SAINT AUGUSTINE ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

I

ST. AUGUSTINE, as "a lad o' pairts", started life with two advantages. His parents might be poor but they were ambitious for him and self-sacrificing; and he had a brother to inherit the modest paternal estate and bear the munera publica, now becoming a crushing burden. The way was clear for him to push on to fame and fortune. Two careers were open, either of which might bring him wealth, high official position and social distinction. His parents destined him for the Law. He decided, however, to enter the profession of Oratory, success in which assured a leading place in the world of culture.

This, however, demanded a prolonged period of education, extending to the twentieth year. For the secondary and advanced stages the curriculum was long established and stereotyped, and may be traced back to Isocrates and Plato in the fourth century B.C. Isocrates aimed at the formation of a ready speaker or writer on subjects of common concern, and offered an education merely literary and rhetorical. Plato's ideal was the philosopher-statesman; for whom he believed a rigorous scientific, i.e., a mathematical, education was necessary. Between these schools there was rivalry and controversy; but sometime in the Hellenistic age the two curricula were combined to form a scheme of preparatory education for everyone who would pretend to be a man of culture. The ἐγκύκλια παιδεῖα embraced "The Seven Liberal Arts", viz. Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy and Music. But this comprehensive scheme remained something of a remote ideal. No school seems actually to have existed which provided a specialist teacher for each of these Arts. The ordinary student had two teachers only, the Grammaticus and the Rhetorician, from whose comments on classical texts and the pupil's compositions was drawn such knowledge of the Arts as was acquired.

Cicero inherited the Hellenistic tradition, and for the Latin West his De Oratore remained the authoritative exposition of the ideal. It is not an educational treatise, but a discussion of the accomplishments of the Perfect Orator, and, inasmuch as Cicero claims for the Orator the super-eminent place in social life which Plato ascribes to the Philosopher (" By his judgment and wisdom . . . the welfare of the whole State is principally upheld "), these accomplishments must be most far-reaching, " knowledge of everything important and of all Liberal Arts " (De Orat, 1. 8). The Liberal Arts form his preparatory education, *Puerilis institutio*, and he must add in adult life a *politior humanitas*, i.e., a profound knowledge of History, Law and Philosophy. As Cicero proceeds there are protests from legal specialists who feel that their province is being invaded; and cries of alarm from two young students aspiring to become orators. He has to admit that the orator may brush along with a fairly modest knowledge of many matters on which he may consult a specialist at need. In particular he need not be a profound philosopher—enough if he can garnish his discourse with anecdotes and sentiments from the philosophers. In short, all knowledge is valued as an aid to oratory, and even Cicero gives some excuse for paring down the amount required, an excuse of which his successors were not slow to avail themselves.

Moreover, the Ciceronian ideal of the Orator-Statesman ceased to have any meaning under the Empire. His own career seemed to realize it, for had not he, a novus homo from Arpinum, by his oratorical talents alone risen through all the grades of honour, become the apparent leader of the Optimates, and been hailed as Pater Patriae? But around him mightier forces were at work which finally overthrew and crushed him. These produced the Empire which put an end to political oratory. The Orator, indeed, remained as the final ideal of cultured humanity but his subjects were trivial, if not quite divorced from real life. Form became more of importance than matter, and scientific as distinct from literary knowledge, correspondingly, appeared to be less and less necessary.

A further point deserves attention. Cicero was educated in Athens as well as in Rome and was practically bilingual. But his patriotic ambition was to make Latin Literature the equal of that of Greece. In every *genre* the celebrated writers of Greece were to have their counterparts in Rome. Undeterred by the

opinion of Varro (quoted in Acad. I. 4) that a knowledge of Greek would always be necessary for the serious student of philosophy, he wrote his philosophical works partly at least in order that Roman youths might find all the philosophical culture they needed in the mother tongue. In any case Cicero and Vergil between them gave Latin full status as a cultural language; the first step to its being regarded as the only language necessary for educated people in the West, and perhaps to a general decline of culture.

This brings us at last to Augustine setting out on his studies with Cicero before him and the Seven Arts prescribed upon his programme, but with only the Grammaticus and the Rhetor to instruct him. Of the two, the rhetor was the more influential. He put the finishing touches to the product, teaching not only the rules of the art but also its practice. Much more solid was the contribution of the grammaticus, for he taught not only grammar in the strict sense but also all that may come under the name of Literature—introduction, textual and literary criticism and interpretation, in the form of laboured footnotes to every line, almost to every word of the text studied, together with *excursus* on important matters of learned interest. From this commentary the student derived his knowledge of history, science, etc., in short his *eruditio*. He might thus accumulate and memorize a vast store of learning, miscellaneous and unsystematic, and fettered to the classical literature of the past.

Through this curriculum Augustine passed not without distinction, for he had immense capacity and a prodigious memory. In his twentieth year he graduated, as we might say, *Vir Eloquentissimus atque Doctissimus*, and immediately entered on his profession of rhetorician, first humbly in his native Tagaste, then at Carthage, later at Rome; finally he obtained an important appointment at Milan, the permanent residence of the western Imperial Court and its powerful and well-to-do hangers-on. Their sons would be his admiring pupils. To one of their daughters, presumably, an heiress of tender years, he became affianced. In 386 he had the distinction of orating in praise of the child Emperor Valentinian II in presence of the Court, for which, in addition to present plaudits, more material rewards might be expected in due course—a province, a prefecture, the Consulship, a high office on the staff

of the Sacred Palace. Definitely he had arrived, and might have lived out his days happily but for us insignificantly.

II

But something had happened long before, in his nineteenth year. Towards the end of his student period, in the ordinary course of study, he had to read the Hortensius of Cicero, perhaps the most sincere of his philosophical works, written when the death of his daughter Tullia had really touched his heart. This would give poignancy to his Exhortation to Philosophy as the way of the happy life. " With an incredible heat of heart I desired the immortality of Wisdom," says Augustine, and, " That book quite changed my affection, and changed my prayers to Thee Lord." Whatever exaggeration these words may contain—he did not abandon his chosen career—they certainly signalize an intellectual awakening. He took a new interest in the religion of his mother which was also nominally his own, and read the Bible for the first time with disastrous results. The stylist and the moralist in him were repelled and he dabbled in a rationalist form of Christianity known as Manicheeism, for a time. Of much greater importance was his realization that a philosopher needs a wider and profounder knowledge than a rhetorician. He at once set about reading all the books he could find on rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, music and arithmetic, to fill up the gaps in his education (Conf. IV, 16). The only book mentioned by name is Aristotle's *Categories*; the rest he may have found in Varro's *Encyclopaedia*. He was delighted to find that he could understand all this without the aid of a teacher, but it is quite plain that he never did acquire any extensive scientific knowledge, though he carried on these studies at least intermittently in the scanty hours of leisure from his teaching duties (Conf. VI, 11). But for ten tears the studium sapientiae sadly lagged, in spite, it would seem, of recurrent pangs of regret.

The exact meaning of Augustine's conversion has been much discussed. He certainly abandoned his teaching post with all the ambitions associated with it, for the otium liberale of the contemplative life, and he accepted baptism from Ambrose. But some will have it that he was converted to Neoplatonism rather than to Christianity. It is true that he devoted himself

to the pursuit of Wisdom; i.e., to philosophy, and not to the study of the Bible or Christian doctrine, which have but little place in his philosophical works. Yet he claims to be following an injunction of St. Paul; and from a (mis)translation of Isaiah vii. 9 he draws his fundamental principle, " Crede ut intelligas ", which means that faith is the indispensable starting point for all reasoning. In any case not even in his most rabidly theological days does he disown these early works; not even the De Libero Arbitrio, which seemed to give a handle to the Pelagians. Apart from a few minor details he recognized them to the end of his life as unexceptionably Christian.

What concerns us here is not the nature of his philosophy, or how far he has merely exchanged the guidance of Cicero for that of Plotinus, but his new attitude to education. The change was accompanied by a new zeal for the Liberal arts. In his early work on the Order of the World he soon becomes involved in difficulties. Such a subject can only be understood and handled by the Sapiens, and the Sapiens is one who has prepared himself by a thorough study of the arts. Leaving aside the Order of the World meantime, Augustine therefore passes to consider the Order of preparatory studies which form the only conceivable approach to Wisdom. " Aut illo ordine eruditionis aut nullo modo " (De Ord. 2. 17). Without this a man must remain among the multitude of stulti. Now this is no mere smoke-screen to facilitate escape from a difficulty. It is evident that in the seclusion of Cassiciacum Augustine went back again to his studies in the pursuit of Sapientia. Moreover he had with him two young men for whose education he had made himself responsible. They were destined for the philosophical career, and he exercises them gently in philosophical discussions. Nevertheless they must start from the bottom with the study of grammar. One of them is made to persevere with his poem on Piramus and Thisbe assured that the manufacture of elegiac couplets will contribute to make him a Sapiens one day. Moreover on his return to Milan for his Baptism he actually undertook to write an encyclopaedia of his own, the Disciplinarum Libri, of which, however, he succeeded in completing only the De Grammatica, the only subject he was really proficient in. But he also wrote six books De Musica, and sketched out treatises on the other arts.

It was not that Augustine pretended to be or even wished

to become an expert in any or all of the arts. To become an expert would be to side-track the whole scheme which was to subordinate the arts strictly to philosophy. Enough to know the elements of each, its axioms, postulates and definitions, and to have some idea of how they are to be applied. This will exercise the mind for dealing with abstract truth, help over the difficulty of conceiving of incorporeal existence, yield examples and analogies that reason may use to establish the immateriality and immortality of the soul and the existence of God. This whole scheme of things he never abandoned. In his review of the Disciplinarum Libri in *Retractationes* I. 6, he states his purpose in writing them. " Per corporalia cupiens ad incorporalia quibusdam quasi passibus certis vel pervenire vel ducere." Writing now as an undoubted Christian theologian not only does he not disown these books but commends them as serviceable for purely Christian training.

III

A further stage supervened. In 391 against his will he was ordained presbyter in Hippo, becoming its bishop in 395. The otium liberale had to be exchanged for " the life of the city ", and the burden of ecclesiastical affairs. The man of culture came to know simple Christian folk, sound in faith and (some of them) saintly in life, people who knew nothing of scholastic education and, indeed, viewed it with suspicion; people whose literature was not Vergil but some rough Latin version of the Scriptures, in fact, the " stulti " of his philosophic works. This was a new world for the intellectual aristocrat, and the full measure of the change which took place in him may be gauged from a judgment that occasionally glides from his pen. Any Christian old woman knows more of the truth than Plato or the philosophers. In such " humility " the prayers and example of his mother bore their fruit.

Moreover, from 391 began his intensive study of the Scriptures and the deepening influence upon him of the Pauline doctrine of Grace and of the Fall. In 397, under this new impulse, he undertook a review of his past life and education on which the Confessions pass the sharpest criticisms. It was all wrong in aim, method and content. Human glory and worldly wealth were the objects for which he was urged to excel in the *linguosae*

artes. He was forced by the rod along the *aerumnosae viae* of the traditional course. His masters were more careful of his grammar than of his morals. The literature studied was filled with lascivious tales of the gods. The eloquence bought and sold was empty, windy, false. Of what use were the arts called liberal to one who did not know God as the author of all truth? Erudition was the vain fruit of idle curiosity, better called " the lust of the eye ". Even philosophy came under his lash for its pride and pretension. " O flumen moris humani . . . flumen tartareum . . . " he apostrophises the educational tradition of antiquity, and one might suppose that he had broken with it completely, so far as that might be possible.

Yet in the Confessions there is evidence that this is not so. He gives unqualified praise indeed only to his infant training under the humble litterator with his three Rs, but at the other end of the scale he acknowledges his debt to the platonists who taught him to seek incorporeal truth. All through it was good that he was forced to his book. All his knowledge of literature, the arts, rhetoric, can now be put to a better use than had been intended, so that all the while God had been his teacher. " Whatever good I learned as a boy, unto Thy service let it be directed. That I can write and read and count let all serve Thee. When I learned vain things, Thou didst discipline me and forgavest my delight in them. In these studies I learned many useful words, but these might also have been learned in studies not so vain, which is the safest way for boys to walk in " (Conf. I, 15). It is a pity he did not develop this suggestion. Nevertheless a positive valuation of the educational tradition was even now occupying his thoughts, to which he gave expression in *De Doctrina Christiana*, begun while he was engaged on the Confessions, though not completed till much later. What is the nature of this work?

The opening sentence of the preface suggests that it is to be a book of useful rules for the handling of Scripture for students thereof, i.e. a book of Hermeneutics. But it is manifestly more than that. Again at the beginning of Book I he lays down that there are two things on which all treatment of Scripture depends—the manner of finding out the meaning, and the manner of expounding the meaning; suggesting in the language of his day a course of Scriptural " grammar and rhetoric ". This and something more is implied in the title, for,

of course, the word *Doctrina* must be taken in its classical sense. Etymologically it means something taught, regularly and methodically. More specifically it means a branch of science or learning, and in this sense it is used by Augustine in this work (II, 29 and 58). Finally it can denote the sum of knowledge taught and acquired, i.e., science in the comprehensive sense. This seems to be the meaning of the word in Augustine's title. What he is offering is a sketch of the accomplishments of a Christian Vir doctus et eloquens, a Christian counterpart to the *De Oratore* of Cicero.

For whom is the book intended? In Book IV, the subject of which is rhetoric, he has obviously in mind Christian preachers and teachers, i.e., clergy, but he is far from any idea of drawing up a scheme of education for the ministry. The study of formal rhetoric is for young men only and is not to be imposed upon men of maturer years who may aspire to the ministry. Even in the case of young men whom " we desire to have educated for the service of the Church " it is expected only of such as have nothing more pressing to do! (IV, 4) Christian Oratory is not a matter of rules, and he can appeal to Cicero, who freely recognised that formal rhetoric was the task of the *puerilis aetas* only, and that *ingenium* was of greater importance than rules. But Books I to III have no reference to the education of clerics. Augustine is writing for " studious and able youths who fear God and seek the happy life ", i.e., Christian lads of capacity, means and leisure, who would normally be attending schools " outside the pale of the Church " (praeter ecclesiam) II, 58. They are not necessarily to be kept away from such schools, but are to be warned carefully to distinguish among the Doctrinae taught there, and to separate the useful from the superstitious, the superfluous and the harmful (II, 58).

Marrou maintains that Augustine took a step in advance of all his Christian predecessors in conceiving the idea of a wholly Christian culture. But this passage does not go beyond Tertullian who, while declaring that no Christian may be a schoolmaster or teacher of heathen literature, recognised that Christian boys who are to have education may legitimately get it in the heathen schools, and must reject all they hear there which smacks of heathenism. Augustine at most goes further in suggesting how the old disciplines may be adapted to Christian use, but he does not even dream of organising as Origen had done

a completely Christian school, without which a Christian culture would seem to be rather in the air.

IV

The ideal of *De Doct. Christ.* is, then, Vir Christianus Doctus et Eloquens, learned in the Scriptures and eloquent in expounding them. What of Sapientia, Augustine's highest ideal till now? Indeed there is little reference to it in this work. At the end of, perhaps as the climax to, his list of Disciplinae useful for the Christian, he adds a brief section on Philosophy. " The so-called philosophers and especially the Platonists, have uttered things true and in agreement with our Faith—certain most valuable moral precepts, yes, and even the doctrine of monotheism. Not that they found these out by themselves unaided by the divine providence. (Elsewhere, and also in this book, he ascribes the truth in Platonism to an alleged meeting of Plato with Jeremiah in Egypt, or at all events to the priority of Moses to Homer and Pythagoras.) But they have prostituted them to the worship of demons. The Christian must claim these as his own and put them to the proper use of preaching the Gospel" (II, 60). We may note a similarity to Cicero's view of Philosophy ad usum oratoris. But Augustine here hardly does justice to a fact which he knew very well, viz., that philosophy and especially Platonism professed to be more than a system or rational truth—to be the way to Sapientia and equally to the Beata Vita.

His attitude to Platonism had indeed changed since his first acquaintance with Plotinus. Then, with many of his contemporaries, he had believed that here was authentic Christianity with but few verbal differences. Now he prefers to stress the gulf fixed between. Gilson will not allow that this process is to be described as " éloignement graduel de la philosophie et conversion de plus en plus totale à la théologie ". But while since his conversion faith upon authority had been the starting-point of his reasoning, orthodoxy became its frame and end.

Yet Neoplatonism left its mark. In the first book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, he gives a rapid résumé of what he believes to be the core of Scripture teaching, the essence of Christian orthodoxy, ethic as well as creed; a rule of faith governing all Scripture interpretation. The specifically Christian doctrines

are there—the Trinity, the Incarnation, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, the Forgiveness of sins at Baptism " in the Church ", Bodily Resurrection to Heaven or Hell, the commandments to love GOD and one's neighbour and the three graces, faith, hope and love. But the whole is highly coloured with Neoplatonic ideas and its characteristic terms abound—The Ineffability and Immutability of God, the grades of being with proof of the existence of God, the grades of value (corporalia and incorporalia) with the corresponding attitudes of use and enjoyment (uti et frui), the tranquil patria of the soul. Summarising he says, " The plenitude and end of all holy Scripture is *dilectio rei qua fruendum est et rei quae nobiscum ea re frui potest.* . . . We should know, and be able to act on the knowledge, that the whole temporal dispensation was so made by divine providence for our salvation that we should use it not with an abiding love and delight but with a transient one " (I, 39)—a clearly Neoplatonic expansion of the Gospel Sum of the Law and the Prophets. All this he does not designate Sapientia but objects of faith (res continentes fidem) which if a man believe and act upon he may without fear approach the interpretation of all Scripture (I, 44).

It does not matter much whether this is to be called Fides or Sapientia. Augustine believed it to be derived directly from the plain places of Scripture and to be hidden in the obscure places, and the use he proposes for it is to serve as a rule governing all interpretation of Scripture. But an important question emerges. Does this Sum of Saving Knowledge, once arrived at and lived by, render Scripture unnecessary? Neoplatonism had already raised for him the question of the necessity of Scripture, and his answer while in the negative is curiously reasoned (Conf. VII, 20). In *De Doctr. Christ.* (I, 43) he says, " A man relying on faith, hope and love and retaining them unshaken (i.e., the Sum of Saving knowledge and Practice) does not need the Scriptures except to teach others. So, many in virtue of these three (graces) live in solitude without copies of the Scriptures, in whom is fulfilled, I think, the apostolic word, Prophecies shall vanish away, tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away." Now these are contemplative hermits, who were traditionally regarded as philosophers or Sapientes. It is their Sapientia, intellectual *and* ethical, that carries them beyond the need of Scripture. I half suspect another vestige of

the philosophical attitude to underlie II, 9-11. Here Augustine enumerates seven steps in a religious progress towards Wisdom itself. The *third* step is the Scripture knowledge which forms the subject of the Book but the *seventh and ultimate* step is Wisdom itself, enjoyed in peace and tranquillity. The *De Doctrina Christiana* is therefore not a book for the would-be Christian Sapiens, but for those who can be content with a more modest kind of Scientia.

V

The traditional education for men of ordinary culture had been solidly based on the careful study of classical texts, above all of Vergil. The staple of education for the Christian of similar type will be the Scriptures. How close the parallel might be felt is seen in De Vera Religione, an early anti-Manichaean work. Augustine points out that a man wishing to understand Vergil would compass sea and land to find the best possible teacher. So should it be in the case of Scripture. But he has moved a long way from that position. True, there are places in *De Doct. Christ.* where Augustine seems to become once more the old grammaticus handling a literary text. But not for long does he forget that this is the Divine Scriptures, and requires a reverential approach. Let the " instructed student of Holy Scripture " not cease to meditate the apostolic word, Scientia inflat, Charitas aedificat. Let him therefore remain meek and lowly in heart.

Nevertheless Scripture *is* a written text and so susceptible to the techniques of the grammaticus—textual criticism and emendation, grammar and syntax, explanation of meaning, literary criticism, i.e., noting style, rhythm, figures of speech, etc. Of all this Augustine gives many examples and shows himself an expert as we might expect. But Scripture presents quite unusual difficulties; partly because it was a non-literary document. Both in grammar and style he had once felt that it was " unworthy to be compared to the dignity of the Ciceronian eloquence ". This does not trouble him now. Examples of all the ornaments of style can be found, and there were probably more of them in the original tongues. Jerome, e.g., a very learned man, had described the metres used in the Psalms. The various figures of speech noted, named and admired by the rhetoricians occur, and occasionally even rhythmical endings

which Augustine does not himself neglect, " but is well pleased to find very rarely in the sacred authors " (IV, 41).

More serious was the variety of the Latin versions in use. It looked as if " in the early days of the faith every man who chanced to get his hands upon a Greek MS., and who thought he had even a little knowledge of both tongues ventured upon the work of translation " (II, 16). Inconvenient though this is it provokes to more careful study, and Augustine devotes considerable ingenuity to showing that different translations either confirm one another, or give, each, a great truth. Curiously enough the basic text of his early Christian philosophy, Isaiah vii, 9 (Nisi credideritis non intelligetis) had another rendering (. . . non permanebitis). But that does not disconcert him, for he can show how both mean the same thing (II, 17). He had, however, some hankering after an authorized version as may be inferred from his preference for the Itala (II, 22). Presumably this was the version in use in Milan, and of course he was no untravelled African provincial. But he actively opposed Jerome's undertaking of a new and better translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, partly as unsettling for the people. How many sermons and theological arguments of his own would thus be invalidated!

Augustine knows well enough that in the last resort appeal must be made to the original tongues. " Knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is therefore necessary for men of Latin speech whom I have undertaken to instruct." But he is a gentle taskmaster. Of Greek he says no more. We know that he had himself enough to refer to the New Testament and the LXX, which he apparently kept before him while writing some but not all of his commentaries. But of Hebrew he was quite innocent, necessary though he declares it to be, nor does he demand it of his scholars. Instead he supplies them with what we would call excuses for leaving it alone. After all, scholars have explained the few Hebrew words and names left untranslated in Scripture. In any case the Greek LXX is as much divinely inspired as is the Hebrew Bible. Where they differ both readings are right, the Holy Spirit having miraculously given to the Seventy a translation better suited to the Gentiles. " No one man ought to or becomingly should aspire to correct the consensus of so many senior and learned men " (II, 22). So much for Jerome. It should perhaps be added that Augustine

had another reason for his opposition to a new translation from the Hebrew, viz., that the LXX was the authorised version of the Old Testament in the Greek Church, and he does not wish the Latin Church to seem to break unity in this particular.

But Scripture presents still greater difficulties. To Augustine it was always an obscure Book, plain in places but for the most part filled with mysterious riddles. This obscurity was due largely to his own presuppositions. Things were said in the Old Testament of God and the Patriarchs that he felt to be intellectually and morally offensive. Hence the rule—Whatever in the divine word cannot be appropriately referred to good morals or to the truth of the faith must be recognized as figurative" (III, 14)—a rule which clearly strains all historical actuality out of the Old Testament. Since he learned from Ambrose the Allegorical method of Scripture interpretation no text was more constantly in his mind than " The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life ". The obscurity of Scripture becomes almost a divine boon. " I do not doubt that it was divinely provided to subdue pride with toil and to recall the mind from disdain, which too often holds as of little value the things it finds out too easily " (II, 7). Augustine, the intellectual, here gets his opportunity, and simply revels in allegorical research. In escaping from the vulgar rationalism of Manichaean literalism, he plunged into the higher rationalism of the philosophers who by allegory discovered profound truth hidden in the offensive myths of paganism. To the principles of allegorical exegesis he devotes the greater part of Book III.

VI

Without doubt to Augustine's mind the interpretation of Scripture demands above all the literary method of the grammaticus, and the quasi-philosophical method of allegory. But there are other sciences that can be of more occasional use. It is impossible to do more than outline the encyclopaedia of studies sketched in Book II, 29-63, with its curious classification of the " *genera doctrinarum* in vogue among the gentiles ". The first main division, into A. Sciences concerned with *Instituta hominum*; and B. Sciences concerned with Investigata; corresponds to the old distinction between *νόμος* and *φύσις*. But the subdivision of A. into (i) Superstitious (religious observances,

divination, astrology, charms, etc.), (ii) Superfluous (painting, sculpture, Belles-lettres), and (iii) Useful (social arrangements) is his own.

The subdivision of B. into (i) Empirical Sciences, pertaining *ad sensus corporis*; and (ii) Rational Sciences, pertaining *ad rationem animi*; calls for no comment. But the Empirical group of "Sciences" is indeed curious: (*a*) History, (*b*) Geography and Natural History, (*c*) Astronomy, (*d*) The mechanical arts, e.g., building, the arts where man co-operates with God, e.g., medicine, agriculture, navigation; finally dancing, racing and wrestling!! On what principle these last are included is indeed explained but remains to me obscure.

What he has to say about History is most interesting here. "History is not itself to be numbered among the institutions of men, for things which are past and cannot be undone are to be reckoned as belonging to the order of time of which God is the author and administrator. . . . Historia facta narrat fideliter atque utiliter" (II, 44). Shades of Ranke! The example he gives of this utility is in fact a mare's nest, the old story that Plato learned his philosophy from Jeremiah in Egypt, or at all events that Moses was prior even to Plato's teacher in theology, Pythagoras, so that chronology makes it probable that those philosophers learnt whatever they said that was good and true from our literature. Moreover, Augustine's use of History in De Civit. Dei inspired Orosius to write his controversial *Historiarum adversus paganos Libri Septem*. Nevertheless the Judaeo-Christian conception of World History as a Divinely controlled process making for a Divinely established goal, was an important corrective of the Graeco-Roman conception of history as a series of unrelated types or *exempla* of moral excellence or depravity.

Finally of the Sciences of the mind alone Augustine enumerates (*a*) Dialectic of which he was himself a master both in theory and practice, and which he finds in high perfection in St. Paul; (*b*) Arithmetic, or rather the Neopythagorean symbolical interpretation of numbers, to which he was pathetically addicted; (*c*) Formal Rhetoric, the rules of which are no conventions of men but are deduced from the observed effects of different kinds of oratory. He here omits the sciences of Geometry and Music, but the latter at least has been already dealt with earlier in the book.

It is needless to attempt any elucidation of the principles

of this classification. Augustine shares with his age the passion for rational, a priori, grandiose and unnatural classifications. It is an attempt to embrace Cicero's " everything of importance and all the liberal arts ". But having set forth the grand ideal Augustine, like Cicero, proceeds to pare it down. It is altogether reasonable that the Christian *Doctus* should reject what is superstitious or ministers to sense-pleasures, even though it be painting and sculpture. Christian art when it arose would have a serious religious, i.e., a didactic purpose, and would long be confined to symbolism. But furthermore, " In the other *doctrinae* I think there is nothing useful except the description (historial) of things past or present, among those pertaining to the senses . . . and, among the rational sciences, Dialectic and Arithmetic ". The passage is not very clear but he seems to be selecting four sciences as specially useful, though he is not too happy about History and Natural History inasmuch as Volvuntur temporibus et continentur locis, i.e., they belong to the realm of space and time.

But even here he will not be too exacting. The rule must be, in the words of Terence, Ne quid nimis; and he goes on to suggest a way of lightening the burden. What Jerome has done for Hebrew words and names, and Eusebius for Chronology, some able and kindly Christian might do for the other sciences, " ut non sit necesse Christiano in multis propter pauca laborare ". One feels a certain shock at this sudden and violent abandonment of the ideal of encyclopaedic training, and the easy acquiescence in a series of short popular text-books. But this is not a failing peculiar to Augustine. It was the characteristic of his time. Indeed, it goes back to Cicero himself who preached up the ideal but did not insist on its realisation, and who accepted without question the narrow Roman view that knowledge is valuable because of its immediate utility. But Augustine has this further justification. He is thinking only of what will be useful for the interpretation of Scripture, and not of the necessities of a general culture; of how much gentile learning the Christian may take as the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians, to serve his religious purpose. Whatever he takes it will be poor by comparison with the treasures of Scripture in which he will find his culture perfected, " Whatever a man learns outside, if it is harmful, it is there condemned. If it is useful it is found there. . . . Yea and much more abundantly

he will find there things that are to be found nowhere else at all". In his peroration, at all events, Augustine declar s for the absolute sufficiency of Scripture.

VII

Finally, Book IV treats of Eloquentia ecclesiastica, the expression in speech or writing of the Doctrina attained by the methods hitherto described. If in Books I-III the influence of Cicero is perceptible, here it becomes obvious, for Augustine quotes him frequently though never by name; as if, like Jerome, he were ashamed to be thought a Ciceronian still.

He does not propose to write a book of formal Rhetoric which must now be learned from others. But its rules are not to be despised. They are useful in the cause of truth, and may well be studied by Christian boys of leisure and capacity, though, of course, they are no substitute for *ingenium*. These rules are not mere human conventions. They are laws derived from scientific observation of the effects actually produced by masters of eloquence, i.e., of facts given in the nature of things as God has made them. Hence it is no marvel that the Scripture writers, who are God's orators, should neither shun eloquence nor make an ostentatious display of it. It is natural for them to combine eloquence and wisdom, which is simply " to express truth in fit and proper words " (61), the right aim of all rhetoric.

Modern writers have often spoken enthusiastically of the literary merits of the Bible. It was not so easy in Augustine's time to do so, partly because the Latin versions were quite unliterary. Augustine himself had once despised the Bible on stylistic grounds. He knew the taste of his age, and continued to share it perhaps more than he realised. He seems to admit that Scripture has " an eloquence all its own ", simple yet sublime, different from that of the schools (10); yet he joyfully points out that it contains examples of all the refinements taught by the rhetors; periods, figures of speech, varied styles, even a few harmonious endings! Its differentia is not the complete absence of such niceties, but that it uses them but rarely and is not enslaved by them.

What Augustine now insists upon is that matter is of greater importance than form, wisdom than elegance. So indeed had Cicero taught, but the lesson had long been lost. Not perhaps

in theory. The rhetors probably knew that their formal school exercises in themselves were as vain and lifeless as, e.g., the school Latin proses of to-day. They were intended simply to train the faculties of the pupil for better things to come. But in practice orators had nothing very important to say, and so gave all their attention to the manner of saying it. Christianity changed all that. Christian oratory has really important themes. Even if it be only a trifle like a cup of cold water . . . " all that we say should have reference to man's eternal salvation. Where eternal destruction is to be avoided, all the themes of our discourse are great themes ". There is, therefore, no place, at any rate in the pulpit, for vain and empty eloquence, and against that Augustine has many a sincere and bitter word.

Not, it would appear, without good reason. Such is the force of habit, such was the public taste of the time, that this kind of elegance is found invading the preaching of the Church, and even the writings of the Fathers. The blessed Cyprian *once* covered a trifling idea with " the spume of ornamental verbiage ", perhaps to show what he could do if he chose, or perhaps to let posterity see from what exuberance of tongue the sanity of Christian teaching had saved him! Augustine had admired Ambrose as a stylist before attending to what he was actually saying. It seems the Christian preacher often received applause even when he did not seek it. It gave scandal to Chrisostom; and Augustine, who also received it on occasion, would prefer that a discourse should yield more solid results. Tears rather than cheers are the sign that a lesson has gone home, or that repentance has begun.

With all his genuine abhorrence of eloquent trifling the ex-rhetorician naturally retains a lively sense of the real power of words and oratory over men, and would fain harness this power to the service of the Church. " The interpreter and teacher of the Divine Scriptures, the defender of the true faith and the debellator of error " cannot, ought not, to forego the use of this mighty weapon which experience has shown to be potent in teaching the truth, in refuting falsehood, in conciliating the hostile, in challenging the remiss, in persuading the wavering, in rousing the emotions, in bending the wills of men. His task is, after all, none other than that of the orator, as defined by the great master of Roman eloquence in the three words: Docēre, Delectare, Flectĕre.

Of these by far the most important for the Christian is teaching, the exposition of the truth, the clearing up of difficulties, and the refutation of error. Here the primary consideration is clarity. The teacher must above all things be understood, even at the cost of sacrificing ornaments of speech, learned quotations, subtle allusions, aye even the classical grammar where it no longer corresponds to popular usage. And clarity will bring its own reward. The audience will evince its appreciation by its deportment, and may even applaud a clever solution of a knotty problem. Next to teaching is the necessity from time to time to stir the hearts and bend the wills of the hearers, to persuade them to do what is right or to refrain from doing what is wrong; or whatever may be the appropriate equivalent of " marching against Philip ". And Augustine tells in illustration how he himself had by a sermon succeeded in eradicating inveterate gangsterism from a city of Mauritania.

But both these things may be done well or done badly, in an attractive or in a repellent manner, and it is obvious which is preferable. Here Augustine finds himself under the necessity of making room for " pleasing ". Never for its own sake, of course, but in the service of a higher purpose. He would not have his Eloquens Ecclesiasticus a bore, however true his doctrine or however lofty his ideal. In teaching he must know to stop when he has made his point, or else to pass on to another. In exhorting he must not exhaust his hearers by continuing too long in the majestic mode. He should use all the styles described by Cicero, the subdued, the moderate, the majestic, and should vary them to suit his topic and to prevent weariness. Would he have examples for his study and imitation, he can find them in Scripture and in the writings of the Fathers, especially of Cyprian and Ambrose. He has no need to go beyond Christian resources for his models. Moreover, when he has made full preparation he should pray before he speaks, remembering the Lord's word, " Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." No doubt this was spoken specially of the hour of persecution, but why should it not apply also to those who deliver Christ's message to those who are willing to learn?

Once again Augustine cannot refrain from pointing out an easier way. Let the Christian preacher speak with eloquence

and wisdom if he can. If not, let him speak wisely without eloquence. If he cannot do even this, let his manner of living be an eloquent sermon in itself. But the possibilities are not therewith exhausted. Some men have a good delivery but can compose nothing to deliver. Let such a man take a wise and eloquent discourse written by another, commit it to memory and deliver it to the people. He is not to be blamed, provided he do it without deception. So many become preachers of the truth and yet "not many teachers". It is disconcerting to think that he should bring this Book to an end on such a note. But could the great ex-rhetorician have given more striking proof of the sincerity and completeness of his conversion? Even if we feel that here he "doth protest too much" or has gone to quite unreasonable and dangerous extremes, we shall gladly acknowledge the value of his ideal of an Oratory brought back to clarity, directness, reality.

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