeds to lay out a series of texts which show that « Photinianism », in Augustine's view, « reduced the personality of Christ to that of a mere man<sup>36</sup>. » Pursuing the question further, he is brought to face the difficulties that confronted a Christian thinker like Augustine when it came to fixing the relation between the humanity and divinity of Christ : my reason for invoking Grillmeier's study in the first place. Not the fact, but the delicate *quomodo* of Incarnation was the nub of the issue<sup>37</sup>. He delivers us — *bravo !* and finally, one hopes — from envisaging the struggle on which Augustine was embarked as foisting on him a *foi du charbonnier*<sup>38</sup>; establishes that Augustine's belief in the immutability of the Divine Word freed him from « Photinianism » in any strict sense of the term<sup>39</sup>, and seems unaware that he has argued himself into the very initial position that convinced me that Augustine's characterizations of Photinianism were therefore of questionable relevance to the issue. Having come this far, however, he proceeds to an examination of Augustine's early Christological utterances, and triumphantly concludes that they are exempt from Photinianism<sup>40</sup> — as if, alas, that remotely resembled my contention in the first place<sup>41</sup>.

33. *Art. cit.*, pp. 106-136.

34. *Early Theory*, pp. 261-264.

35. *Art. cit.*, p. 110. It would take something of a fool to hold that every « variant » of Antiochean Christology was « orthodox ».

36. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 120; cf. p. 117 also.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 119, and 116-7.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

41. I pass on the « contresens » of which Madec accuses me, *art. cit.*, p. 129 : it must, of course, be deemed such *if* one reads the text in the light of Madec's hypothesis. I fail to see, further, that my hypothesis requires both Augustine and Alypius to be disabused of their errors simultaneously, *art. cit.*, p. 107.

Finally, the structure of *Confessions* VII, 13-27<sup>42</sup>. Madec assures his readers that, despite my protestations to the contrary, I haven't really been bothered by this question<sup>43</sup>. It may surprise him that I find his analysis of that structure quite acceptable, in the main ; for one thing, it reflects Augustine's growing disaffection toward the Platonists which begins to show as early as the *De Vera Religione*, a disaffection which, I have freely admitted, may well have come from a closer acquaintance with the writings of Porphyry, for which the *De Consensu Evangelistarum* presents us with the earliest *solid* evidence. A « Porphyrian », then, will legitimately stress the *ibi legi... ibi non legi* contrasts, the contrast between pride and humility, presumption and confession — and the resultant analysis of this section of the *Confessions* will represent more adequately than mine what Augustine's thoughts about Platonism were *at the time he wrote the Confessions*. There is nothing in this contrary to my thesis, and despite vague minatory rumblings in that direction, Madec has produced (aside from the points raised above) no specifics to bring against my view of this section.

But my hypothesis was precisely this : that Augustine's early writings, and (with less certainty) perhaps even the basic unity and meaning of the *Confessions* themselves, could be understood on the supposition that the *positive contribution* (*ibi legi ; inde admonitus, vidi*) he accepted from the *libri platoniorum* from 386-391 A.D. was distinctively Plotinian. This both obliges and entitles me to scrutinize those sections from another angle than Madec's, to prescind from what my hypothesis supposes to be later overlays, and to attempt to ferret out that original stratum of positive contribution. Madec is alert enough to note that this forces me to concentrate much more on sections 16-23, where Augustine is describing what his reflections on those readings yielded him — a legitimate endeavor, dictated by the hypothesis I was pursuing, and one whose legitimacy a generous-spirited adversary will, I think, acknowledge. Madec's privileged territory is, of course, sections 13-15 and 24-25 ; I have no complaints on that ; nor do I complain that his attacks on me have centered on those points where I have made forays into his privileged territory.

My suggestion, here as throughout this reply, is that many of our fragile certainties about Augustine's — particularly the early Augustine's — allegiances to Neo-Platonism, need a good deal of buttressing. In the present state of scholarship on that question, competing hypotheses are entirely in order. So, it is entirely right that the tenant of one hypothesis gird himself manfully to prove that his angle of view has more illuminative power than that of his competitor.

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42. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-88.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

But before moving on to this stage, he might be welladvised to take the time and care required to grasp the contours and implications of the counter-hypothesis he is bent on demolishing. This, I am compelled to think, Fr. Madec, with all his resources, brilliance, learning and passion, has, in the main, failed to do. And, to conclude with his own phrase, *c'est dommage*.

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