ST. AUGUSTINE

ASPECTS OF HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

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PREFACE

ST. AUGUSTINE has been described as "the first modern man." A statement of that kind can always be attacked from various points of view; it can also be defended. I quote it here neither for attack nor for defence, but simply to focus an impression. It may serve, that is, to suggest a certain unity of purpose underlying the series of studies here offered to the reader. For they will deal, at least chiefly, with those aspects of his life and thought which appeal most readily to us as moderns.

In the case of all the great figures of European history, in some respects they stand in lines of development which have come down to us, and along these lines it is comparatively easy to reascend to them. In other respects they belong to their own time, in ways that render them remote from us and make it a matter of long and painful study to think ourselves back

into their thoughts and surroundings. The historian must not of course neglect this more difficult task, but it is obviously sound method to make a first approach along the lines of less resistance.

In the case of a man like St. Augustine, who has left his permanent mark for good and ill upon the Western civilisation amid which we stand, it is natural that there should be many of these lines along which it is comparatively easy to approach him. And this way of approach has for most of us a special fascination. Andrew Lang has somewhere remarked that "there is a peculiar pleasure in finding ourselves, our common humanity, our puzzles, our cares, our joys, in the writings of men severed from us by race and speech and [he is speaking, of course, of a more remote era] half the gulf of recorded time."

Such were the general considerations which I had in mind in selecting materials for a course of lectures upon St. Augustine given in the Lent Term of last year in St. John's College, Cambridge. The lectures were not directed especially to examination requirements, but received some encouragement from various quarters as an attempt to promote, in some small degree, a

wider interest in Church History. The scope of the lectures would perhaps best be defined by saying that they were intended, not indeed as a general introduction to St. Augustine—a much more ambitious undertaking—but as a series of introductions to particular aspects of his thought. They were intended, that is, to provide the student with a choice of starting-points, from one or other of which, according to his tastes and previous training, he might usefully approach the study of this great and many-sided figure.

That is the genesis of the studies which are here offered to a wider audience. They have been carefully revised and to some extent recast, but I have not attempted to remove all traces of their origin.

In a book of this kind it is hardly necessary to give a bibliography, but among works to which I have been indebted I should like to mention especially G. J. Seyrich, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Augustins* (Chemnitz, 1891); Joseph Mausbach, *Die Ethik des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1909); W. Thimme, *Augustin, Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild auf Grund seiner Briefe* (Göttingen, 1910); R. C. Trench, *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount drawn from the*

Writings of St. Augustine (London, 1869), with its valuable introductory essay.

The lectures were written before I came across M. Bertrand's articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It seems worth while to mention this, as it gives the value of independent agreement to the concurrence of our views regarding what may be called the "economics" of the Cassiciacum period—a point which, so far as I know, had not previously been so clearly brought out.

As regards the translations, I have made my own wherever it appeared desirable to do so, but in many cases I have been glad to avail myself of the generally admirable rendering in Dods' *Select Works of St. Augustine* (by various translators), which do not, however, include the Early Dialogues or the psychologically important *De Genesi ad Litteram*.

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I

ST. AUGUSTINE THE MAN—CHARACTER AND TEMPERAMENT

WHAT manner of man was St. Augustine? There are probably few figures of antiquity in regard to whom there exist fuller materials for answering such a question. Every one knows of the famous *Confessions*, but only those who have studied him with some care have any idea how much material of a personal kind is scattered up and down his works. He was of those writers who cannot help revealing themselves; and not only in those "orthodox sources" for biography, memoirs and letters, but in the midst of the severest theological disquisitions, you will suddenly come upon these little personal touches. I am not even sure that a scientific biographer would regard the *Confessions* as his primary source for a knowledge of Augustine's temperament and character. To say that is not to throw any doubt upon his good faith; he writes with a sincerity which has probably

never been surpassed in this type of literature. But it is in a sense a work of art. The dominant interest is religious, and the whole has the definite emphasis and subordination which the unifying purpose of a work of art necessarily involves. So it seems possible that the biographer might prefer the less conscious self-revelations found elsewhere. The attempt to combine the whole of these scattered touches into a portrait would doubtless be worth making, but the task would be quite unmanageable on the present scale. What shall be attempted here is not a finished full-length, but a portrait-sketch, and one ventures to draw some slight—perhaps delusive—encouragement from remembering how often in the case of actual portraiture the rough sketch contrives to be more lifelike than the finished portrait.

Let us take, then, as our starting-point, not the *Confessions* but some of the less-known early works, which offer certain advantages of their own. Man is a social animal, and we get to know the individual best, not by analysing him in isolation but by observing him in a definite environment, in his relations with his fellow-men and with the external world. In these works we have, by good fortune, the opportunity of observing Augustine in a certain definite *milieu*, which is sufficiently restricted

to be easily grasped, and of which he has himself given us a remarkably interesting picture.

That curious interlude in his life, his retirement to Cassiciacum, is passed over rather lightly in the *Confessions*, but it lives for us in a number of incidental touches in the Dialogues written at that period. After his conversion, as we are summarily told in the ninth Book of the *Confessions*, he withdrew, accompanied by his mother and a few friends and pupils, to a country house, placed at his disposal by one of his friends in Milan. There he spent several months. The significance of this retirement for his inner life was doubtless that he there adjusted the intellectual relationships of his new faith, but the aspect in which we chiefly see him in the Dialogues is that of "guide, philosopher, and friend" to the younger men, teaching them, stimulating their thought, rallying them, on occasion, with a pleasant humour. It will put the picture, I think, in an interesting perspective if I borrow a happy suggestion made by my friend, Professor Gibb, in his introduction to our joint edition of the *Confessions*, and work it out in some detail. "A comparison has been instituted," writes Dr. Gibb, "between them [that is, Augustine and his little company] and Cicero with his philosophical friends in the shades of Tusculum.

But they were so youthful and exuberant that an apter comparison would be a reading-party from an English University, under the leadership of a sympathetic tutor."

The youthful portion of the party shows perhaps greater inequality of attainment than we should expect in these days of specialisation. There are two slow-witted youths, Lastidianus and Rusticus, distant cousins of Augustine's, who had, as we might say, never even been at a Secondary School ("nullum vel grammaticum passi sunt" [1]). They owe their inclusion in the party to their relationship to Augustine, who has now taken in hand their neglected education. There is the all-round man, Trygetius, just back from camp ("Trygetium item nobis militia reddiderat," *De Ordine*, i. 5). Augustine remarks elsewhere that this experience of an active life had sent him back to his studies with renewed zest (*C. Acad.* i. 4), and here adds slyly, "he had all a veteran's love for history" (where there is possibly a word-play on "historia" in the further sense of "story"). Then there is Licentius, brilliant but flighty—the kind of man who is described as "a possible First if he would only work"—who thinks one day that there is no

[1] In a rough parallel, the *ludimagister* or *litterator* corresponded to a Primary School teacher, the *grammaticus* to a Secondary School master.

study to compare with philosophy, and the next is so deeply absorbed in verse-making that he loses all interest in the discussions. And there is Augustine's son, Adeodatus, younger than the rest but already showing high promise.[1] These are the youths, the reading-party proper, but the company includes one or two others. There is Augustine's old pupil and personal friend, Alypius, a young and rising lawyer, *très affairé*, who finds himself obliged to run up to town for a few days (*C. Acad.* i. 5; *De Ordine*, i. 7), but is eager to take his share in the discussions on his return. Then there is Navigius, Augustine's brother, a quiet, non-philosophical but sensible person, who is not ashamed to admit frankly that he has not seen a point, and can smile at a joke at his own expense (*De Beata Vita*, 7, 14). Last but not least, there is the hostess, Augustine's mother, Monnica, "who ruled us all like a mother, but served us like a daughter" (*Conf.* ix. 22), who hustles the party briskly in to lunch ("trudere in prandium coepit") when they are

[1] He died a year or two later, and the wistful tenderness of Augustine's references to him is admirably suggested in the lines of that scholar-poet, the late Archbishop of Armagh, in his quaintly-named *St. Augustine's Holiday*:

> Him evermore a shadow overhung
> Not of the great Numidian forests born—
> The prophecy of genius that dies young,
> The far cloud film of a too radiant morn.
> Ah! they who early pass through one dark gate
> Have looks like thine, thou young Adeodate!

inclined to lag debating by the way, but is ready to give a shrewd opinion herself upon any point that is put to her in plain language.

The external circumstances of the life may be made clear by one or two quotations. In the *Contra Academicos*, i. 15 he notes: "We put off the remainder of the discussion to another day, for we had only begun it when the sun was getting low, the rest of the day having been spent, partly in looking after the affairs of the farm, partly in revising the First Book of Virgil." On another occasion we read that the party "rose earlier than usual and helped the rustics with some work for which time pressed" (*C. Acad.* ii. 10). Again: "We had intermitted our discussion for nearly a week, but had only worked through three Books of Virgil, from the second to the fourth—I lecturing on them as fully as seemed necessary" (". . . atque ut in tempore congruere videbatur tractaremus," *C. Acad.* ii. 10). Their discussions often took place in the open air: "It was a brilliant day, and the temperature, which was very mild for winter in those parts, invited us to go down to the meadow as we very frequently did" (*De Ord.* ii. 1). Again: "Though but two hours of daylight remained, we went to the meadow; for the unusual fineness of the evening tempted us, and we resolved not to lose what remained of

the day. So we came to our accustomed tree and took up our positions" (*C. Acad.* ii. 25). How fresh and natural the little picture shows after so many centuries! Once, as they were on the way to the scene of these debates, their attention was arrested by a sparring-match between a pair of cockerels. There are a few touches of vivid description—"the necks craned forward at full stretch, the erected combs, the vehement blows, the skilful evasions"; but behind this there is a pleasant touch of humanism, something that recalls White of Selborne in the interest shown in the subsequent conduct of victor and vanquished—something, too, of the philosopher in the suggestion that the law and order of the universe are illustrated even here. And along with all this there is the frank avowal that, apart from these higher considerations, "the moving incidents of the fray induced in us a certain pleasure in the spectacle" (*De Ord.* i. 25, 26).

But we have touched on the background of circumstance only as a setting for the human relationships. Here, for instance, is a charming little incident between Augustine and his mother. Monnica enters during the dialogue and asks what progress they have made, "for she knew," says Augustine, "what was the subject of our discussion." Augustine bids the person who

is recording the debate note her entry and her question. The good lady is, or pretends to be, rather taken aback, and protests that it is not the custom for women to take part in such discussions. Augustine replies that if philosophy means, as it ought to mean, "love of wisdom," she is the best philosopher of them all, and that he thinks he could not do better than enrol himself in her class. To which she answered, as he says, "pleasantly and good-temperedly," "I never heard you talk such nonsense in all your life!" (*De Ord.* i. 31, 32, 33).

The soft answer which turneth away wrath is, as we know, sometimes the better for a touch of humour. Alypius, the young lawyer, is a little apt to lose his temper when the debate is going against him, and Augustine on one occasion pulls him up, rather happily, thus: "I thought just now we were coming to the heel of the debate, but since then you have struck in with your fists." "He laughed, and we went off to lunch." (The pun is, of course, better in the Latin: "Mihi enim cum videretur iam nos *ad calcem* pervenisse, *pugnos* etiam miscuisti.") There is a good deal of chaff of this kind, good enough *in situ*, but not often sufficiently pointed to quote separately. At the discussion held on Augustine's birthday, which was to provide a feast of reason as a counterpart of the meal "a little better

than the ordinary" with which the day was celebrated, Licentius makes a somewhat arbitrary suggestion as to the future conduct of the debate. Augustine replies: "You must invite me to *your* birthday-party, and then you shall choose the dishes; it will be good manners now not to ask for what may not have been prepared!" This is mild enough certainly, but pleasantly natural; and we have an equally familiar type of jest when it is hinted that the shades of night which interrupt a discussion are the natural allies of the opposite party! (*C. Acad.* ii. 29).

Once or twice we get a hint of Augustine's methods as a teacher. Here, for instance, we see him reviewing in lively style a discussion between two of his pupils: "Then Trygetius got a foothold in your citadel and you would have been driven out and wholly defeated if a cessation of hostilities had not enabled you to call up reinforcements. For the Academic definition of error, which you had forgotten, is the very key of their position. And if you had not remembered that during the night—perhaps it came back to you in a dream?—you would not have been able to make any reply."

The opening of the Dialogue *De Ordine* presents to us an especially intimate and vivid little scene. "One night," writes Augustine, "I had awakened as usual . . . for my eager

pursuit of truth made that my custom.[1] I did not allow the youths at that time to call me away from myself . . . and I had told them that if they were awake they must do something for which books were not required, and accustom their minds to quiet thought. So, as I said, I was awake, when suddenly the sound of the stream which ran down behind the baths caught my ear, and I noticed it more attentively than usual. It struck me as curious that the water, as it ran over the stones, sounded now louder and now less loud. I began to ask myself what was the cause of this, and I confess no explanation readily occurred to me. Just then Licentius tapped on his bed, to frighten away the mice which were disturbing him, and thus announced himself to be awake. So I asked him had he ever noticed how irregularly the streamlet ran? 'I noticed that long ago,' he said; 'for often on awaking, wishing to know if it was a fine day [how near that little natural touch brings it to us!], I have listened to the stream, in order to judge from its volume whether it was raining or not, and it always varied, as it does now.' Trygetius agreed. He too had been awake without our knowing it, for it was dark—in Italy even the rich must generally put up with that."

[1] Namely, to spend either the earlier or the later half of the night in thought.

Licentius ingeniously suggests that the variations in the sound may be due to masses of fallen leaves periodically choking the channel, and then, as the water gathers head, giving way again. This is accepted, and a consideration of the number of causes which must have concurred to produce this apparently simple effect leads to a discussion on the order of the universe and the difficulties which are alleged against belief in a Divine providence. In the discussion Licentius shows that he has been thinking seriously about the deeper things, and the scene has a little epilogue (*De Ord.* i. 23) of a still more intimate and personal character. In the morning Licentius, after going out along with his companions, comes back alone to Augustine, to ask him privately, "What do you really think of me?" He does not mean, of his abilities, but of himself. That is an opening which brings men face to face, and the lad's purpose is to tell his older friend that the real things have begun to mean something to him.

Having thus glanced at Augustine as tutor, we may get another point of view by recalling that, writing of an earlier period when he himself was studying in Carthage, he has left on record one of the most admirable short descriptions of the social side of University life which is anywhere to be found: "To converse together, to jest

together, to give and take the lead by turns with cheerful good-humour, to read pleasant books, to trifle together and together to be serious, to differ sometimes without heat, as a man may differ with himself, and by that same dissension to give a spice of piquancy to a wide range of agreement, to teach one another and learn from one another, to long for absent comrades with impatience and hail their return with delight; these and similar relations between mutual friends, made manifest by the features, the tongue, the eye, and a hundred little mutual services, supply the warmth which welds souls together and make one of many" (*Conf.* iv. 13). It makes one think of the Cambridge "Apostles" in the days of Tennyson and Hallam.

Another point to be noted about Augustine's College friendships is their catholicity. The description just quoted applies evidently to a reading set, but in another passage (*Conf.* iii. 6) he has something to say about a very different set, the "Eversores," the rowdy people who at the same time prided themselves on being good style ("urbani"). Of them Augustine says, that while he had no taste for their wild doings he took pleasure in knowing some of them ("amicitiis delectabar aliquando quorum semper factis abhorrebam"). Few men have ever been better qualified by nature than

Augustine for realising the "homo sum" ideal, and it is interesting to note how that natural gift is turned to account in his correspondence as a bishop, where we find all manner of people writing to him on a great variety of subjects, and attaching the greatest importance to his sympathy and advice.

Less important than a man's attitude to his fellow-men, but of considerable interest for the understanding of his temperament, is his relation to the external material world. The degree of interest which it holds for different men varies, of course, enormously, and of the two great classes, Eyes and No Eyes, Augustine belongs emphatically to the former. There is, for instance, a delightful touch of self-revelation in *Conf.* x. 57, where, reviewing his temptations, he tells us: "I do not go nowadays to see a hound chasing a hare in the circus, but if it happens in the fields as I am passing, the interest of the chase will sometimes distract my mind from some grave meditation, and though I do not turn my mare to follow it [he would be riding, no doubt, on a pastoral visitation] my thoughts are turned aside."

This is mere "interestedness," direct response to the external stimulus; but there are several passages in which he shows the rudiments of a naturalist's observation. Thus in *De Trinitate*, xii. 16 he notes that the apparently continuous

gliding of the snake is the sum of an infinite series of minute movements, "coluber . . . squamarum minutissimis nisibus repit." There is a long discussion in *De Quantitate Animae* on the continued vitality of the severed parts of a worm or centipede; and when in another place the question arises whether fishes have memory, he is able to decide it from personal experience. He knew of a fountain where there were a number of fishes which were often fed by onlookers, and so well did they remember this that if any one walked up and down along the edge of the pool, a shoal of fishes swam up and down beside him (*De Gen. ad Lit.* iii. 12). It belongs perhaps rather to the sphere of aesthetic observation when we find him writing with enthusiasm of the nightingale's song—the Latin must be quoted for its music—"quam suaves sonorum pulchritudines verberatus aër traiciat cantante luscinia" (*De Vera Rel.* 79). The man who wrote that might not have understood the Romantic element in Keats's *Ode to the Nightingale*, but the sounding phrase shows the same sympathy as Milton's full-throated line:

> She all night long her amorous descant sang.

The response of the eye to aesthetic impression was equally keen. In his self-examination in Book X. of the *Confessions* he complains of the

constant unescapable appeal which light and colour made to him. "Light itself," he says, "the queen of all the colours, bathing with its varied flow all things on which the eye rests on all the daytime, wheresoever I may be, lays its spell upon me, even when I am doing something else and not thinking about it, and so strongly does it affect me that if I am suddenly deprived of it I miss it keenly, and if it is long withheld I grow depressed." In another passage he speaks of "the glorious spectacle of the sea, which clothes itself with changing colours as with a garment, now with green, and that of many shades, now with purple, and now with the blue of heaven" (*De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 24. 5).

Illustrations might be multiplied, but it is time now to turn to a rapid analysis of the temperament and mentality which we have to some extent exhibited in action.

Corresponding to the keen interest in the external world which we have just noticed, forming its basis and supplying it, so to speak, with its raw material, we find, as we should expect, a highly developed sense-organisation. In the course of his wonderful analysis of the powers of memory, one of the details which he mentions is this: "I can distinguish the odour of lilies and violets when neither is present." The language and the context show that he does

not merely mean that he can remember that there is a difference, as we can all do, but that he can imaginarily "sense" the difference, seem to himself to smell each odour as if it were present. Now that power of voluntary recall is quite common in regard to visual impressions —we can all see Oxford and Cambridge blue in our mind's eye. And it is common enough in regard to auditory impressions—musical people can, I believe, often recall the exact difference of *timbre* which two famous sopranos exhibit in their "high C." But in regard to olfactory impressions the power of voluntary recall is rare. (It must not, of course, be confused with the well-known and almost universal power of the actual occurrence of an odour to recall a scene or incident formerly associated with it.) The fact that Augustine possessed it may be taken, I think, as evidence that his powers of sensation were unusually keen, and the impression is confirmed by what he tells us about the liveliness of his visualising faculty. In the *De Trinitate*, viii. 7 he mentions that when he read the Pauline Epistles all the persons mentioned appeared before his mental gaze. This may seem a small point to lay so much stress upon, but a clue to the physical organisation of a historical personage whom one is endeavouring to reconstruct is not to be despised by the

discerning student of history. Special keenness of the senses is the basis of the sensuous temperament, and the sensuous temperament is especially exposed—though it by no means necessarily falls victim—to the temptations of sensuality. It is an example of sensuousness when Augustine tells us that in listening to Church music, in which he took great delight, he was prone to allow the mere aesthetic pleasure to outstrip devotional feeling (*Conf.* x. 49 f.). It is an example of sensuality when he tells us that he was inclined to be over-fond of the pleasures of the table (*Conf.* x. 45). And we know, of course, that as a young man he fell into the graver forms of sensuality. The characteristic reaction of the sensuous temperament when awakened out of sensuality is to turn to asceticism, and it is not surprising that we should find the ascetic side of religion attracting Augustine's admiration prior to his conversion, and claiming his devotion afterwards.

Just as Augustine's attitude to the external world is the natural expression of a sensuous temperament, so his relations with his fellow-men are the expression of a warm, emotional temperament. It is not your cold man, as a rule, who wins such loyalty and affection as Augustine's friends showed him in following him over sea and land, and into one spiritual venture after

another. That he was not cold there is ample direct evidence. The passage in Book IV. of the *Confessions* describing the death of his friend has a sustained intensity of emotion which has rarely been equalled. It constantly recalls the language of that great monument to friendship, *In Memoriam*. Where Tennyson says of Hallam's death that for him it

> sicken'd every living bloom,
> And blurr'd the splendour of the sun,

Augustine says with a terser vigour, "The very light grew hateful to me" ("horrebant omnia, et ipsa lux"). The emotion of the stanza beginning, "I dreamed there would be spring no more," goes into the full-charged phrase, "quidquid aspiciebam mors erat" ("the face of death looked out at me from all things"). There is another passage of which we best appreciate the force when we see how Shakespeare has expanded the same thought.

In *King John* III. iv. Philip says to Constance:

> You are as fond of grief as of your child.

She replies:

> Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts, . . .
> Then have I reason to be fond of grief.

It is almost exactly Augustine's phrase: "Grief alone was sweet to me, and was the sole sweetness that in any measure filled the place of my friend."

In most if not all of his friendships, Augustine was doubtless the leading partner. His mental vigour and energy of temperament would ensure that with men of more ordinary mould. But one does not get the impression that he was overbearing in friendship; it was possible for a lesser man to be his friend "without capitulation," to use Stevenson's fine phrase.[1]

That he was choleric there is some evidence,[2] but he does not mention it in his self-examination as one of his besetting sins. Like many strong and vehement men he could be exceedingly tender and self-restrained where he really loved. No son could desire a finer testimony than his mother gave him on her death-bed, when, "answering some little service with a caress," she told him that she never remembered having heard from him a single ungentle word (*Conf.* ix. 30).

Turning now to Augustine's qualities as a thinker, the first point which I wish to make is a negative one. It may seem a rash thing to

[1] His letters to Nebridius give an interesting glimpse of his relations with a friend who, though not his intellectual equal, was at least interested in and capable of following his deeper speculations.

[2] There is an amusing description, apparently drawn from his own experience, of impatience with a refractory pen, in *Ep.* 9.

say of the "Carthaginian Aristotle," [1] the great Doctor of the Western Church, but I believe there is good ground for saying that he was not of a pre-eminently *metaphysical* cast of mind. That is not to deny that he was a great thinker; what I wish to suggest is simply that his mind did not move easily or by preference in the region of abstract ideas and non-material conceptions. He has himself supplied us with direct evidence on this point. Over and over again in the earlier part of the *Confessions*—I have noted half a dozen passages, and I believe there are others—he dwells on the difficulty which he experienced in forming the conception of spiritual existence. The following may be quoted:—

"Seeing that I knew no way of thinking of God save as a corporeal magnitude—for it did not seem to me possible for anything to exist except in this form—that was the greatest and almost the sole cause of the error which held me fast" (v. 19).

"Of what was meant by a spiritual substance I could not form even a faint and shadowy notion" (vi. 4).

"So slow of heart was I . . . that whatsoever was not extended in space or diffused through

[1] "Aristoteles Poenorum." He is so denominated by his Pelagian opponent, Julian of Eclanum. The stress is doubtless on the "Poenorum," with a similar suggestion to that in Porson's "Hermann's a German" epigram.

it, I supposed to have no existence at all" (vii. 2).

A graphic metaphor in the same context as the last-quoted passage explains to some extent the nature of his difficulty. "I strove vehemently," he says, "against the swarm of visual images[1] which crowded upon me, and tried to drive them off, but scarcely had I beaten them away when lo! they gathered again and rushed into my face and blinded my eyes." That seems to indicate that Augustine had the defect of his quality. The man who was so keenly sensitive to the impressions of the external world found a difficulty in escaping, even when he desired to do so, from the mental presentations to which it gave rise. The passages quoted refer, of course, to a time prior to his acquaintance with Neo-Platonism; and undoubtedly the discipline of that highly abstract philosophy greatly strengthened this side of his thought. But if we look at his work as a whole, I think it bears out the impression which has just been suggested. The departments of thought with which his name is especially connected are the doctrines of sin and grace, and the philosophy of history. But the doctrines of sin and grace are those which are especially in touch with experience,

[1] There is no doubt about the translation: Augustine uses a psychological technicality which he defines elsewhere.

and the philosophy of history is the most concrete of the philosophies. It is true, of course, that he wrote an important work upon the Trinity. But this is rather of the nature of the exception which proves the rule, in the sense of being found capable of explanation in accordance with it. In the first place, he treated the subject not so much because he was spontaneously attracted by it, as because his clergy complained that nearly all the literature of the subject was in Greek, which they could not read. In the second place, the method of treatment is that of a thinker whose mind moves most easily in the concrete. It is for its analogies that the *De Trinitate* is most often cited.

My next point is that whether he was a great metaphysician or no, he was certainly a very great psychologist. Nothing that has been said heretofore goes any distance in explaining his greatness in this direction; we have here to do with the incalculable element of genius. It is possible that it may seem to some readers a paradox to distinguish thus sharply between metaphysical and psychological ability. There is an old association between the two studies, but in point of fact the main affinities of psychology are with the natural sciences, the sciences of observation. And, be it noted, it is on the natural science side, the observational side of

psychology, that Augustine shows his greatness. There is nothing wonderful about his system, his classification of the mental powers and so forth ; it is an eclectic system drawn from various sources. It is Augustine writing with his eye on the object that is unsurpassed. He possessed, in fact, very unusual powers of introspection and extraordinary skill in recording his observations. It is not merely that he gives vivid descriptions of religious feelings ; his observations in general psychology are such as to evoke the admiration of modern experts in the subject—having regard, of course, to the point at which he comes in the line of development. But the psychology calls for treatment in a separate study ; we may therefore leave it for the present and turn to his characteristics as a writer.

The familiar dogma that the style is the man, like all such bold generalisations, needs a good deal of qualification before it will fit the facts with any completeness. The style is often far more the school than the man. It is perhaps only in those writers who may fairly claim to be called great, that the personal note becomes at all distinctive. And even then it is more often expressed by a modification than by a contravention of the prevailing canons. Now Augustine undoubtedly was a great writer, but he was in the first place a trained rhetorician ;

and in those days the training of a rhetorician was directed as much towards writing as towards speaking. The ideal which the rhetoricians of to-day set before them was not that of the Classical age. Instead of the full-sailed Ciceronian period, what was aimed at was a short antithetic sentence, with the antithesis often pointed by the assonance of emphatic words, and the antithetic clauses sometimes, though by no means always, exactly balanced. The Classical restraint has given place to a certain intensity—one might almost say exuberance—of expression, and the Classical economy in the use of metaphor, which becomes so painfully impressed upon us when we attempt to write "Latin prose," has entirely disappeared. The use of metaphor is as free as in modern writing, and not infrequently errs on the side of extravagance. On the whole, the general effect of the changes is that a modern, not trained in the Classical tradition, would feel a style like Augustine's to be less remote from him than the Classical style. The most obtrusive feature is the antithetic structure, and though that is not quite of to-day, we do not need to go very far back to parallel it. Here, for instance, is a little passage of characterisation which, if it were sufficiently well translated,—a feat I do not profess to accomplish,—would have a faint suggestion of Gibbon about it:

" Three times he had now acted as Assessor, arousing the wonder of his associates by his integrity, while he on his part had wondered how they could prefer gold to innocence. His probity had been attempted not only with the bait of lucre but with the goad of menace. This occurred when he was acting as Assessor at Rome in the Court of the Treasurer of the Italian Finances. There was at that time a very powerful senator, to whom many were attached by benefits, and many were subservient from fear. This man desired some favour, which his influence usually commanded, though by the law it was forbidden. Alypius opposed it. Bribes were offered; he laughed them to scorn: threats were held out; he spurned them: while all wondered at the exceptional firmness which, confronted with a man so great and so famous for his powers of either injuring or rewarding, neither desired his friendship nor dreaded his enmity" (*Conf.* vi. 16). In this passage there is little to remark beyond the antitheses which appear in the translation; but one or two examples of more elaborate balance and assonance of endings may be given:

" Qui laudari vult ab hominibus vituperante te, non defenditur ab hominibus judicante te, nec eripietur damnante te " (*Conf.* x. 59).

" Cito sonuerunt exultatione, quia videbant

eum, et cito siluerunt intentione, ut audirent eum" (*Conf.* viii. 5).

Word-plays are frequent, and are often sufficiently pointed and striking. Here, for instance, is a parallel in meaning to our proverb, "One man's meat is another man's poison," in which we have both pun, alliteration, and assonance: "Palato non sano poena est panis qui sano suavis est"; and here is a saying about procrastination which we might imitate by, "Presently was never present": "Modo et modo non habebant modum" (*Conf.* viii. 12). A particularly elaborate example, which for once lends itself to reproduction, is the following. Speaking of the suspense of judgment advocated by the Academic philosophy, he says: "I hung back from every assent (ascent), dreading precipitation, and was like to die by hanging instead" ("tenebam enim cor meum ab omni assensione, timens praecipitum, et suspendio magis necabar," v. 6). Sometimes, in less elaborate forms, a word-play is used with good effect in quite serious passages. It contributes something to what is perhaps Augustine's finest, as it is certainly his best-known saying: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee" ("Fecisti nos ad te; et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te," *Conf.* i. 1).

In a style like this, which aims at striking effects,

the figure known as "oxymoron"—the piquant combination of opposed ideas—is a favourite: "adero absens," "loquaces muti," "severa misericordia," "sobria ebrietas"; and sometimes more elaborately, as "ad satiandas insatiabiles cupiditates copiosae inopiae et ignominiosae gloriae"—which one might reproduce by, "for the satisfaction of the insatiable desires which spring from an abundant lack of means and an inglorious lust of fame." A style such as this lends itself to epigrammatic phrases, and these, when not over-elaborated, are often pleasing enough. "Happy is he who loves Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thy sake" (*Conf.* iv. 14). To refuse to confess one's sins is to "hide God from oneself, not oneself from God." Sometimes we find a trace of rather mordant wit. "The trifling of grown-up persons is called business; boys' trifling, though not different in kind, is punished by their elders."

We have spoken of a free use of metaphor as characteristic of the style of the period, but excellence in the handling of metaphor is always an individual distinction, and in turning now to Augustine's metaphors we come to what is, I think, the most striking and individual feature of his style. And his skill in this respect was of special importance, owing to the character of the subjects dealt with in much of his writing. In

the *Confessions*, for instance, which is generally recognised as his greatest literary monument, he had a difficult subject, a record almost wholly concerned with inner experience. If we ask what enabled him to give it its extraordinary interest, we find the answer in a combination of two of the characteristics which we noted earlier: his unusual powers of introspection and his interest in the ongoings of the external world. It was his introspective power which made the inner world so vivid to himself; it was the keenness of the outward eye and ear which enabled him to make it so vivid to others. For he makes it vivid mainly by means of metaphor. It was just that quick response to the impressions offered to ear and eye for which the anxious bishop takes himself to task, which enabled him to fill the "hollow land" of the invisible—as Pater says of Plato—"with delightful colour and form," and to make his *Confessions* literature, instead of "materials for Church History."

To give the most striking example, we should have to quote from the account of his inward struggle at the time of his conversion; but as we shall have to come back to that from another point of view, we must be content for the present to take some scattered metaphors from various passages. His first half-hearted efforts to turn from the things of sense are thus described:

"The pressure of the world lay heavy upon me like a not unpleasant drowsiness, and my thoughts when I strove to raise them to Thee were like the efforts of a man trying to awaken and constantly falling back into slumber." This is how he describes why the perception of truth in the arts and sciences did not lead him to higher things: "While I rejoiced in them, I knew not whence came whatever in them was true and certain. For I had my back towards the light, and my face towards the objects which it illuminated, and so the eyes wherewith I beheld these illuminated objects were themselves not enlightened." The general conception is Neo-Platonic, but the literary handling is distinctive. He is not afraid of a homely image when it will serve his turn. One had supposed that the phrase "swelled head" was a piece of very modern slang, but it is difficult not to think of it when you read, "nimis inflata facies claudebat oculos meos"; and the additional touch suggesting why this condition should result in blindness has a value of its own. Sometimes an intellectual conception is set forth in a simile of considerable elaboration: "I imagined Thy creation as one vast mass adorned with various kinds of corporeal beings, and Thee, O Lord, I thought of as surrounding and penetrating it in every part, as though there had been a universal

sea extending on all sides through limitless immensities and having within it a sponge, as vast as ever one can imagine it and yet finite, and as if that sponge were filled throughout every part of it by the infinite sea; so it was that I thought of Thy creation as filled with Thee." In the following, a very simple metaphor is reinforced by the arts of literary suggestion: "When my thought, ranging the secret depths, had swept together and piled up in the sight of my heart all my misery, a mighty storm broke forth, bringing with it a great rain of tears." Here only "storm" and "rain" are strictly metaphorical, and the weight of language does the rest, almost compelling us to think of his misery as a piled-up cloud.[1]

By way of contrast with these elaborate examples let us conclude the series with a metaphor in which he is content to trust the effect to a single full-charged word.

It occurs towards the close of a keen dialectical discussion of the nature of time. Of the subject-matter of the passage we shall have to speak

[1] "Ubi vero a fundo arcano alta consideratio contraxit et congessit totam miseriam meam in conspectu cordis mei, oborta est procella ingens, ferens ingentem imbrem lacrymarum" (*Conf.* viii. 28). There is perhaps a reminiscence, though not, of course, direct imitation, of Virgil, *Georg.* i. 322-4:

> Saepe enim immensum caelo venit agmen aquarum,
> Et foedam glomerant tempestatem imbribus atris
> Collectae ex alto nubes: ruit arduus aether,
> Et pluvia ingenti . . .

again in another connexion Here it may suffice to remark that it is conducted throughout with a literary skill which makes the reader feel at each step the toil and the excitement of the search. Finally, when at last he comes in sight of his conclusion, Augustine makes the reader share the joy of discovery with the fine phrase: "Attende ubi albescit veritas" ("Mark where truth brightens to the dawn").

Even this hasty survey can hardly have failed to give us some impression of the man; for he is of those who impress themselves. A man of keen, subtle, penetrating intellect, delighting in the play of dialectic and the analysis of thought and feeling; possessing, too, a literary skill capable of doing full justice to his thought. A man sensitive to the beauty of nature and keenly alive to the ongoings of the world about him. A large-natured, warm-hearted, impulsive man, with a strong love for his fellows and a great capacity for friendship. That is the impression one gets of his temperament, of his natural endowment; in subsequent chapters we shall endeavour to trace some of the aspects of his "reaction upon life."

II

HIS CONVERSION—A STUDY IN CRITICISM AND RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY

ST. AUGUSTINE'S account of his conversion in the *Confessions* is a *locus classicus* for the psychology of religion. Unfortunately, as is the case with so many of our most valuable documents, we are no longer at liberty to use it as it stands without first vindicating its trustworthiness. The question is not, of course, regarding the authorship,—there has never been the slightest doubt that Augustine wrote the *Confessions*,—nor, among sober critics, is there any doubt of his essential good faith. But the account was not written immediately after the events, and it has been suggested that it may have been so modified by later experiences as to be misleading. The question arises in this way. The *Confessions* was not written until some twelve years after the date at which its record closes; on the other hand, the Dialogues referred to in the previous essay were written a few months after

his conversion. These writings are, the *Contra Academicos*, a debate about the Sceptical philosophy; the *De Beata Vita*, a discussion about the highest good; the *De Ordine*, a discussion on Providence and the order of the universe; and the *Soliloquia*, dealing with the immortality of the soul. The last-named, in spite of its title, is not improperly called a dialogue, for it is arranged in the form of a colloquy between Augustine and Reason.

It is contended by some critics that the impression as to Augustine's spiritual state which we should draw from these Dialogues is not reconcilable with the account given in the *Confessions*. These critics, of whom we may take as typical M. Louis Gourdon and Dr. Hans Becker,[1] urge the following considerations:

(1) That the whole situation implied in these Dialogues is incompatible with the representation of the *Confessions*. Augustine, they say, retires to a pleasant country-house to discuss philosophy and read literature with like-minded friends, whereas we should have expected him to retire into solitude to weep and pray.

(2) Coming more to close quarters, it is urged that these writings make no mention of the conversion, and leave no place for it in his mental history.

[1] L. Gourdon, *Essai sur la conversion de Saint Augustin* (Cahors, 1900); H. Becker, *Augustin, Studien zu seiner geistigen Entwickelung* (Leipzig, 1908).

(3) That they display a cheerfulness not to be expected in a man with the experiences of the *Confessions* behind him.

(4) That they show a very limited knowledge of Christian theology.

(5) That they are filled with the praises of philosophy and say little about Christianity.

I propose first to deal with these objections *seriatim*, endeavouring to show that they are untenable, and then to examine carefully the account in the *Confessions* with a view to showing its inherent credibility.

First, as to the suggestion that Augustine retired to Cassiciacum with a company of philosophic friends to enjoy a philosopher's heaven of lettered ease and dialectical discussion. Now the passages on which this representation is based are precisely those which we noticed in the previous chapter, about the discussions under the trees, the reading of Virgil, and so forth. The aspect in which they were there presented did not in any way tend to minimise the interest or importance of these passages, but it does, I think, suggest a different explanation of them. There was, of course, a certain artificiality in speaking of the gathering as a reading-party, but nevertheless that representation is a good deal nearer to the facts than this picture of a philosophic coterie. That is to say, the youths really

were Augustine's pupils. In another work written a little later (*De Quant. Anim.* § 62), he speaks of them in so many words as having them with him for the sake of their education ("nostri illi adulescentes qui tunc mecum erant studiorum suorum gratia"). There was, in fact, no philosopher present except Augustine himself. The only other member of the company for whom that title could possibly be claimed was the young lawyer Alypius, who was young enough to have been Augustine's pupil a year or two before in Carthage, and himself tells us in one of the Dialogues that if he knew any philosophy he had learnt it from Augustine. Moreover, during a considerable portion of the discussions he is absent, having been obliged to go up to Milan on business. Thus the engaging picture of the philosophic coterie rather fades away on close examination.

The reading of Virgil, again, which is incidentally referred to, was not a dilettante amusement; it was part of the education of the youths. Virgil may almost be said to have been the universal text-book of the time. A whole cycle of knowledge could be introduced by way of lectures on his works, including philosophy, mythology, history, grammar, and rhetoric, as well as more obviously appropriate subjects like versification and literary criticism. For Virgil was held, as

Macrobius says, to have been "skilled in every branch of learning" ("omnium disciplinarum peritus").[1] Even the discussions recorded in the Dialogues were to some extent subordinated to this educational purpose. We have seen how Augustine reviews and criticises the arguments of two of his pupils,[2] and we find him writing to Romanianus, the father of one of them, a report on his progress to this effect: "Your boy is beginning to take an interest in philosophy, but I restrain him somewhat, that he may make firmer and better progress when he has first been thoroughly trained in the necessary disciplines." By the "necessary disciplines" he means grammar, logic, and literary studies generally.

It is highly probable that Augustine's main motive in undertaking this educational work at this time, was a very simple and practical one. He was giving up his profession as a public teacher of rhetoric, and he had to find some means of support, not only for himself but for his mother and son, and possibly other members of his family, for whom the income of the small farm left by his father would not suffice.[3] (He

[1] On this subject see T. R. Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*, pp. 181 ff.

[2] *Sup.* p. 9.

[3] Cf. *Contra Academicos*, ii. 4, where he refers to the necessity of providing for his dependents as having for a time hindered him from giving up his profession.

speaks in one passage of its "scant acres"—"pauca angellula"). He needed a period of comparative leisure for retirement and self-recollection, and he bought his leisure, so to speak, by taking pupils. This is not a fanciful or modernising suggestion. To the evidence given above we have to add that the fathers of Licentius and Trygetius were both wealthy men, while the former, Romanianus, had been, at an earlier period of Augustine's life, a generous patron to him. But if this be the correct reading of the situation, there is no difficulty raised by Augustine's having these young men about him and reading Virgil with them. After all, most men have to go on with some daily work, whether they be passing through a spiritual crisis or no.

Similarly the references to agriculture, which the critics seem to think of as belonging to a doctrinaire scheme of philosophic "simple life," have, in all probability, an equally practical origin. The friend whose villa Augustine was occupying was not a wealthy landowner, but a schoolmaster in Milan. We can imagine him saying to Augustine, as he offered him the use of the house: "And you know you will be doing me a service too; that villicus of mine needs to be kept up to his work in the busy seasons." Is not that the way things happen in real life? There is nothing unlikely, it should be said, in

supposing Augustine capable of work of this kind, for he was himself the son of a small landholder. The phrases in which he alludes to the farm work exactly bear out this interpretation. Augustine speaks on one occasion of having spent part of the day "in rebus rusticis ordinandis" (*C. Acad.* i. 15). This suggests farm-management, not leaning on the handle of a rake while one talks philosophy, nor even planting trees in quincunces to remind oneself of Cicero's *De Senectute*. On another occasion the whole party "rose earlier than usual to help the labourers with some work for which time pressed" (*C. Acad.* ii. 10). There is a practical ring about this too. Men do not generally rise earlier than usual in order to carry on *pro forma* occupations.

Thus the whole circumstances of the Dialogues are, it would seem, simpler and more natural, less inspired by any doctrinaire philosophical ideal than these critics would have us believe.

It was necessary to take this objection first, on account of its generality, but we come now to what is, I think, the weightiest of the negative arguments, namely, that there is no mention, and, our critics would add, no sufficient indication of any such crisis in the immediate past as the conversion described in the *Confessions*.

Here we must first consider for a moment what kind of literature it is with which we are

dealing. On this point we may quote Cicero, an acknowledged master in this kind. In sending a copy of the *Academica Posteriora* to a friend, he writes: "You will wonder, perhaps, to find that we have said things here which we never really did say, but you know how it is in Dialogues" ("nosti morem dialogorum").[1] This refers, no doubt, chiefly to literary embellishment, but it may be quoted as evidence of a certain conventionality in the form. How this might operate to exclude certain elements we get a hint from Augustine himself. He tells us in the *Confessions* (ix. 7), that his friend Alypius was at first reluctant to allow the name of Christ to appear in these Dialogues. This means that in the literary redaction of the Dialogues, in which we are told he helped Augustine, when he found the name of Christ in the rough notes of the discussion, he was loath to insert it in the "fair copy." Not apparently that he was ashamed of the name of Christ as such, but he felt it to be out of place in this *milieu*. We get an indication as to his point of view in a very interesting passage of the *Contra Academicos*. Wanting to say that, perhaps, truth can only be known by a divine revelation, he says that it may be that truth is like Proteus, who could only be recognised by the aid of a "divine

[1] *Ad Varron., ad Fam.* ix. 8. 1.

power," using the Classical, one might almost say, "pagan," word *numen* for the divinity who gives the revelation. Evidently, in the opinion of Alypius, if one had to refer to religious matters in this kind of writing, the way to do it was by means of a skilfully turned mythological allusion —much as your scholarship candidate transposes a parliamentary report in terms of the Roman Senate. Augustine, as we shall see, was strong enough to break the convention, to introduce the name of Christ, and numerous direct references to Christianity. But the fact remains that, from this point of view, he was working in a reluctant medium, and that it would be absurd to expect here a self-revelation of an intimacy and fulness comparable to that of the *Confessions*.

On the other hand it would, no doubt, be distinctly curious if there was a complete absence of allusion to, or implication of the circumstances indicated in the *Confessions*. That, however, is not the case. In the *Contra Academicos*, ii. 5 he writes to his friend Romanianus that as a result of his Neo-Platonic studies he "set out to return unto himself." And then he adds these remarkable sentences: "I cast but a backward glance, I confess, like one starting out on a journey, towards that religion which was instilled into us as children and entered into the

very marrow of our bones; but though I knew it not, it was drawing me to itself. And so, tremblingly, hastily yet hesitatingly, I took up the Apostle Paul; for I said to myself, those men could not have lived as it is manifest they did live, if their writings and reasonings had been at variance with this so great good. I read through the whole with the utmost intentness and alertness." Thus, writing to a philosophic friend, he tells him that his philosophic development had not been uniform and homogeneous. It had been interrupted and modified by an incursion of the religious interest.

To pass to the next point, it is urged that the tone of the Dialogues is different from what we should expect. There are a number of small jests scattered through them; Augustine sometimes rallies his pupils with a certain gaiety. This, it is argued, is not the tone of a man with the experience of the *Confessions* behind him. Now, as a psychological generalisation quite apart from its application to the present case, that remark seems far from being axiomatic. No man with any sense of humour preserves unmitigated gloom for months together. But, beyond that, it may be confidently denied that we should expect the Augustine of the *Confessions* to be at this time in a mood of unmitigated gloom. According to his own account he had

reached, in the garden at Milan, after long struggles, the momentous decision to break with that in his life which he felt to be wrong, and he believed that he had received Divine aid in doing so. Now, it is a familiar psychological fact that the immediate result of any momentous decision is to bring a sense of relief: and if it be a decision in favour of that which the deeper self has long approved, it tends to bring with it a lightening of the whole mood. It is no sufficient reason for denying that Augustine had come to Christianity by a bitter and painful struggle, that we find him, some months after the crisis, occasionally seasoning his discourse with a touch of humour. But after all the kind of humour that meets us in the Dialogues belongs merely to the surface of social life, and we find traces enough of a deeper life that was going on below. In the *De Ordine* (i. 29), rebuking two of his pupils who have quarrelled, he says: "Do not, I pray you, add to my distresses. Surely my wounds are enough, which I pray God with almost daily tears to heal, though I often tell myself that I am not worthy to be healed as quickly as I would."

In another passage of the same writing he speaks of long vigils of anxious thought, during which he did not allow himself to be interrupted by the youths who slept in the same room with

him. At the close of that passage he says: "When the morning came, I arose and prayed with many tears," and he several times speaks of his daily prayers (*De Ord.* i. 25; *Solil.* i. 2-6; *Ep.* iii. 4). Becker, with German thoroughness, quotes the passages in the Dialogues about weeping and prayer, but thinks that he gets rid of them by remarking that they bear a very small proportion to the whole. This is a very curious argument. If your informant be a truthful person; surely it comes to exactly the same thing, so far as the facts are concerned, whether he tells you that he weeps almost every day or whether he tells you almost every day that he weeps, although in the latter case his statements on the point bear a much larger proportion to his total speech than in the former. If, that is, he be a truthful person; but *ex hypothesi* the Augustine of the Dialogues is a truthful person, because his evidence is required to confute the Augustine of the *Confessions*.

Another critic suggests that Augustine was emotional, and his weeping, therefore, does not mean very much. But surely this is one of those cases where you cannot have it both ways. It will not do to argue that if Augustine weeps in the Dialogues, it is because he is emotional, and does not mean very much; but if he says in the *Confessions* that he wept, that indicates

a condition of spiritual distress which is irreconcilable with the lighter mood of the Dialogues.

By a similar argument from silence, or rather from inadequate proportion of references, it is urged by M. Gourdon that Augustine at this time knew very little of Christian doctrine. The *Confessions*, on the other hand, M. Gourdon seems to think, represent him to have been converted to a ready-made system of Catholic theology. I do not know whether any one ever did hold such a view. If so, it must have been read into the *Confessions*; it is certainly not in the text. The *Confessions* explicitly represents his knowledge as in some respects seriously defective up to a time shortly before his conversion (*Conf.* vii. 25), and does not represent him to have received any supernatural illumination in matters of doctrine. Still, a man who had been listening, at least occasionally, to the preaching of Ambrose, during a considerable period (*Conf.* v. 23, vi. 3, etc.), and who had studied the Pauline Epistles (*Conf.* vii. 27), would not be grossly ignorant of theology. Perhaps M. Gourdon means that the theology of the Dialogues is incompatible with these statements. But both statements receive confirmation from the Dialogues, the former by the fact that Ambrose is thrice referred to, twice as 'sacerdos noster' (*De Beata Vita*, 4 and 35), and

the latter by the mention in *Contra Academicos*, quoted above, of the reading of the Pauline Epistles. Moreover, there is a significant little passage in the *De Ordine*, i. 29. Trygetius, one of Augustine's pupils, says that when we name God, it is not Christ who occurs to our minds, but the Father. We think of Christ when we name the Son of God. Licentius at once catches him up. "You're making a nice mess of it," he says (the colloquial "bellam rem facis"). "Are we to deny that the Son of God is God?" Trygetius, the account goes on, saw the difficulty in which he was placed, but forced himself to say: "He is indeed also called God, but it is the Father who is properly called God." Here I interposed (says Augustine) saying, "Stop! You must not say that the Son is not properly called God." Licentius laughs at Trygetius for making such a mistake, and Trygetius begs that it may not be put on record. Now if these youths, Augustine's pupils, thought it disgraceful to make a mistake in the doctrine of the Trinity —and moreover a rather technical mistake, for, as Trygetius explains, he did not really mean to deny that Christ was God—if they thought such a mistake disgraceful, the argument is *a fortiori* that Augustine was not ill-instructed about the main doctrines.

Another objection of a similar character is

that the Augustine of the Dialogues does not make the free use of Scripture that we should expect from the Augustine of the conversion story. In view of the character of the literature in question very little weight could in any case be attached to this argument. But, as a matter of fact, where it is in place, as in the opening prayer of the *Soliloquia*, there is a series of quotations: "God who bringest us to the door and causest it to be opened unto us when we knock; God who givest unto us the bread of life; God who givest us to drink of that water whereof if we drink we shall never thirst; God who convictest the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; God by whom we overcome the enemy, I cry unto Thee." In connexion with Scripture quotations another little point is worth mentioning, because it tends to confirm Augustine's statement in the *Confessions* (ix. 8), that while at Cassiciacum he took a special delight in the Psalms. In the *De Ordine*, i. 22 he mentions that Monnica on one occasion rebuked Licentius for humming over a phrase from a psalm in inappropriate circumstances. Augustine explains that the tune, which the lad had lately learned, was running in his head as tunes do. That certainly seems to point to a familiar use of the psalms in the household.

We come now to a more serious difficulty.

There is, it is pointed out, very little said about religion, whereas there are eloquent praises of philosophy. In fact, we sometimes find "philosophy" where we should have expected religion, as when he tells Romanianus that he rejoices to have escaped from the world to take refuge in the bosom of philosophy (*C. Acad.* i. 3), or when he says that, after reading the Pauline Epistles, the face of philosophy appeared to him in all its attractive beauty (ii. 6). But do not just these unexpected turns of expression give us a clue to the explanation—which is, I believe, that in these Dialogues Augustine means by philosophy Christianity, as interpreted through Neo-Platonism? That may seem a bold statement, but here are a number of items of evidence. In the *De Ordine*, i. 21 Licentius says that philosophy has now become fairer to him than all the love-tales of the poets, "and with a sigh he gave thanks to Christ." In the *De Ordine*, i. 32 Augustine points out that philosophy simply means "love of wisdom" ("amor sapientiae") and goes on to say that the sacred Scriptures teach us to avoid and despise, not all philosophies, but only "the philosophers of this world" (with allusion to Col. ii. 8) Whoever teaches us that all philosophy is to be shunned, teaches us not to love wisdom. Monnica is, therefore, he says, a better philosopher than he, for she loves wisdom

more than he does. The "wisdom" which he has in view here is therefore something not very different from Christianity.

When he distinguishes them in thought, while noting their partial coincidence, it is not to philosophy that he awards the primacy. In *De Ordine*, ii. 16 we read: "There are two ways that we can follow when we are troubled with difficulties, that of reason and that of authority. Philosophy offers us reason, and scarcely succeeds in liberating a very few; and so far from teaching them to despise these mysteries" (*i.e.* the deeper doctrines of Christianity) "it only brings them to understand them as they ought to be understood. True and genuine philosophy has no other business than to teach us what is the uncaused Cause of all things ('principium sine principio'), how great is the Intelligence which abides in it, and what it was that for our salvation issued thence without any degeneration. Now it is this same omnipotent God, who is at the same time tripotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is taught in those sacred mysteries which, by the way of a sincere and firm faith deliver the masses of mankind (this seems to be the meaning here of 'populos'); and they teach this neither confusedly, as some assert, nor arrogantly, as many allege. And further, how great a thing it is that a so great God should

assume and use even this body of our race; the greater the humiliation the greater the mercy, and the more widely distant from the kind of pride of some intellectual persons." Here we find already Augustine's characteristic teaching about humility as the lesson of the Incarnation, and the contrasting of it with pride as the besetting sin of the philosopher. Now, when a man writes thus, is it correct to say of him, as Becker says, that he valued Christianity for the sake of Neo-Platonism? Would it not be much more correct to put the statement the other way round?

There is a similar passage in the *Contra Academicos* (iii. 43), and in this case with a personal note which almost recalls the manner of the *Confessions*. "There is no doubt that we are impelled to learn by two forces, authority and reason. With me it stands fast never to depart from Christ's authority, for I find no stronger. But as for those matters which it is possible to seek out by subtle reasoning, such is my cast of mind that I am eagerly desirous of apprehending the truth, not only by believing but also by understanding it. I am confident that I shall find among the Neo-Platonists that which does not conflict with our religion ('sacra nostra')." One more passage from the Dialogues and we may leave them. It is for our purpose

peculiarly significant. In *Contra Academicos*, ii. 2, after speaking of his prayers for his friend Romanianus he says: "Shall Augustine have made these prayers for Romanianus in vain? Nay, that will not be permitted by Him to whom I have given myself wholly, and whom I have begun in some measure to recognise." Notice the "to whom I have given myself wholly" ("cui totum me dedi"). That is surely a clear enough allusion to the decisive act described in the *Confessions*. The increase in knowledge comes afterwards: "quem nunc recognoscere aliquantum coepi." When an intellectual man undergoes an emotional conversion he needs a subsequent period for the readjustment of his mental attitude, and that, it seems to me, is just what we find traces of in the Dialogues.

Let us turn now to the positive side and see precisely what is the representation of the conversion which we find in the *Confessions*, and whether it is inherently credible. Here we are met *in limine* by the question: Are we at liberty to use the data of the earlier part of the *Confessions* in constructing our idea of the conversion? Becker and Gourdon both say Yes. The *Confessions* may be freely used up to the time of the conversion, it is only at this point that they become untrustworthy. That is, from their point of view, a generous concession, but as it seems

to me also a just one, I shall accept it without more ado. We are at any rate safe in taking as our starting-point the fact that Augustine received through his mother a very strong impression of the power and beauty of the Christian faith. This is amply confirmed by the Dialogue *Contra Academicos*, where he speaks of "that religion which was instilled into us in childhood and entered into the very marrow of our bones" ("medullitus implicata est"). For lack of suitable teachers the impression remained unrelated to his rapid mental growth, and yet he kept it in the background of his mind, and cherished the vague hope that he would some day find a way of rationalising it to himself, rationalising, I mean in the sense of adequately relating it to his thought. He was like a man who has come into possession of a locked casket which he believes to contain some treasure, but of which he cannot find the key. Wherever he comes across a key which seems likely to open it he at once tries it in the lock. This happens several times in the *Confessions*. The first occasion was when he read the *Hortensius* and the glory of philosophy dawned on him (*Conf.* iii. 7). Thereupon his thoughts flew to the religion of his childhood, and he turned, he says, to the study of the Scriptures. But the lock refused to yield, and he soon gave up the attempt.

Another intellectual advance was marked, he tells us, by the study of Aristotle's *Categories* (*Conf.* iv. 28). The immediate use which he made of this new knowledge was to apply it to the elaboration of his notion of God. The attempt was not a success; what is significant is that it should have been made.

His adhesion to Manichaeism was itself in one aspect a rationalising venture of this kind. In the *De Utilitate Credendi* (§ 2) Augustine writes to his friend Honoratus: "You know that the real reason why I fell into the hands of these men was that they promised without any use of a dreadful authority to lead up to God by pure and simple reason those who listened to their teaching." The similar passage in *De Beata Vita*, 4: "I persuaded myself that those who taught rather than those who commanded, ought to be believed," seems to suggest that about that time he had taken his difficulties to some Christians of repute who, not being qualified to deal with them, had flourished "authority" in his face, saying: "You must not question, you must simply be content to believe what the Church teaches"; and that in contrast with this treatment he had been attracted by the Manichaean promises of explanations and revelations. It was, by the way, the discovery that these vaunted explanations were mythological

and conflicted with what he knew of astronomy, which first weakened the hold of Manichaeism upon him (*Conf.* v. 3, 6).

We come now to the most important of these adventures in pursuit of truth. It was at this point that he fell in with the writings of the Neo-Platonists. It has been necessary to argue above that the Augustine of the Dialogues was not merely a Neo-Platonist; on the other hand we have here to emphasise that the Augustine of the *Confessions* is by no means niggardly in his acknowledgments of what he owed to Neo-Platonism. He devotes most of the seventh Book to the reckoning of his debt, and he shows it to have been very great. The Neo-Platonic teaching restored, he tells us, his confidence in the possibility of attaining Truth, which had been shaken by his disappointment with Manichaeism and his subsequent study of the Academic philosophy. It enabled him to grasp the conception of the spirituality—the non-materiality—of God, which had hitherto eluded him, it prepared him to accept the doctrine of the Trinity, and it relieved his difficulties regarding the problem of evil by its doctrine that evil is negative.

At the close of this account he proceeds abruptly: "*And so* I caught up most eagerly the revered writings of Thy Spirit, and above all the writings of the Apostle Paul." The "and

so " would be rather puzzling if we did not by this time know his habit of treating every new mental acquisition as a possible key to his locked casket.

This time the key worked. He now understood St. Paul, he says, and found in him the same truths as in the Neo-Platonists, only accompanied by praises of the Divine grace and a corresponding humility—the same reservation that is made, we may recall, in the passage cited above from the *De Ordine*. [1]

The history of Augustine's intellectual development does not, however, lead straight up, at this point, to his conversion. To reach that, we must go back and take up the other thread which was intertwined with it—that of his ethical development. Here again the starting-point is an early impression, not leading, however, to the acceptance of the ethical demand of Christianity. He speaks particularly of the earnest exhortations of his mother, urging on him purity of life, and how he scornfully rejected them. It is not necessary to use the language of exaggeration as some have done, but his statements, and not merely his comments from a later point of view, make it evident that his year of idleness at home and the beginning of his student life at Carthage, prior to his quasi-marriage, were marked by

[1] P. 48 *sup.*

grave moral disorders. And yet there was an undercurrent of inner protest. As a youth, he tells us, he used to pray, "Give me chastity—but not yet," longing and fearing at the same time. His adhesion to the Manichaeans, indeed, was partly prompted by his admiration for the supposed ascetic sanctity of Manichaeus and his "Elect" (*Conf.* v. 9; *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.* § 2).

Another stream of ethical influence he traces to the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*, which increased his enthusiasm for the things of the mind, and gave him a lower estimate of wealth and worldly success (*Conf.* iii. 7 f.); though it did not, in the meantime, slacken his pursuit of them. The loss of a friend at Tagaste gave him that first vivid realisation of death which marks an epoch in most men's experience (*Conf.* iv. 7 f.), and he himself passed through a dangerous illness (*Conf.* v. 16). Thus amid varied influences the struggle of ideals and practice goes on right down into the period immediately preceding his conversion. That period was marked, not by an advance but by a grave moral lapse. In fact, the ugliest blot upon his life falls here. It must be referred to, because it is sometimes implied in attacks upon the *Confessions* that Augustine for some time prior to his conversion had been living an irreproachable life, and had really very little to be converted from, so to

speak. Now the facts are these. It is quite true that his life had not been one of wild debauchery. After a short period of dissipation in Carthage he had lived in virtual wedlock for many years with the mother of his son, Adeodatus. If this connexion had continued down to his conversion and had then been either regularised by marriage,[1] or broken off with a view to celibacy (the latter alternative being more in accordance with the Christian sentiment of his time), the favourable view referred to above might fairly have been maintained. But what happened was that about a year before his conversion, he put away the mother of his child, not from Christian sentiment, but to prepare the way for an advantageous marriage. That was the most repellent act of his life, and in view of what follows it becomes very base. Let him tell it in his own words, for he has made what amends are possible by telling it with an unsparing directness which cuts deeper than invective. "She had gone back to Africa, vowing that she would never know any other man. But I, unhappy that I was, and weaker than a woman, could not endure the delay of two years which must elapse before I could obtain my promised bride, and so, being not a

[1] Goethe's regularisation of his *Gewissensehe* will occur to some readers. It would, of course, be unhistorical to press the contrast.

lover of wedlock, but a slave of lust, I procured another mistress—I cannot call her wife—in order that under the guard of an unbroken custom the disease of my soul might be fed and carried on as strong or stronger than ever into the realm of marriage" (*Conf.* vi. 25). That is written, no doubt, from a later point of view, but at this period of his life there could be no question, if there ever could have been, of a mere light-hearted paganism; he was deliberately false to his own ideals.

Now, just such a state of tension, of conflict of ideals and practice, supplies the psychological pre-conditions for a conversion. Psychologically speaking the conditions of a conversion are realised when an undercurrent of inner protest is reinforced by influences from without or from within, until at a given point it becomes strong enough to overpower and reverse what has hitherto been the dominant current of the life. There is no psychological reason why the critical point should not be a definite and assignable one. If so, the conversion is in a sense sudden, though it has been long prepared.

Now let us see what happened in Augustine's case.

At the point we have reached, the intellectual and the ethical lines of development intersect. Neo-Platonism and the teaching of Ambrose had

removed his principal intellectual difficulties, or at least inspired him with the confidence that they could be removed.[1] The new enlightenment called for a new decision. But the decision hung fire. After his study of the Neo-Platonists, and the reading of the New Testament, described in Book VII. of the *Confessions*, his position, he tells us at the beginning of Book VIII., was this: "I had found the pearl of great price; and I still hesitated to sell all and buy it." Other influences had still to come in before the decisive point was reached. There was first the story told him by Simplicianus, himself a Neo-Platonist Christian, of the conversion of Victorinus, the famous rhetorician, the scholar whose translations of the Neo-Platonists Augustine had himself read. He, after long repugnance, had humbled himself to confess Christ publicly, and had been obliged to give up his chair of rhetoric in the Julian "persecution." Then came—with all the advantage of an assault from an unexpected quarter—the interview with Ponticianus and his story of the life of Antony and of the two young courtiers who renounced the world. This brought to Augustine, according to his own account, a flash of self-revelation. He saw that his intellectual difficulties had drawn part of their strength from an unrecognised ally. He

[1] See below, p. 63, for some further remarks on this point.

had flattered himself that these were the barriers to his pursuit of the higher life; in reality they had served him as shelters against the rigour of its demands. "I had supposed that the reason I was putting off from day to day the decision to renounce the world and follow Thee only, was that I could find no certainty towards which to direct my course. But the day had come for me to be stripped naked in my own eyes; and conscience clamoured in my ears: 'What have you to say now?'" Then follows the famous scene in the garden at Milan. It shapes itself as a struggle to give up that in his life which he knows to be wrong, and it is evident that that is primarily sensual indulgence. "The things which held me back were vanity of vanities and folly of follies to which I had given my love, and they plucked at the garment of my flesh and whispered: 'Wilt thou indeed cast us off? From this moment shall we be separated from thee for ever?' And what were the imaginations which they called up—what were they, O my God? May Thy mercy cast them out from the mind of Thy servant! What vilenesses, what shames did they not call up! And now I was scarce listening to them, far less than half, and they no longer withstood me to my face, but, as it were, whispered from behind and plucked furtively at my garments to make me

look back." If this be invention, what a dramatist was lost in Augustine! And it must be remembered that there was no large conventional literature of conversion for him to draw on in those days; he either invented this, or he experienced it.

Before long comes the crisis. He throws himself down beneath the fig-tree, and gives the rein to his emotion. "And not indeed in these words, but to this effect I broke forth: 'But Thou, O Lord, how long? Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? O remember not against us our former iniquities'—for I felt that it was by these that I was held fast, and I exclaimed in my distress: 'How long, O Lord, shall it be to-morrow, to-morrow?' Why not now? Why should there not be an end of my vileness this very hour?'"

Then comes the voice: "Take, read," the taking up of the codex of the Apostle, the reading of the words that seem to leap forth to meet his need. And at once his heart "was filled with a sunshine of confidence, before which his dark doubts fled away."

This last passage with its suggestion of miracle raises a difficulty for the modern mind, and it is therefore worth while to point out the sobriety of Augustine's handling of this experience, and the completeness of the psychological

preparation for it. In a modern, that might be art, but Augustine had no interest in minimising the miraculous character of the experience. He believed, as we know from other passages, in many miracles which most of us could not accept at all, and so far as most of his readers were concerned, the greater the miracle the better they would be pleased; and yet in regard to this experience he leaves it standing, with—as the German phrase goes—a note of interrogation against it. The voice is "as though of some boy or girl" ("quasi pueri aut puellae"), and comes from the neighbouring house. And though the explanation that it might be a formula from some game is mentioned only to be rejected—in so far as Augustine knew no game in which it occurred—he was after all an African, and this was Italy; he may not have known all the games that ever were played there, and even children have been known on occasion to invent a new game—so that that explanation remains open. I do not urge it; inclining rather to the theory of an "audition," a subconscious impression interpreted as external. But in any case we may note the *level* way in which the experience is related. We get just the right touch of contrast when we find that the scribe of one of the manuscripts of the *Confessions*, not satisfied with the commonplace suggestion of "from the

neighbouring house" ("de vicina domo"), and resolved that there shall be no mistake about the miracle, gives us "from the Divine abode" ("de divina domo"). Then there is "the codex of the Apostle." This is no chance book, but one which he had been studying for some time past (*Conf.* vii. 27). It was the book which, lying on the table, had suggested the conversation with Ponticianus, and he had caught it up in going out, meaning perhaps to read in it when he grew calmer. The idea of looking into it for guidance, as the interpretation of the vague command of the "voice" was suggested by the story of Antony, about whom he had just been hearing: "For I had heard concerning Antony that going into a church he had taken as addressed to himself the words which were being read: 'Go and sell all that thou hast.'"

The fact that we find Augustine representing things thus, when, so far as we can tell, a more magical account would not have been inherently distasteful to him, makes strongly in favour of the reality of what is told. One other little point is, I think, worth mentioning in this connexion. When he gives us his cry in the words of the Psalm passage ("How long, O Lord . . .") he adds that it was not really in these words, but to this effect. Why does he say that? It

does not belong to the logic of the literary situation that he should not have known the Psalms at this time. He has told us previously that he had read other scriptures besides the Pauline Epistles, and he had been going from time to time to the Church (*Conf.* v. 23) where they were in constant use. Why then does he mention this unimportant detail? The answer that occurs to me is: Because he is dealing with facts.

Thus, in my view, we have no serious grounds for impugning the accuracy of the *Confessions*, so far as the account of the conversion is concerned.

The real critical difficulty which arises on comparing the *Confessions* with the Dialogues is quite a different one, and does not seem to be noticed by Becker or Gourdon. It is that—on the evidence of the Dialogues—Augustine was, during the Cassiciacum period, not a more, but a less, complete Neo-Platonist than we should gather from the *Confessions*. The fact is, that we find him in the Dialogues still struggling with certain intellectual difficulties, which we should gather from the *Confessions* he had already solved on the lines of Neo-Platonism. The simplest explanation seems to be that he had made acquaintance with the Neo-Platonist books at the period mentioned in the *Confessions*, and

had, so to speak, "glimpsed" the solutions of his difficulties, had seen the direction in which they lay, but that he had still to work them out as we see him doing in the Dialogues.[1] Alternatively of course, it might be argued that the working-out of these questions in the Dialogues is *pro forma*—that it represents a process which had been completed sometime before. But, while it is doubtless quite true that most of the arguments used by Augustine did not first occur to him while actually talking with his friends and pupils, it is difficult to resist the impression that he is here dealing with questions which were really agitating his mind at that time (cf. *C. Acad.* ii. 22-24)—the questions which he was debating in those hours of silent thought which he mentions in the *De Ordine*. It must be remembered, of course, that the existence of these difficulties is in no way incompatible with the religious experience of the *Confessions*. As he tells us in the Dialogue *C. Acad.* iii. 43, he had already made the decision to believe, on grounds of authority. The question which remained—the question raised by the Academic Scepticism with which we find him still wrestling

[1] I am glad to find myself in agreement on this point with Thimme, *Augustins geistige Entwinkelung*, who writes (p. 19), that the *Confessions* would need only a very slight alteration of phraseology ("leichte Nuanzirung einzelner Redewendungen") to represent the state of affairs exactly.

earnestly in the Dialogues—was whether a purely intellectual certainty could be reached. The determination to believe stood fast, but the restless intellect ceaselessly endeavoured to reach the same conclusions along its own lines.

III

HIS CORRESPONDENCE—RELATIONS WITH MEN AND AFFAIRS

THE correspondence of St. Augustine fills one of the large-quarto volumes of the Benedictine edition, and even after deduction has been made of several letters which might well be classed as treatises, the extent and variety of it are amazing.

Not to speak of personal friends, bishops, Government officials, pagan philosophers, Christian scholars, poor widows, wealthy landowners, town corporations, hermits, heretics, and schismatics all come into some kind of epistolary relation with Augustine of Hippo, himself scholar, philosopher, theologian, ecclesiastic, pastor, citizen, ascetic, and with it all a friendly and helpful human being.

It will not be possible to cite here even a representative selection, and it seems better to give the circumstances of a few of the letters or exchanges of letters pretty fully, rather than

to take a stray paragraph here and there from a greater number.

The department of personal friendship in its more intimate aspects is perhaps the least well represented. Probably many letters of this kind have perished. If the early Dialogues had been lost, the letters would not entirely have supplied their place as materials for reconstructing the temperament and ethos of the writer.

We may begin, however, with the most interesting of the few letters of this personal character. It is addressed to a correspondent with whom we have already had to do, the young Licentius, the brilliant, flighty pupil of the Cassiciacum days. But it is written more than seven years later, and we must briefly indicate the changes which had taken place in Augustine's life in the interval.

It was the winter of 386 to 387 which was spent at Cassiciacum, following his conversion in the summer of 386. In the spring of 387 he was baptized by Ambrose in Milan. In the summer of the same year his mother died at Ostia, and after her death he spent some months in Rome.

In 388 he returned to Africa, sold his small property at Tagaste, and for a time lived what was virtually a monastic life in company with a few friends.

In 391, however, when visiting the town of Hippo Regius, he was practically compelled by the urging of the people and their aged bishop to allow himself to be ordained a presbyter. As he says himself in one of his lively metaphors, the post of second helmsman was thrust upon him before he well knew how to handle an oar.

Four years later he was made co-episcopus or colleague to the now infirm Valerius. In the same year he received a letter from Licentius, who was still in Italy. The letter itself is not preserved, but Augustine has quoted in his reply a poem which it contained addressed by his pupil to himself. The letter seems to have given Augustine some anxiety—not apparently that his pupil was plunging into dissipation, but simply that his interests were what may be called worldly. Augustine fears that he is in danger of losing touch with the things that matter most, and writes him a letter full of solicitous affection (*Ep.* 26). He quotes, as we have said, the poem, and we may give a few lines from it here to indicate the relation subsisting between them. The poem as a whole is in a rather turgid style, overweighted especially with strings of names Classical and barbarian, and it is just in one or two passages which express the writer's feeling of affection

that the style simplifies itself a little and rises into real impressiveness. Recalling that pleasant interlude at Cassiciacum when Augustine came into such close relations with his pupils, he writes some lines which may be rendered thus:

> Oh, if the Dawn's joy-bearing chariot wheels
> Could bring back once again those long-past days
> We spent in Italy's bosom 'mid the peaks,
> Tasting with thee fair leisure, and the laws,
> The lofty laws, to which the good obey—
> Oh, then, not cruel cold of winter's frost,
> The West's fierce gales, or raging of the North
> Should stay my eager steps from following thee:
> Speak, and I follow . . .

The expression is perhaps over-elaborate, but it is evident, I think, that Licentius looked back with real affection to that pleasant sojourn at Cassiciacum. The following lines also may be quoted. To explain the allusions it should be said that Augustine and Licentius were both natives of Tagaste, and that Augustine had been for a time an inmate of his father's house:

> Skills not to write us of one city sprung,
> Nurtured in the same halls, of the same blood
> Of ancient race, and linked by Christian faith;
> Nor yet that now the wide sea flows between:
> Love laughs at both. . . .

That last half-line — *amor contemnit utrumque* —in its terse surprise-effect seems to me to carry a real hint of poetry.

And while it is a commonplace that love laughs

at distance, the recognition that love is as far from being a necessary product of close association as it is from being destroyed by separation is not so commonplace.

In his reply, Augustine begins by saying he regrets that his answer has been delayed by circumstances which he will not enter into; Licentius must just take his word for it—the touch of authority to his old pupil is not out of place. Then he turns to the poem and remarks that Licentius would have been bitterly ashamed if there had been any disorder in his verses; is he not ashamed to exhibit disorder in his life? This strikes us, perhaps, as a rather artificial argument, but he goes on to use Licentius' affectionate words about himself as the basis of a really moving appeal. "Remember what you wrote, 'Speak and I follow; it needs only your command.' Well, my command is this: Give yourself to me, that is the one thing needful, or rather give yourself to my Lord, who is Lord of us all, and who gave you your abilities. For I, what am I but your servant through Him, and your fellow-servant under Him? And does not He himself command you? Hear the Gospel: 'Jesus stood and cried, saying, Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' . . ."

Then he urges the young man to go to visit the saintly Paulinus of Nola, whose acquaintance Augustine had himself lately made by an exchange of letters. And in his next letter to Paulinus he introduces Licentius to him. "The son of Romanianus," writes Augustine, "whom I count also my son—whose name you will find mentioned in some of my writings—I have decided, whether he visit you or no, to hand over to you by letter, that you may console, exhort, instruct him, not so much by the sound of your voice as by the example of your fortitude. I desire earnestly that while his life is still in the green blade he may turn the tares into fruit, and may believe those who have experienced that which he desires to endanger himself by experiencing. You will understand from his poem, and from my letter to him [Augustine encloses a copy], what I deplore in him, what I fear, and what I desire. And I have good hope that by the Lord's favour my anxieties about him may be set at rest through you." Paulinus accepted the charge, and wrote a friendly letter to the young man; but there our knowledge ceases.

By way of contrast with this intimately personal and warm-hearted letter, we have now to consider one in which Augustine deals with an unknown correspondent, a young man of a very different type (*Ep.* 118). This was a Greek

named Dioscorus who had studied both in Rome and Carthage, and who seems to have been a finely developed specimen of the genus bore. He is about to return to Greece, where he desires to pose as an authority on Latin literature and philosophy, and suddenly realising that there are a great many gaps in his knowledge, he writes off post haste to Augustine, whose reputation has reached him in Carthage, to ask for solutions of a whole catalogue of difficulties. With a naïveté which almost disarms criticism he frankly says that his object in wanting to know is that on his return he may, so to speak, astonish the natives. And, with a touch which borders on the farcical, he adds that he *thinks* there is nothing improper in his request, but even if there is, he begs Augustine to fulfil it, because—of all reasons in the world—he is just on the point of sailing! Augustine was, as we gather from many indications, a good-natured man, but he was not without a sense of his own dignity, and a wholly justifiable estimate of the value of his own very fully occupied time. It is not surprising that he should have felt that this enterprising young man needed the application of something in the nature of an astringent to his inflated self-conceit.

He begins: "You seem to have intended to blockade me with an innumerable host of ques-

tions, or, rather, completely to overwhelm me with them"; and he goes on to make play with the curious suggestion that the young man's impending sea-voyage gave him a peculiar claim upon Augustine's attention. "The impropriety of this request," writes Augustine, "you are yourself aware of, though in your absorption in your own interests you are unwilling to recognise it. For what else does it mean, when, after saying that you see nothing improper in it, you add, 'But *be this as it may*, I pray you to answer me, for I am on the point of sailing'? . . . For the effect of this is, that while you yourself see no impropriety in the request, yet if there *is* anything improper in it you *nevertheless* implore me to grant it—because you are about to start on your voyage. Now what is the force of this plea, 'because I am about to start on my voyage'? You think, it would seem, that impropriety can be washed away by salt water! But even if it were so, my share in the fault would remain unexpiated, for *I* have no intention of making a voyage!" Then he applies to him a trenchant comment from the young man's favourite poet, Persius:

> Knowledge itself, it seems, is nought to you
> Unless another knows you know it too.[1]

[1] Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.
Sat. i. 27.

"O cause," says Augustine grimly, "well worthy to occupy the hours which bishops devote to study while other men sleep!"

But the curious and interesting thing is, that instead of dismissing the importunate inquirer with this rebuke, Augustine ends by writing him a long and learned letter, dealing with the history of philosophy and the relation of philosophy to religion. He intimates also that he has answered many of the detailed questions in the margin of his correspondent's manuscript. What led him to answer so fully? It was partly, no doubt, good-nature; partly zeal for his correspondent's welfare, for the answer is adapted to put the young man's whole conception of learning on a higher plane; and partly perhaps—one is tempted to conjecture—that, living as he was, remote from his old interests [he tells us incidentally that there was not a copy of Cicero to be had in all Hippo], he may not have been altogether loath to have his thoughts directed to them again. But, it may be noted, he entirely declined to answer such of the questions as dealt with Cicero's treatise on rhetoric, the *De Oratore*. That art, which in his view lent itself so much to trifling, to flattery, to making the worse appear the better reason, he had renounced on becoming a Christian, and refused henceforth to have anything to do with—at

least on its formal side. His style, of course, bore to his dying day the marks of his rhetorical training, and in his advice about preaching in the *De Doctrina Christiana* he turns his technical knowledge to very good account.

We next turn to a letter of a more public character, a historical document, in fact, of some importance, for it gives an account of how Augustine dealt with, and succeeded in putting a stop to, an ecclesiastical abuse (*Ep.* 29). In the North African Church a custom prevailed of holding feasts in the chapels or oratories dedicated to the martyrs upon the martyr's "birthday" — the anniversary of his martyrdom. The feast was an Agape, such as had originally been attached to the celebration of the Communion, but which it had been found advisable at an early date to separate from it. No doubt in the case of many devout and sober-minded Christians the feast was very much a *pro forma* affair, and fellowship in prayer at the martyr's tomb was the important matter. St. Augustine has himself given us in the *Confessions* a very interesting account of the way in which his mother used to celebrate it. "When she brought her basket, with the festal viands, to be given away after she had first tasted them, she never set forth more than one

cup of wine, diluted to suit her own very sober palate, from which she would take her sip, for courtesy, and if there were more than one oratory to be visited she would carry round the same cup to each" (*Conf.* vi. 2). But the majority of the African Christians were not so temperate.

These festivals were treated as occasions for boisterous revelry. Augustine himself, in fact, tells us that they were originally permitted as a substitute for the pagan festivals, an accommodation to the weakness of new converts from paganism. "It seemed good to our ancestors," he says, "making for the time a concession to this infirmity, to permit them to celebrate, instead of the festivals which they had renounced, other feasts in honour of the holy martyrs, which were observed, not as before with a profane purpose, but with similar self-indulgence"; and the Greek Father, Gregory of Nyssa, gives a similar account. Augustine had found when resident in Milan that these festivals had there been abolished by Ambrose, and when he himself became a presbyter in Hippo, even before he was made bishop, he determined to use his best endeavours to get them abolished there also. He was not, like Ambrose, a man of autocratic temper, nor had he as yet a position of authority comparable to that of the great

Bishop of Milan, but he used the means at his disposal with excellent strategy. He secured the sympathy of his own bishop, and he wrote to Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, to propose that a Council should be held to pronounce against the abuse; and this was done. The Council met in 393, definitely forbade the clergy to take part in any such festivals, and directed that every effort should be made to restrain the people from engaging in them. Thus fortified, Augustine set about his personal task of dealing with the question at Hippo. One factor in the situation which we must realise clearly to ourselves, is the temperament of the North African populace. They were extremely emotional—easily moved to tears, but on the other hand easily roused to violence. They were capable of raising, even within the walls of the church, a riot in which the lives of the clergy might be endangered—Augustine himself gives us elsewhere an account of such a disturbance. They were extremely attached to these festivals, which had been rendered reputable by the prescription of long usage. Moreover, the Donatist schismatics, who had the reputation of being, in general, stricter than the Catholic Church, continued to countenance them. To attack the custom needed therefore some personal courage, because it might raise a dangerous riot; and

some moral courage, because it might strengthen the schismatics at the expense of the Church. Such were the circumstances in which Augustine planned his campaign, and carried it to a successful issue.

Most men, I suppose, if they had gained a success of that kind in a matter which lay so near their hearts, would feel a keen desire to tell some understanding friend all about it, and that is just what Augustine did. He wrote a full account of the matter to his old friend Alypius —whom we last met as a rising young lawyer, but who had in the meantime entered the Church, and was now Bishop of his native place, Tagaste. Augustine begins by reminding him how they had prayed together about the matter beforehand, and he rejoices that they may now give thanks together. The prohibition had been announced during a recent visit of Alypius, and soon after his departure, says Augustine, he became aware that some were violently declaring that they would refuse to obey it. Shortly before the festival of a certain martyr named Leontius, the verse about casting pearls before swine occurred in the ordinary lesson of the day, and Augustine took occasion to preach from it. "I discoursed therefore," he says, "concerning dogs and swine in such a way as to compel those who clamour with obstinate barking against the

divine precepts, and who are given up to the abominations of carnal pleasures, to blush for shame."

This sermon, he tells us, was much discussed and "found many opponents." The eve of the festival of Leontius fell upon Quadragesima Sunday. Augustine read and commented on the passage about the cleansing of the temple, and argued *a fortiori*, if the Lord abominated trafficking in the temple, how much more drunkenness and revelry within the church. Then he read the passage about the golden calf in Exodus xxxii. to show that even in Israel such feasting was only known in connexion with idol worship. Here we may note a very interesting little incidental touch. Augustine says that he had this passage of Scripture prepared, ready to be put into his hands—presumably by a deacon. In an ancient manuscript, finding a particular passage is a matter that takes time, and Augustine as a practised orator knew that the break caused by even a few moments' delay may lead to completely losing the attention of a popular audience. To have provided against that little difficulty beforehand was a piece of real generalship, and shows how carefully he must have thought out his plan of campaign. Having made his application of the passage in Exodus, Augustine went on to point out how grave are

the sins with which Paul associates drunkenness, how severely he comments on the disorders at the Communion, and how vividly he contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruits of the Spirit. So far he had confined himself to reading and comment, but as he handed back the manuscript the people cried out for a discourse (apparently much as people nowadays at a political meeting call out, "Speech, Speech" ("imperata oratione" are Augustine's words). Perhaps he had expected this; at any rate he rose to his opportunity. "I set before their eyes," he says, "with all the power at my command, as the danger itself constrained me, and as the Lord was pleased to give me strength, the peril shared by them, who were committed to my care, and by me who must give account to the Chief Shepherd, and implored them by His humiliation, by the unparalleled insults, the buffetings and spittings which He endured, by His pierced hands and crown of thorns, and by His cross and blood, to have pity on me at least, if they were enemies to themselves. . . . In this appeal I put forth all the power in thought and utterance which in an emergency so great and hazardous our Saviour and Ruler was pleased to supply. I did not move them to weep by first weeping myself; but while these things were being spoken, I own that, moved by the tears which

they began to shed, I myself could not refrain from following their example. And when we had thus wept together I concluded my sermon in the full persuasion that they would be restrained by it from the abuses denounced."

Next morning, the day of the festival, some of the malcontents came to him privately, still in a very uncertain mood. He talked them over, however. Then, going to the church, he explained how the custom had arisen by way of accommodation to heathen practices, and how most of the Churches beyond the sea had already suppressed it. He gave notice that in the afternoon a meeting would be held for the reading of Scripture and singing of psalms, "and by the number who should assemble for this purpose it would plainly appear who were guided by reason and who were the slaves of appetite."

In the afternoon, he records with satisfaction, a greater number assembled than in the morning. He spoke only a few words, expressing gratitude to God, but he could not refrain from referring to the sounds of revelry which proceeded from the neighbouring Donatist church, and remarking that the beauty of day is enhanced by contrast with the darkness of night. We should have been well content, no doubt, to spare that touch of self-righteousness; but he had reason for satisfaction, for he had won a real victory

for the cause of spiritual religion. And the victory was complete. When he retired from the church the people remained there, continuing to sing psalms "even till daylight failed."

This letter has shown us Augustine as a Churchman — a parish clergyman — dealing vigorously with a practical abuse. We have now to look at him as a scholar discussing Scriptural problems with a fellow-scholar. In the whole of Augustine's wide correspondence there are few more interesting letters than those which he exchanged with the greatest of contemporary Church Fathers, St. Jerome. I say "exchanged," because here we have fortunately the letters of both parties. In the main, they are occupied with a scholars' controversy, and the fluctuations of tone and temper in the contributions of the two disputants are in themselves of some human interest. Before we go on to the subject-matter, however, it is worth while to realise to ourselves the local circumstances in which the correspondence took place.

Jerome, after living the life of a wandering scholar, recalling in some respects that of Erasmus, had settled down at Bethlehem, where he presided over a monastery founded for him by his convert Paula. Here he was devoting himself mainly to the work of translating and commenting upon the Scriptures. The two

scholars were thus widely separated in space, and still more so by difficulties of communication. Whereas, for example, between Rome and Alexandria there would be fairly regular communication—though trade had much fallen off from the early days of the Empire—it was only by roundabout journeyings that Bethlehem could be reached from Hippo Regius. We are sometimes told that there was an elaborate postal service in those days; and there was, in fact, a system of couriers and change-horses on some of the main routes, but it was not maintained for the convenience of individuals but solely in the interests of the Government, to carry administrative messages. The correspondence of Augustine and Jerome was wholly dependent on the finding of brethren travelling from one country to the other; and accident, illness, or change of plan on the part of the messenger might delay the arrival of a letter indefinitely. There is a passage in Kingsley's *Hypatia* which well illustrates this private carrying of letters. There, in a certain case, both speed and secrecy are necessary in the delivery of a letter, and a monk who bears it works his passage as an oarsman on the benches of a galley. When he presents the letter the recipient courteously invites him to be seated; and the monk feelingly replies, in words which command

the special sympathies of rowing men: "Of sitting, as of all carnal pleasure, cometh satiety at the last"! Several passages in the letters make pathetic references to the uncertainties attending such means of communication; for instance, Augustine writes: "I can scarcely send a letter to you, and scarcely receive one from you at intervals not of days nor of months but of several years" (*Ep.* 166. 1); and again, still more strikingly: "I remember writing to your Holiness about these words in the Epistle to the Galatians when I was young; and behold I am now advanced in age and have not yet received a reply" (*Ep.* 73. 5). Of course in this case some accident had befallen the original letter.

The subjects discussed in the letters are mainly two: the dissension between St. Peter and St. Paul at Antioch, described in Galatians ii.; and Jerome's new translations of the Scriptures. In regard to the incident at Antioch, Jerome had maintained in his Commentary on Galatians that St. Paul did not really rebuke St. Peter: it was an arranged scene between the two apostles, an object-lesson which they gave to their converts. He argues that St. Paul, who elsewhere declares that "to the Jews he became as a Jew," could not have found fault with St. Peter for following the same principle.

The argument is felt by the modern reader to be artificial; for his contemporaries it derived its real strength from a prepossession. The reverence felt for St. Peter made it difficult to believe that he could have been rebuked by St. Paul, his junior as an apostle. Here Augustine has our complete sympathy when he argues that if Scripture could be made to mean the opposite of what it says in this way, it would cease to have any authority for us whatever, and that St. Paul, who is, so to speak, on oath in all this narrative — having introduced it by saying, "Behold, before God, I lie not,"—could not possibly have described a pretence in this way without giving any hint that it was a pretence. As regards St. Paul's becoming a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks, Augustine, with fine insight, says that this means that St. Paul put himself by sympathy in the place of those whom he desired to help. "He became all things to all men, not with the subtlety of a deceiver, but with the love of one filled with compassion, using the remedies required by the ills under which other men laboured, as though their case had been his own" (82. 27 *fin.*). And he shows historical discernment in meeting the argument: "How do you account for the fact that St. Paul permitted Jews to continue in the performance of their ancestral customs, whereas you as a bishop

would refuse to receive a Jewish convert unless he abandoned them?" "Slowly and by degrees," he says, "all this observance of these types was to vanish away. . . . The toleration for the time of their continuing to observe these was enough to declare their excellence as things which, though they were to be given up, were not, like the worship of idols, worthy of abhorrence; but they were not to be imposed on others lest they should be thought necessary to salvation" (*Ep.* 82. 15, 16). "The Apostle," he goes on to say, "provided that these ceremonies should, so to speak, receive an honourable burial. They are now dead and buried, and any one who proposes to continue their observance is not piously performing his part in the funeral obsequies, but impiously violating the sepulchre." That, it seems to me, is not only wittily said, but profound in thought. The case is not, of course, allowed to go by default. Jerome was as skilled a dialectician as Augustine, and makes effective use of the well-known difficulties about the circumcision of Timothy, the non-circumcision of Titus, and the case of the men who were purified from the Vow. He also fortifies himself with the agreement of some of the Greek expositors. There is some sharp speaking on both sides, and Jerome, who shows the greater acerbity, has some excuse, for one letter of Augustine's attack-

ing his views failed to be delivered, but was copied by unauthorised persons and circulated at Rome, so that Jerome first heard of it indirectly, and indeed received an unsigned copy before the original. It is interesting to note, however, that in the end Jerome allowed himself to be convinced by Augustine, or, at any rate, came round to his view. This does not appear in the letters exchanged between them, though the tone of the last of these is very cordial; but Augustine notes in a letter to Oceanus (*Ep.* 180) that Jerome in his last work against Pelagius "has maintained the same opinion concerning what was said and done by the apostles on that occasion as I myself, following the blessed Cyprian, had done." The allusion to Cyprian as his own authority for this view, pleasantly avoids any hint of triumph in this statement.

When we turn to the other question debated between the two scholars, the position is reversed as regards the strength of their arguments. In a matter of linguistic scholarship, Augustine, with his restricted knowledge of Greek and ignorance of Hebrew, was no match for the amazingly learned Jerome. To understand the points at issue between them we must briefly recall the main facts in regard to the Latin versions of Scripture. Up to Jerome's time there had been numerous different recensions of

the Latin version in circulation, and in the case of the Old Testament the version was not from the original but from the Septuagint. At the request of Pope Damasus, Jerome undertook a revised version. Beginning with the Gospels he went on to the rest of the New Testament. Later on, he seems [1] to have revised the whole of the Old Testament from the Septuagint, making use of the critical marks given in Origen's *Hexapla*, and finally he made a new translation of the Old Testament direct from the Hebrew. Of these various undertakings, Augustine approved of the revision of the New Testament, and he had no objection to the current Latin version of the LXX. being improved from a better text; but the idea of a new translation from the Hebrew filled him with suspicion and alarm. For one thing, he had an extremely high estimate of the authority of the Seventy translators. He was rather inclined, as appears from *De Doctrina Christiana*, ii. 22, to believe the story according to which they all worked in separate cells and miraculously produced versions agreeing in every particular. He expresses himself, it is true, with some reserve about this, and still more guardedly in *De Civitate*, xviii. 42, 43; but he adds in both cases the further suggestion that even if they

[1] There is some doubt whether this revision was completed. See H. J. White in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Vulgate," iv. 875a.

worked together they were miraculously guided in such a way that their departures from the Hebrew represented the mind of the Spirit—that they were led to deviate from it in a way which would adapt the Divine message better to the Gentiles. They were, in fact, as he sometimes expresses it, not merely interpreters but prophets, speaking with an authority collateral with that of the text. Holding these views, he presents to Jerome what seems to him an inescapable dilemma. "It is to me," he says, "most extraordinary that anything should at this date be found in the Hebrew MSS. which has escaped so many translators perfectly acquainted with the language. . . . Now these things are either obscure, or plain: if they are obscure, it is believed that you may possibly be mistaken; if they are clear, it is not believed that the previous translators could possibly have been mistaken." To this Jerome replies, effectively enough, that the same principle would equally discredit Augustine's own commentaries on Scripture, or indeed any attempt to come nearer to the meaning of the sacred text. Another consideration which weighed with Augustine may be described as a kind of perverted scholarly instinct. "So long as we had to do with translations from the LXX.," he says, "we could check the version by the original, but now that the

translation is based upon the Hebrew, we are helpless." This, of course, is not an argument of any weight, but members of a generation which has seen Greek scholarship obliged to yield place to Aramaic scholarship in regard to so many questions connected with the Gospels, can at least sympathise with Augustine's feelings. But he is not confined to theoretical and sentimental arguments ; he has also a very practical one. As in the early days of our own Revised Version, though with less justification from a literary point of view, the people simply would not have it. Augustine tells (*Ep.* 71) of a curious incident at a little town in North Africa. The bishop there had introduced the reading of Jerome's new version in the church. In reading the Book of Jonah he came to the familiar passage about Jonah's gourd. Here, instead of "cucurbita" (gourd), Jerome's version had "hedera" (ivy). And when this was read, destroying the familiar detail of the mental picture, immediately the church was in an uproar! We find it hard to imagine so much excitement arising over so small a point, but these emotional North Africans were in many respects like children, and, like children listening to a favourite story, they resented any alteration in the consecrated wording. "Thereupon," says Augustine, "arose such a tumult in the congregation, correcting

what had been read and denouncing the translation as false, that the bishop was compelled to ask the testimony of the Jewish residents. These, whether from ignorance or spite [he diplomatically says to Jerome], answered that the words in the Hebrew were correctly rendered in the Greek and in the [Old] Latin based upon it. What further need I say? The bishop was compelled to correct your version in that passage as if it had been falsely translated, as he desired not to be left without a congregation—a calamity which he narrowly escaped." In a later letter Jerome gives learned reasons for his choice of the word, but botanically he seems to have been quite wrong—indeed he admits that "hedera" is a compromise. But the interesting thing is that, in spite of this unfortunate instance, Augustine came round to the better opinion regarding the advantage of a direct translation. "Regarding your version," he says, "you have persuaded me of the advantage of your plan of translating from the Hebrew" (*Ep.* 82. 34), though apparently mainly on the ground that it was a safeguard against omissions or corruptions on the part of Jewish translators.

To be able to admit oneself convinced by argument after vehemently maintaining the opposite opinion, is a test of character, and it is interesting to observe that these two Church

Fathers, both of them vehement men and keen controversialists, each had the candour to accept the better opinion at the hands of an adversary.

One other passage from this correspondence I should like to quote, because it shows St. Augustine's temper at its best. Jerome had written to him about his bitter quarrel with his former friend and pupil, Rufinus. Augustine expresses his sympathy but avoids abusing Rufinus, and breaks out into this memorable appeal: "If I could anywhere meet you both —which, alas, I cannot hope to do—so strong are my agitation, grief, and fear, that I think I should cast myself at your feet, and there, weeping till I could weep no more, would, with all the eloquence of love, appeal first to each of you for his own sake, then to both for each other's sake, and for the sake of those, especially the weak for whom Christ died, whose salvation is in peril as they look on you, who occupy a place so conspicuous on the stage of time, imploring you not to write and scatter abroad these bitter words against each other" (*Ep.* 73).

It is passages like that, and there are not a few such in his letters, which bring home to us the great Churchman's claim to the title "Saint." Nor is the emotional tenderness shown in this passage incompatible with sternness where he feels it to be necessary.

On one occasion, we learn from *Ep.* 250, a young bishop named Auxilius had taken very high-handed action against a Christian government official named Classicianus. This official in the execution of his duties had come to the church in pursuit of certain law-breakers who had taken refuge there. He had not forcibly violated the right of sanctuary, but he had protested against the bishop's affording sanctuary in this case. The bishop, who was young and headstrong, had thereupon inflicted excommunication, not only upon Classicianus himself but upon all his household. This was a very serious matter. A child born while the sentence held and dying unbaptized would, according to the prevailing view, be eternally lost. The official complained to Augustine. The latter had no direct jurisdiction over his fellow-bishop; but his years and the consideration in which he was generally held gave him great authority, and he writes with a kind of courteous severity which is very effective. "For my own part," he says, "although I have been most grievously troubled by the cruel excesses with which some men have vexed the Church, I have never ventured to do as you have done, for this reason, that if any one were to challenge me to justify such an act, I could give no satisfactory reply."

Notwithstanding the number of years for

which he has been a bishop he is willing, he says, to learn from one who has not yet been a twelvemonth in the same office, "if he undertakes to teach me how we can justify our conduct either before men or before God if we inflict a spiritual punishment on innocent souls because of another person's crime." A little further on comes the fine human touch, going beyond mere officialism, which is rarely lacking in Augustine. "And think not," he says, "that because we are bishops [notice the "we"; how very different it would have sounded if he had said because *you* are a bishop]—think not that because we are bishops it is impossible for unjust passionate resentment to gain secretly upon us; let us rather remember that because we are men our life in the midst of temptations and snares is beset with the greatest possible dangers." When he comes to the point he speaks out quite directly. "Cancel therefore the sentence which perhaps under the influence of unusual excitement you have passed; and let the mutual love which united Classicianus and you since the time when you were a catechumen be restored again. Let strife be banished and peace brought back, lest this man who is your friend be lost to you, and the devil who is your enemy rejoice over you both."

To the victim of the excommunication he writes: "One thing I say deliberately as an

unquestionable truth, that if any believer has been wrongfully excommunicated, the sentence will do harm rather to him who pronounces it than to him who suffers this wrong. For it is by the Holy Spirit dwelling in holy persons that any one is loosed or bound, and *He* inflicts unmerited punishment upon no one; for by Him the love which worketh not evil is shed abroad in our hearts" (Fragment attached to *Ep.* 250).

On another occasion we find him standing up energetically for social righteousness in a case between landlord and tenant. The circumstances have to be gathered from the allusions in the letter (*Ep.* 247), but it appears pretty clear that a rascally land-steward had collected the rents from the peasant occupiers and absconded with them. He had no authority to collect these rents, and the landowner, acting apparently within his legal rights, was proposing to exact the rents a second time from men who were very near the poverty line. The landowner was professedly a Christian, and Augustine writes him a very trenchant letter. He argues the equity of the case, pointing out that these ignorant peasants could not be expected to know just at what point the authority of the agent stopped. The landowner, he says, ought either to have given them definite instructions in writing

that they were not to pay the land-steward in any circumstances, or alternatively he ought to have told them only to pay him on the production of special written authority. [Augustine had a good deal of Church property under his own charge, and seems to have been a careful business man.] He reminds the landowner—apparently from personal knowledge—that he had in several cases been rather inconsistent in the amount of authority he permitted to these land-stewards. He taxes him with deliberately dodging a personal interview with himself—one fancies Augustine was not a pleasant person to meet when he had grounds for righteous indignation—and he offers him by letter what he calls a draught of that bitter medicine, truth. "Would that any abuse which you direct against myself might do you as little harm as it will do me, and would that the injustice which you are inflicting on the poor and wretched might do you *no more harm* than it does them. For they suffer for this present time, but be well assured that you are laying up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath and of the revelation of the judgment of God. I beseech His mercy that He will correct you here rather than reserve you for that day when there will be no place for correction; and I pray that He who has given you the fear of Him, for which cause I do not despair of you,

will open your understanding, that you may see what you are doing, and abhor it and amend it. For you think little or nothing of things which are so great evils that when your greed is sufficiently tamed to allow you to consider them, you will water the earth with your tears that God may have mercy upon you. If I am wrong in thinking it unjust that men should have twice exacted from them what they are scarce able to pay once, then do what you choose. But if you recognise that it is unjust, then do what is right; do what God commands and what I urge upon you. I ask it not more for their sake than for your own." One may venture to hope that the rents were remitted.

By way of contrast with this severe letter we may conclude with one which shows the touch of humour so often noticed in Augustine. Astrological fatalism, the theory that men's actions are governed by the stars, was a very living belief in his day, and in writing to one correspondent he meets it with the following effective *argumentum ad hominem*: "When one of these astrologers," he says (*Ep.* 246), "after selling to wealthy clients his absurd prognostications, calls back his thoughts from the ivory tablets [on which he inscribes them] to the management of his own house, he reproves his wife, not with words only, but with blows, if he

finds her, I do not say jesting too freely, but even looking out of the window. Nevertheless, if she were to expostulate saying: 'Why beat me, beat Venus rather, if you can, since it is under that planet's influence that I am compelled to do what you complain of'—he would certainly apply his energies, not to invent some of the absurd jargon by which he cajoles the public, but to inflict some of the just correction by which he maintains his authority at home!" [1]

[1] Augustine frequently uses his gift of humour to ridicule superstition, and although it is not from the letters, I may quote, by way of pendent to the above, the following rather good story: "Many people," he says, "hold that to have anything belonging to one eaten by mice portended some disaster. The story goes that some one once came to Cato with a long face announcing that the mice had eaten his boots. Cato replied: 'It would have been a very much stranger thing if the boots had eaten the mice!'" (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 31).

IV

OUTLINES OF HIS PSYCHOLOGY

If one were asked for a good illustration of the contrast between poetry and prose—between essential poetry and prose, that is—one might offer it in a pleasantly paradoxical form by comparing a famous verse of Pope, as illustrating the prosaic treatment, with a famous passage of St. Augustine's prose, as illustrating the poetic treatment. Pope, in the often-quoted line, informs us didactically that

> The proper study of mankind is man.

Augustine, in a perhaps less well-known passage, expresses his astonishment that men "go forth to marvel at lofty mountains and mighty torrents, and the expanse of ocean, and the movements of the stars—and pass themselves by."

That was a mistake which Augustine at least was in no danger of making; in that sense he could not pass himself by. He had, as we have already seen, a keen enough eye for external

nature, but that to which he constantly returns as by a kind of fascination is what he elsewhere calls the "abyss of human consciousness" ("abyssus humanae conscientiae").

I do not know that there is much use in speculating on the cause of his keen interest in psychology. We are sometimes told that it was his Neo-Platonic studies which made him a psychologist. There is, it seems to me, an unanswerable argument against that. The earlier part of the *Confessions*, prior to his acquaintance with Neo-Platonism, is full of accurately observed and vividly remembered inner experience. A subsequent study of Neo-Platonism would not have supplied him with either the observation or the memory of that previous period. Moreover, the psychology of Plotinus is of quite a different stamp from that of Augustine, being much more metaphysical in character.

Others have suggested that the explanation lies in the intensity of his religious experience. But surely this is—I will not say to put the cart before the horse, but at least to suggest a relation of cause and effect where the real relation is one of interaction. The intensity of his religious experience is surely in part at least due to the vividness with which his inner life was present to his consciousness.

I do not think we can get much beyond the

plain fact that he had a natural bent for psychologising. The fact itself is indisputable. His psychology is the centre of his thinking, and supplies the standpoint from which he approaches other intellectual problems. It will therefore be worth while to go into it in some detail. First, I propose to sketch his system, then to give some general illustrations of his observational powers; and then to trace his application of psychological methods in the treatment of some of his main philosophical and theological doctrines.

In regard to two questions which stand on the threshold of the subject, Augustine displays a genuinely scientific caution, refusing to speak dogmatically where evidence is inaccessible. These are, the origin of the soul, and the manner of its union with the body. By the origin of the soul is here meant, not the ultimate origin of its existence—that, of course, Augustine unhesitatingly refers to God—but the question whether each individual soul is newly created, or whether it is derived through the parents from the primal man, or whether all souls were created at the beginning, and continue to exist in a kind of storehouse or reservoir of soul life, from which they are either sent into bodies, or find their way into them by a kind of natural tendency. It is not from any lack of interest in this question

that Augustine refuses to decide between the rival theories. He discusses them at some length in at least four different works — *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 55 ff.; *De Genesi ad Litteram*, vii. §§ 35, 36; *Epistle*, 166; and the *De Anima et ejus Origine*. It is obvious that the theory which would best support his doctrine of original sin is traducianism, the theory that the soul is derived from the parents, and so ultimately from the first man. This advantage was perhaps outweighed for him by the fact that it seemed to lend itself to a materialising conception of the soul (cf. *De Gen. ad Lit.* x. § 40).

Of creationism he says, in Letter 166, that he "could wish it were true," but as this was the opinion of Jerome, to whom he was writing, and as Augustine states the objections to it very fully, the form of the remark is perhaps due to courtesy. The other opinion, that of the storehouse of soul life, was commended to him by his Neo-Platonic studies, and he discusses it with a certain sympathy in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, vii. §§ 35, 36, especially in the form according to which the soul finds its way into the body by a kind of natural tendency—very much the theory which is suggested by those lines in the epilogue of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

> A soul shall draw from out the vast
> And strike its being into bounds.

But the fact remains that though he felt attracted to one or other theory on various grounds, he refused, in the absence of sufficient evidence, to come to any definite conclusion. In his *Retractations*, his final review of his works,[1] he says frankly, referring to an earlier allusion to the subject: "I did not know then, and I do not know now."

The other subject, of which he equally recognises the mysterious character, is the nature of the union between soul and body. In the *De Civ. Dei*, xxi. x. 1, he avows: "The manner in which the spirit inheres in the body . . . is altogether wonderful, nor can it be understood by man." He has a clear consciousness of what may be called the metaphysical difficulty of the inter-relation of spirit and matter, which has led so many modern psychologists to adopt some form of psycho-physical parallelism. So much so that, assuming the inter-relation as a fact, he can use it as an *a fortiori* argument for the conceivability of the Incarnation. Writing to a pagan philosopher who had raised some of the

[1] In accordance with its derivation from *re-* and *tractare*, *retractatio* means a "re-treatment," "revision," not a "withdrawal" of a previously expressed opinion. It is only in comparatively few cases that Augustine "retracts" (*re-traho*) in the modern sense his earlier statement. It seems necessary to say this, since a well-known English dictionary quotes from the preface to the A.V. a passage which is, at least, misleading: "St. Augustine was not ashamed to retractate, we might say *revoke*, many things that had passed him."

difficulties regarding the Incarnation, he says: "In the person of man there is a combination of soul and body. In the person of Christ there is a combination of the Godhead with man, that is to say with a soul having a body. Of the two events the combination of two immaterial substances [God and the soul] ought to be more easily believed than a combination in which one is immaterial and the other material" (*Ep.* 137. 11). But in spite of this sense of the difficulties he boldly expresses his belief in the reciprocal influence of mind and body. "It is my opinion," he writes in *Ep.* 9, § 3, "that every movement of the mind affects in some degree the body. This is patent even to the senses when the movements of the mind are vehement, as in grief, anger, and so forth. Whence we may conjecture that when we are thinking, although no bodily effect of the mental state is discernible by us, there may be some such effect which would be discernible by beings of a higher perceptive faculty. Therefore, these footprints of its motion, so to speak, which the mind impresses on the body, may perchance not only remain but set up as it were a certain disposition."

He is not, however, without a conception of the *manner* of the soul's presence in the body, and it is a tribute to his acuteness of mind that

—to use modern terms—he does not treat it as an explanation, but only as a description of the facts. He holds that the soul is, so to speak, dynamically omnipresent in the body, capable of acting and feeling as a whole at every point. It is present, as he says, "vi et potentia" and "tota singulis partibus" (*De Immort. An.* 25; *De Quant. Anim.* § 69). This does not mean, it will be seen later, that he underrates the physiological importance of the brain, and, so long as it is not regarded as an explanation, it is, no doubt, a better conception than the location of the soul in the pineal gland, or any of the other localisations with which the psychology of a century or so ago made play.

It is interesting to note also that he has considered a difficulty arising from what may be called the side of natural science, though it is fair to say that the experiment which brought it home to him occurred accidentally.

"One day," he says, "at Cassiciacum the youths as they were reclining on the ground in a shady place noticed a little many-footed creeping animal, a kind of long worm, I mean. It is quite common, but I had never known about it what I am going to tell you. One of the youths took the butt-end of the stylus which he happened to have in his hand and struck it, severing it in two. Forthwith the two parts

of its body made off in opposite directions, moving just as rapidly and vigorously as if it had been two animals of the same kind. Dumbfounded at this miracle, and curious as to its cause, the youths quickly carried the living sections to where Alypius and I were sitting. We were no less astonished to see them run about the writing-tablet in every direction. And if one of them was touched with the stylus, it twisted itself up on feeling the touch, while the other part felt nothing, but pursued its own line of movement elsewhere. Further, we tried how far this would go on, and divided the worm, or rather, I should say, the worms, into numerous parts, and they all continued to move in such a way that if we had not divided them ourselves, we could have believed each of them to have always existed separately" (*De Quant. Anim.* 62).

Augustine is quite aware of the difficulties which this raises. He says: "Had I not already been acquainted with many abstruse and subtle reasonings concerning the body and its organisation, concerning space and time and motion which bear upon this question, I should have inclined to award the palm to those who say that the mind is corporeal" ("qui corpus esse animam dicunt"). Unfortunately he does not confide to us the whole of these subtle reasonings.

He takes the line that if the weight of other evidence makes in favour of an immaterial unitary soul, dynamically rather than locally present in the body, then we must be content to suspend our judgment as to the explanation of this phenomenon of the divided worm.[1] A little later on, however, we come on what is perhaps a clue to his real opinion. To his interlocutor Evodius—who, he indicates, is not trained in philosophic speculation—he remarks: "If I should say that there was but one soul, you would be up in arms, because it is happy in one and unhappy in another, and the same thing cannot be at once happy and unhappy. If I say that it is both one and many, you will laugh, nor can I easily find a way of restraining your laughter. But if I say that souls are many only, I shall laugh at myself, and I like still less to displease myself than to displease you" (*De Quant. Anim.* § 69). Here it is evidently the second alternative —that (the) soul is at the same time one and many—which appeals to him. In this he is

[1] It is amusing to find that the French philosopher Nourrisson, writing some fifty years ago, solemnly takes Augustine to task for confusing the issue by bringing in this question of the animal soul, whereas in the latest defence of Animism, M'Dougall's *Body and Mind*, the same phenomenon is noted as a real difficulty in the way of belief in a unitary soul or consciousness. "Many of the lower animals," he writes, notably some of the segmented worms, "may be divided by the knife into two or more portions, each of which continues to live and to manifest all the indications of psychical life proper to the species."

no doubt influenced by the Neo-Platonic view of the World-Soul.[1]

But it is time to leave these speculative matters, which modern psychology is inclined to think of as lying rather outside its borders, and turn to the details of Augustine's psychological teaching. It should be said at the outset that his originality is not especially shown in his system as such. He wrote no systematic work on the subject, and his system when pieced together from various writings is found to be eclectic, embodying elements from Plato and the Neo-Platonists, from Aristotle and the Peripatetics and Stoics. The main influence is undeniably Neo-Platonic, and in accordance with this Augustine is a thorough-going Animist in the philosophical sense of the word. That is to say, he holds—as we have already seen—that the soul is a non-material entity distinct from the body, and is very decidedly the predominant partner in the combination of body and soul. This active, dominant relation of soul to body is well brought out by a passage in the *Confessions*

[1] Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* iv. 9. 4, 5. It would take us too far afield to enter further into this matter here, but another interesting modern parallel may be quoted. Such facts as the divisibility of certain animal forms, referred to above, have been used by some philosophers as the basis of a theory of the composite nature of consciousness, and M'Dougall *ut sup.* remarks: "This view is strictly in harmony with the widely accepted speculation that an absolute mind or consciousness comprehends or includes within it the consciousness of all lesser minds."

(x. 11), where, in referring to the different grades or degrees of soul life, he begins at the bottom with " that power of the soul whereby I vitalise my body " (" qua vivifico carnem meam "). This power, he says, in another work, " unifies the body, resists disintegration, regulates the distribution of nutriment within the body, and presides over growth and generation " (*De Quant. Anim.* 70). He is quite aware that such action is unconscious: " It knows not what it does nor how it does it " (*De Anim. et ejus Orig.* iv. 6). Next comes " the power by which I endow the body with sense-perception." Again the same active form of word " qua *sensifico* carnem meam " : The body, of course, receives the sense impression, but this does not become sensation until the soul, so to speak, reads it off.

He defines sensation as " passio corporis per se ipsam non latens animam " (*De Quant. Anim.* 58), where " passio " means simply " anything that happens to the body "—in modern terminology a modification of the sense organ—and " non latens animam " means coming into consciousness, the negative form (lit. " not escaping the notice of the soul ") being perhaps used in contrast with the unconscious vital functions mentioned above.

As regards the physics of sensation, the relation of the organ with the external object,

he is, of course, not in advance of the science of his day. The eye, for instance, sees by projecting a ray of light out of itself to its object. In *Serm.* 277, § 10, he says: "In this body of ours I find something the celerity of which astonishes me. What is that? The ray of our eye, with which we touch what we perceive, for whatever object we see, we touch it with our visual ray." In the *De Quant. Anim.* 43, 44, he says that we touch the object of our vision "as though with a wand." This wand consists of a ray of light emanating from the eye (*De Gen. ad Lit.* i. 31).

This is, of course, a very unsatisfactory theory. Even regarded purely as a hypothesis, apart from its relation to the facts, it is not so good as the Platonic theory, according to which vision depends on a ray from the eye meeting with a ray from the object, for that at least explains (theoretically) why we do not see in the dark, which this theory fails to do.[1] And it is, of course, on a different plane from the Aristotelian recognition of motion in a medium. It is interesting to note that in one of his later works, the *De Trinitate*, Augustine expresses dis-

[1] I am not sure, however, that this is not what Augustine means. In the above-cited passage from *De Gen. ad Lit.* he says that the visual ray is held (*docetur*) to be so weak that unless we were aided by the external light we could see nothing; and in *Conf.* vii. 16 he speaks metaphorically of the weakness of his vision being "beaten back" by the radiance of the Divine light (? conceived as meeting it too strongly).

satisfaction with this view. After mentioning the ray-theory, he says that it is a subtle and difficult question whether the fact be so or no, and goes on: "For whatever is the nature of the power by which we discern through the eyes, whether it be the rays or anything else . . ."

The nature of sound was more generally understood, in so far as it was known to be transmitted by a movement of the air. Augustine uses phrases like "verberatus aër," "aëre percusso," and in speaking of God's word at the Creation he argues that it was not a literal word, because there was as yet no medium by which it could be transmitted (*De Vera Rel.* 79; *De Mus.* vi. 11; *Conf.* xi. 8).

In regard to the sense of smell, he says that it may perhaps be reasonably disputed whether it is exercised by direct contact or no (*Ep.* 137. 6). But he evidently inclines to think it is so, and in this he is in accordance with what is, I believe, the prevailing modern opinion, namely, that bodies which possess odour discharge into the atmosphere infinitely minute particles which come in contact with and excite the olfactory nerves.

Turning from the physics of sensation to its physiology, that is to say, from the relation of the senses with the external world to the inner mechanism of the body, we find that Augustine has enquired and thought a good deal about

this also. And it is interesting to note that he here betakes himself not to the philosophers but to the physicians. Some of this ancient physiology is curious enough, but every here and there we come upon a strand of fact in it. In *De Gen. ad Lit.* vii. 20 he writes:

"If the opinion deserves respect, which the physicians not only affirm but say they can prove . . . all organisms have within them a certain amount of air, which is contained not only in the lungs, but is also distributed from the heart by the channels which are called arteries; and also fire—[This is of course an allusion to the old theory of the 'four elements' in man's composition]—fire not only of a fervid character such as has its seat in the liver, but also of a lucent character, which, according to their demonstrations, becomes sublimated, and flies aloft into the upper part of the brain, which is as it were the heaven of our body. Thence come the rays which shoot forth from the eyes. From the middle of the brain, as from a centre, there go forth not only to the eyes but to the other senses, narrow tubes ('tenues fistulae'), to the ears, that is to say, the nostrils, the palate, for hearing, smelling, and tasting. While the sense of touch, which is distributed throughout the whole body, they say is also directed by the brain by means of the spinal marrow and the

marrow of the bones to which the spine is united, so that thence the very finest ducts ('tenuissimi rivuli') which form the sense of touch are distributed through all the members. By these messengers, so to speak, the mind receives whatever corporeal facts are accessible to it."

Further (*ibid.* § 24), he describes the *localisation* of function in the brain as follows: There are, he says, three "ventricles," so to speak, of the brain, the anterior, which has to do with the senses, the posterior, which has to do with all movement, and the third or central portion in which *memory* is located. The reason he gives for this division is thoroughly scientific in character, in that the physicians assert that disease or injury of one or other of these portions is accompanied by disturbance or suspension of one or other of these functions. The facts are, of course, not quite so simple as is here implied, but the physicians whom Augustine is here following were on the track of an important physiological truth in thus localising function.

The special senses are presided over, according to Augustine, by what he calls the inner sense ("interior sensus"), to which, as he says in *Conf.* vii. 23, the special senses make their report—"cui sensus corporis exteriora nuntiunt." It is in some respects equivalent to the Aristotelian κοινὸν αἰσθητήριον or "common sense." When

an object affects several of the senses at once, we distinguish between the various simultaneous sense impressions. Now it is absurd to suppose that any one of the special senses exercises this act of discrimination. We have therefore to refer it to some other power, and this is what Augustine calls the inner sense (*De Lib. Arb.* ii. 8). But, beyond distinguishing and correlating the sense impressions, it is also conscious of sensation as such, not merely of the thing "sensed," but of the act of "sensing" it. Further, it judges whether the sense-organ is performing its office or not, and whether it is performing it properly (*De Lib. Arb.* ii. 12).

The interior "sensus" thus appears to be nothing more nor less than consciousness so far as it is concerned with sensation, and it is not quite clear why these functions should be assigned to a special faculty. The explanation suggested by Augustine himself is that we share these powers with the animals, and as he cannot ascribe reason to the animals, he prefers to assign these functions to the "interior sensus." It thus becomes little more than a matter of classification and nomenclature. We agree, so to speak, that those mental functions which have to do with sense, and which are obviously possessed by the animals also, shall be called "inner sense." But even so there is not much

gained by this division, for above the "interior sensus" in Augustine's classification come memory and imagination; and he freely recognises that memory and even a certain rudimentary imagination are found in animals, so that we do not part company with them just at the point marked by the "interior sensus."

One or two other points may be noted before leaving the subject of Augustine's treatment of the senses.

He has observed that when the eye is directed to an object in the foreground, more distant objects are seen more dimly than when we look right at them, though from the same distance (*De Gen. ad Lit.* i. 31)—a psychological fact which, I believe, hardly received its due in painting until the coming of the Impressionists.[1] And he has tried some mild experiments in regard to vision. He knows, for instance, that by deflecting the eyeballs a little you can get a double image of a candle. And—allowing for the perverse theory of the visual ray proceeding from the eye—he explains this effect correctly enough by saying that the two rays are affected severally, instead of meeting evenly in the object. He remarks that if one eye be shut

[1] What is referred to has nothing to do either with geometrical or aërial perspective, but is simply a question of the different effect produced by the concentration of vision on one portion or other of the field of view.

you may do what you like with the other—"draw it down or press, or distort it as you please"—and no such effect will be produced (*De Trin.* xi. 4). He has observed also the positive after-image which is seen on shutting the eyes after gazing at a bright surface, and remarks that if the bright object is a window the lattice-work may often be seen cutting up the bright panes. He uses these observations to show that what is perceived in sense is not the object directly, but its impress on the sense.

The analysis of vision in *De Trinitate*, xi., from which these illustrations are taken, is, however, notable for another point. Besides the object and the sense-organ as affected by the object, there is to be recognised in sensation a purely mental act, the attention which directs the sense-organ towards its object and keeps it focussed upon it. This is an act of will.

Another acute observation is that a further mental process, namely memory, is involved in acts of hearing. If this is not immediately apparent Augustine has an illustration ready to convince us. Take a word of two syllables. You do not hear the second syllable till after the first is finished. Therefore, if the first syllable were not retained in the memory while the second was being spoken, you would never hear the word as a whole. But even in the case of a word

of one syllable you do not hear the end of it in the same moment as the beginning, so that, to get the complete impression, memory must retain the first part till the last is sounded (*De Mus.* vi. 21).

This brings us to speak of memory in general, which in the ascending order of the powers of the soul comes next above the inner sense. It has always been recognised that in the treatment of memory Augustine displays his special powers to advantage. The palmary passage is in *Confessions* x. from chap. viii. onwards, and we may follow its general lines, supplementing from other sources. The passage is eloquent, but eloquence is not in Augustine, as in some writers, a signpost indicating that at this point the author has ceased to think. In the course of his survey of the powers of the mind, he comes "to the spacious halls of memory." "There are laid up treasures of innumerable images, drawn from all manner of things that have been presented to the senses. There are laid up also the images formed in thought, whether by increasing or diminishing or varying in this way or that, what the senses have encountered and whatever else has been bestowed and laid up there, and has not yet been buried in oblivion." Noteworthy is the clearly drawn distinction between the direct

memory-image of sense impressions, and the images which are mentally constructed by elaborating the materials derived from sense impression. We shall have to recur to this point when we come to speak of "imagination." Another point to be noticed is the recognition that the content of memory is not stable, but shows a constant tendency towards disintegration. In another work he remarks on the gradual and elusive character of the process—if we find that we have forgotten something which we knew a year ago, that does not mean that we forgot it suddenly the day before yesterday; from the very moment when we learned it, it began to slip away (*De Mus.* vi. 6).

To go back to the *Confessions* passage—he goes on to remark on the various degrees of readiness of recall: "I demand the production of whatsoever I will, and some things come forth immediately, some need longer search and are drawn out, as it were, from more remote receptacles; and some rush out tumultuously, and when something else is being asked and sought they leap forward as though saying: 'Are not we what you want?'" "Others," he proceeds, "present themselves in an orderly sequence as they are wanted, as happens when I tell a story that I know by heart."

Then he goes on to remark that the impres-

sions arriving by the various senses are kept distinct. We have, in modern terminology, a visual, auditory, tactual memory, and so forth. "Dwelling in darkness and in silence," says Augustine, "I can, if I will, bring up in my memory colours and compare them together, and sounds—meaning auditory images—do not break in and interrupt when I am dealing with the material derived from the eye, though they are latent in the memory, put away separately as it were." Siebeck, the German historian of psychology, remarks that many of Augustine's problems are still problems, and instances this power of memory to classify its contents. The next point he notices is that experience is remembered not merely objectively but as the experience of the self as such. "There," he says, "I find *myself* and recall what I have done, and when and where, and how I felt when I was doing it."

He goes on to point out that there is in memory another kind of content, differing from that derived from sense impressions, namely, the memory of principles, of scientific knowledge, and so forth. This differs in that the act of recall is not the summoning up of an image but of the knowledge itself. In contrast with knowledge, the recall of which involves complete reinstatement, it is evident that the emotions are

not recalled by re-experiencing them, since we are sometimes sorrowful in recalling happiness, and happy in recalling sorrow. They must, therefore, he observes, be recalled by something which, though not exactly an image, may be described as a "notio" or "notatio." A little further on (*Conf.* x. 28), after indulging in some verbal paradoxes about remembering oblivion, he gives a very accurate analysis of the process of forgetting, or imperfect recall. The fact that we seek for the forgotten impression, he observes, and if something else is offered reject it without hesitation, shows that we have not entirely forgotten it. "It has not wholly fallen out of the memory, but the part that is retained leads us to seek the other, the memory feeling that the whole of that to which it is accustomed is not present." "Lopped of this accustomed part," he says, "it seems as it were to limp, and craves the restoration of the missing portion." The sense of discomfort which we experience from an imperfect reminiscence is well conveyed by the metaphor of limping ("claudicans"). He goes on to illustrate from the familiar case of trying to recall a man's name which we have forgotten. "Whatever else than the right name occurs to us does not link on properly to our impression of the man and is rejected, until at last that name occurs to us which slips into its place and satisfactorily

completes the accustomed impression" ("donec illud adsit, ubi simul adsuefacta notitia non inaequaliter adquiescat").

If no part of the impression, however, remains in the memory you may try in vain to recall it, as he points out in another work in the following lively illustration (*De Trin.* xiv. 17): "Some one whom you do not recognise says to you, 'You know me,' and in order to remind you, tells you where, when, and how he became known to you; and if after the mention of every sign by which you might be recalled to remembrance, you still do not recognise him, then you have so come to forget as that the whole of that knowledge is altogether blotted out of your mind, and you have either to take his word for it, or, if he do not appear worthy of credit, to disbelieve him." In addition to this recall by attendant circumstances, due to what some modern writers call "association by contiguity," Augustine also recognises, of course, the still more obvious "association by similarity." "There occurs to the thought," he says, "by occasion of similar things, a movement of the mind which is not yet extinct, and this is what is called reminiscence" ("recordatio") (*De Mus.* vi. 22).

Some other points from various works may be noted. He has several illustrations of the necessity of the "will to remember," and there

are few readers to whose sympathies the following plaint will not appeal: "It happens in reading, and to myself very frequently, that when I have read through a page or an epistle, I do not know what I have read, and have to begin again. For, the purpose of the will being fixed on something else, the memory was not so applied to the bodily sense as the sense itself was to the letters."

In a passage in the *De Quantitate Animae*, 72, he distinguishes the habitual or mechanical memory, arising from mere repetition, from the intellectual and voluntary memory with a clearness which would be approved by M. Bergson. "Mount to the next grade," he says, "and consider memory, not that which arises from habituation to familiar things ('consuetudine inolitarum rerum'), but of those innumerable things which are committed to memory by intellectual attention ('animadversione') and retained by their signs."

There is one other point which should be noticed before leaving memory, and that is that Augustine sometimes extends it to mean the storehouse not merely of experience but also of potential thought. In *De Trin.* xv. § 40, he first uses memory in the ordinary sense, remarking that when we have thought out a truth we hand it over to the memory to keep, and then

he goes on to say: "But there is a deeper depth of our memory ('abstrusior profunditas nostrae memoriae') in which we found that truth, when we began to think about it." When he wrote this he had given up the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence in its cruder form,[1] so that it approaches very nearly to the modern conception of the subconscious mind. We shall have to recur to this later in connexion with his illustrations of the Trinity.

Next above memory in the scale of mental life comes imagination. The most important passage on this subject is in a letter (*Ep.* 7) to Nebridius, one of the most thoughtful of his friends. Nebridius had suggested that since our imaginations can conceive objects which we have never actually seen, it would appear that imagination can create its own materials independently of the senses. Now one might perhaps have expected this argument to appeal to Augustine. He was philosophically a spiritualist, and therefore inclined to welcome anything that suggested the soul's independence of matter. But he was too sound an observer to be misled on this point. "Whence comes, you ask," he writes, "our capacity for conceiving in thought things which we have never seen? Whence do you think, save from a certain faculty of subtracting or

[1] See below, 126 f.

adding which is innate in the mind." In another work he gives the examples of imagining a black swan, which as an actual phenomenon was, of course, wholly unknown to him, or a bird with four legs. "Therefore it is possible for the mind to produce by the exercise of the imagination that which as a whole has never been within the senses, but the parts of it have all been present to the senses in a variety of different connexions."

In the same letter he distinguishes (besides the simple memory-image) two varieties of such imaginary constructions. To the first belong all ordinary pictorial imaginations such as the image that we form in reading the poets of the appearance of Aeneas, or of Medea with her team of winged dragons. To the second belong the kind of schematic images that we make for the purpose of assisting thought. "This class of images," he says, "has to do chiefly with numbers and measure, as when the figure of the entire world is discovered and an image consequent on this discovery is formed in the mind of one thinking upon it, and with geometrical figures, and so forth"; and he acutely remarks that even logical divisions and syllogisms are a kind of mental counters to facilitate reasoning. In connexion with this subject he introduced a refinement of terminology. He says that Nebridius and many others classed all three—the memory-

image, the pictorial imagination, and the schematic image—together as *phantasiae*. But he himself in the *De Musica*, vi. 32, proposes to reserve *phantasia* for the simple memory-image, and to designate the imaginary constructions as *phantasmata*. His memory-image of his father, he says, was a *phantasia*; that of his grandfather, whom he had never seen, was a *phantasma*.

In connexion with imagination he has also some interesting things to say about dreams and hallucinations, to which we may recur when we come to give some examples of his descriptive psychology.[1]

When we come to the Reason, we find Augustine following the Neo-Platonists in laying stress on the distinction between discursive and intuitive reasoning, and placing the latter high above the former. The discursive reason he designates by the terms "ratiocinandi potestas" or "ratiocinatio," and he describes it thus: "When by means of what is known and manifest, by connecting with it other things, we pass to what is unknown. By it the mind searches, by the intuitive reason it sees." ("Ut ratio sit quidam mentis aspectus, ratiocinatio autem rationis inquisitio." *De Quant. Anim.* 52, 53.) Psychologically the interesting point is the relation

[1] He notes, by the way, the familiar fact of dogs barking or growling in their sleep as evidence that they possess memory-images capable of being revived in dreams (*Contra Epistolam Manichaei*, xvii.).

between these two functions. The discursive reason compares and judges, but the principles by which it judges are supplied by the intuitive reason. The laws of thought, the laws of mathematical truth, as well as the sense of justice, and the sense of harmony which makes us admire beauty in art and nature, are all thought of as data supplied by the intuitive reason. He tells us, for example, that when in the course of his search for God he was impressed by the order and beauty of nature, he found himself judging of these things by an *immutable* law. He felt that this could not have come from his own mutable discursive reason (" ratiocinans potestas "), and so was led up to the higher intelligence, which he found to be directly illuminated by the Divine light.

If we ask how or when the contact with the Divine in which this knowledge is generated takes place, we find Augustine giving a different answer at different stages of his career. In some of his earliest works, the *Soliloquia*, the *De Quantitate Animae*, and the Letter to Nebridius (*Ep.* 7), he adopts the old Platonic doctrine of Reminiscence—such truths were learned in a former state of existence—but in the *De Trinitate* and the *Retractations* he explicitly rejects it, and substitutes a doctrine which is practically that of the Neo-Platonists. After referring to

Plato's example of the slave-boy, in the *Meno*, he remarks that nearly any one can answer in this way if properly questioned, and we can hardly suppose that all the world have been geometers in a former existence. "But," he says, "we ought rather to believe that the nature of the rational mind is so constituted that being, in the natural order of things, by the disposition of the Creator, in touch with the things of the intelligible world, it sees them by a certain incorporeal light of a unique character, as the eye of the flesh sees by the corporeal light the things by which it is surrounded" (*De Trin.* xii. 24).

We come now to the will. Will is defined by Augustine in an early work (*De Duab. Anim.* 14) as "an uncoerced movement of the mind towards obtaining or retaining something" ("Voluntas est animi motus, cogente nullo, ad aliquid vel non amittendum vel adipiscendum"), and although in the Pelagian controversies he found his opponents endeavouring to make capital out of this definition, he still theoretically maintained it. Of the psychologically interesting points in his treatment of the will we may notice:

(1) The wide extension which he gives to it. His main division of mental function is twofold, not threefold as in most modern writers. It consists of "intelligentia" and "voluntas."

What is therefore usually classed as feeling or emotion, falls under the head of will. This is quite explicitly recognised and stated. In the *De Trinitate*, xv. § 41, he speaks of "our will, or love or affection, which is a stronger will." And other emotions are in turn referred to love. In *De Civitate Dei*, xiv. 7, he says, "A right will is a good love and a perverse will a bad love." Then, adopting the Stoic classification of the four passions or "perturbations of the soul"—desire, fear, joy, and grief—he goes on: "Love, longing to have what it loves, is desire; enjoying it, is joy; fleeing what is adverse to it, it is fear; if this adverse thing happens to it, what it feels is grief."

The classification is defective and the definitions are unsatisfactory. To say that desire is love longing for its object, comes very near actual tautology. On the other hand his *descriptions* of the passions are in some cases classical, such as that of the grief of bereavement, which was quoted in an earlier chapter, or his description of hatred as anger that has turned sour with keeping. The second point to be noticed is his full recognition of the way in which will is interwoven with all other mental acts. We have observed this above in regard to sensation, memory, and imagination. It is also, of course, involved in reason, for it is the will which draws

out the inchoate thought and moulds it into that definite thought which may be described as the "word" of the inner man (*De Trin.* xv. 29 ff.). And it is also involved in self-consciousness. "For we both are and know that we are, and we love that being and that knowledge" (*De Civitate Dei*, xi. 29 ff.).

V

HIS POWERS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND DESCRIPTION

THERE was once, so runs a familiar story, an old lady who in her youth had been brought up to eschew "stage-plays" as a work of the devil. In later life she gradually extended the range of her literary interests, and was finally induced to read Shakespeare; when she gave it as her verdict that it was a pity he had tricked out his writings with so many familiar quotations. In estimating the interest of Augustine's observational psychology we need to be on our guard against a somewhat similar error. It is not here, of course, a case of familiar quotations, but it is quite true that much of the psychologising which was new and fresh in Augustine's day is over-familiar at present. The fact is, that whether we have ever formally studied the subject or no, "we are all psychologists nowadays." The modern novelist has made us so. There is more minute observational psychology

in a novel by Meredith or Henry James than in half the philosophers of antiquity; and a host of minor writers can tap the end of the egg quite neatly, now that they have been shown the trick. All the same, you will turn a good many pages of average novels before you will find a piece of description which combines psychology and incident more vividly than the following.

Augustine's friend, Alypius, had been as a youth an enthusiast for the gladiatorial shows. Later he had renounced them—from a kind of ethical disgust, for this was long before he became a Christian. Augustine here describes how the taste was accidentally revived. "Certain of his friends and fellow-students, meeting him by chance, dragged him off to the theatre, he protesting vehemently the while, and even resisting with friendly violence. 'Though you drag my body to that place,' said he, 'can you force my eyes and mind to give attention to the spectacle?' Nevertheless they did not relax their efforts, eager, perhaps, to put him to the test and see whether he could make good his words. So they came to the theatre and found seats for themselves; and all about them was the excitement of delight in cruelty He, closing the gates of the soul [the eyes], forbade it to go forth to look upon such evils. Would that he had stopped his

ears as effectually! For at some crisis of the combat, when a great shout of the whole assembly smote upon them, he was overcome by curiosity, and thinking himself prepared to despise and contemn whatever he might see, he opened his eyes . . . and fell more pitiably than he whose fall had been hailed with that shout. . . . For when he looked on the flowing blood, he drank in the lust of it, and turned himself not away, but fixed his eyes upon it and drank deep of madness, and knew it not, and became intoxicated with the lust of cruelty. He was no longer the man who had come thither, but one of the crowd amid which he stood. What then? He gazed, he shouted, he raved with the rest, and took with him thence a madness which drove him to go again, not merely with those who had brought him thither, but yet more eagerly than they, and dragging others with him" (*Conf.* vi. 13).

Now, there is one point here to which I want to direct particular attention. We are accustomed to think that the psychology of crowds is a modern study, and many modern critics have illustrated how a crowd absorbs the personalities composing it into something simpler, cruder, more vehement, of which the individuals become in turn the organs. As the German dramatist Keyserling makes one of his revolutionaries say, "It shouts through one." Now Augustine

gives us just this in one of his illuminating phrases: "He was no longer the man who had come thither, but one of the crowd" ("unus de turba"), infected, as it were, with its bloodthirsty excitement.

Equally true to life is the following little picture of a crowd drawn by an accident: "What pleasure can there be, for instance, in looking at a mangled body, and yet if there is one to be seen, men come running up, to be horrified and nauseated. [You hear them say] they fear they will see this again in their sleep—as if any one had compelled them to look at it when awake, or as if some fame of its beauty had drawn them!" (*Conf.* x. 55).

It is interesting to note, too, that while he satirises this morbid curiosity from an ethical point of view, he assigns a rational motive for it—the desire to extend experience.

One particular form of "crowd psychology" was especially familiar to Augustine, namely, what may be called oratorical sympathy, the *rapport* between speaker and audience. In the following passage it is regarded from the point of view of the speaker, and it is illustrated by a very happy parallel. In his treatise on the instruction of the unlearned (*De Catechizandis Rudibus*, § 17) he has occasion to remark on the difficulty which a teacher often experiences in keeping up his own

interest in the more rudimentary part of his work, and he suggests a means for overcoming it. "If we feel it wearisome to go over repeatedly matters which are very familiar, and adapted, rather, to children, we should endeavour to meet them with a brother's, a father's, and a mother's love, and . . . to us not less than to them will these things seem new. For so great is the power of a sympathetic disposition, that, as they are affected while we are speaking, and we are affected while they are learning, we have our dwelling in each other; and thus, at one and the same time, they, as it were, in us speak what they hear, and we in them learn, in a sense, what we teach." That is well said, as any one knows who has had experience of being in touch, or not in touch, with an audience. And now for his illustration, which is extraordinarily fresh and happy. "Is it not a common experience that when we show to persons who have never seen them before beautiful views, whether in the city or the country, which we have been in the habit of passing by without any sense of pleasure, simply because we have become so accustomed to the sight of them, we find our own enjoyment renewed in their enjoyment of the novelty of the scene?"

Another modern development, we are apt to think, is child psychology. The spirit in which

the modern observer laboriously chronicles the first appearance of any action which has the faintest suggestion of dawning, or growing, intelligence, is, we might have thought, foreign to the temper of antiquity. It is almost with a start of surprise that we come on the statement in Augustine's brief account of his infancy: "Then I began to smile, first in sleep, and then waking. This has been told me of myself, and I believe it, for we see it to be so in other infants." This fact, that an infant generally first smiles in sleep, might well have seemed too trivial to chronicle, but you will find it duly noted by a well-known German authority on child psychology—Preyer, *Die Seele des Kindes*, p. 189.

In the *De Trinitate*, xiv. 7, he observes that the eyes of an infant have so strong a tendency to seek the light, that if it be laid down in a position in which it can only see the light by turning the eyes awkwardly, a squint may be the result. Things like this were, I suppose, as well known in the nurseries of antiquity as they are in those of modern times, but the philosophers of those days did not usually think it worth while to put them on record. He notes in one place that while the intelligence is undeveloped, the senses of the infant are probably in some respects keener than those of mature life (*De*

Quant. An. 54). And in the *De Civitate Dei*, xiii. 3, commenting on the fact that the helplessness of infancy lasts so much longer in man than in the lower animals, he remarks that this is in proportion to his ultimately higher efficiency, "as an arrow has to be drawn further back the further it is to shoot"—a very exact and illuminating metaphor.

Here again is a striking description of the process of learning to speak: "For I was not taught by my elders giving me words to learn in a definite order, as I was afterwards taught letters, but when I found that by making inarticulate cries and sounds and gestures of various kinds, I could not express my meaning in such a way as to have my will . . . then using the mind which Thou hadst given me, I taught myself by the aid of memory. When grown-up persons called anything by its name and, after using the word, made some bodily movement towards the thing, I saw and remembered that the thing was known by the sound which they made when they wished to indicate it . . . while the tone of the voice showed whether it was a case of desiring, possessing, rejecting, or avoiding something. By hearing words frequently and in different connexions, I gradually gathered what were the objects of which these were the signs, and having broken

in my tongue to these signs I was able to make known my wishes by means of them" (*Conf.* i. 13).

That is a little too much schematised, perhaps —gives too much the idea of a logical process— but the logic, though unconscious, does after all underlie the process, and one point can often be paralleled in children who have made some progress in learning to speak. "I taught myself," says Augustine, "memory playing schoolmaster, and saying the word over for me." Now a child that has just acquired a new word, preferably a fairly long one, may often be heard laying it up in this way for future use.

Without introspection psychology is impossible, for even in cases which are not accessible to direct introspection, like child psychology and crowd psychology, man is himself the instrument by means of which he interprets his fellows; but we may now turn to one or two examples of introspection proper. With what clear perception he deals with the problem of the two wills in man, the phenomena of inward struggle! "Whence comes this marvel? The mind gives a command to the body, and is immediately obeyed; the mind commands itself and meets with opposition. The mind commands the hand to move, and it moves so readily that you can scarcely distinguish the command from its fulfilment; and yet the mind is the mind, while the

hand is not the mind but the body. The mind commands the mind to will, and the mind which it commands is not other than itself, and yet it does not obey. Whence and why is this marvel? The mind commands the mind, I say, to will; and it could not command unless it willed, and yet it does not do that which it commands. The secret is that it does not wholly will it, and therefore it does not wholly command it. . . . For if it wholly willed it, it would not even need to command it, because it would already *be* it. This partly willing, partly not willing, is not therefore a miracle but a diseased condition of the mind, which prevents it from rising up as a whole; for while truth draws it up, ill custom drags it down. And that is why there seem to be two wills; it is one will which is disunited. The second will consists of that which is lacking in the first" (*Conf.* viii. 21).

That is analysis; he goes on to description, and surely hesitation upon the point of a decision has never been more vividly pictured. "Thus was I sick and suffering in mind, upbraiding myself more bitterly than ever before, twisting and turning in my chains in the hope that they would soon snap, for they had almost worn too thin to hold me. Yet they did still hold me. But Thou wast instant with me in the inner man, with merciful severity redoubling the

lashes of fear and shame, lest I should cease from struggling. . . . I kept saying within my heart, 'Let it be now, now!'—and with the word I was on the point of going on to the resolve. I had almost done it, but I had not done it; and yet I did not slip back to where I was at first, but held my footing at a short remove and drew breath. And again I tried; I came a little nearer, and again a little nearer, and now—now—I was in act to grasp and hold it; but still I did not reach it, nor grasp it, nor hold it, . . . for the worse that I knew so well had more power over me than the better that I knew not, and the absolute point of time at which I was to change filled me with greater dread the more nearly I approached it . . ." (*Conf.* viii. 25).

And how fine and delicate is his analysis when he comes to speak, in his self-examination, of the love of praise. His ideal is singularly austere, but he quite frankly acknowledges that he comes short of it. "I should like," he says, "to be so minded that the approval of another would not even increase my joy [in doing right]. But it does increase it; and not only so, but dispraise diminishes it. And when I am disturbed at this weakness, an excuse suggests itself to me, the value of which Thou, O Lord, knowest; as for me, I am in doubt. It is this.

Seeing Thou hast commanded us . . . to bestow our love where it is meet, and hast commanded us to love not only Thee but our neighbour, often I seem to myself to be pleased with the progress or promise shown by a neighbour when I am pleased with his intelligent praise, and to be grieved for his sake when I hear him finding fault ignorantly or mistakenly. And indeed I am sometimes distressed when I am praised for things in myself which displease me, or when things good in themselves but of small moment are esteemed more than is fitting." [Most people, I suppose, have experienced that sense of exasperation in being "praised for the wrong things."] "But again," continues Augustine, "how can I tell whether I feel in this way because I do not like him who praises me to differ from me, not because I am thinking of his advantage but because those things which I think good in myself please me better when they please another also? *For, in a certain sense, it is not I that am praised when my own estimate of myself is not approved*" (*Conf.* x. 61).

It is perhaps more commonplace, though still accurately observed, when he goes on to remark: "This love of praise is a temptation to me even when I rebuke it in myself, on the very ground that I do rebuke it; and often men glory the more vainly in their very contempt for vain-

glory, and therefore in no true contempt for it; for he who glories does not condemn vainglory" (*Conf.* x. 63).

His readiness in psychological illustration is very marked—his lively handling of everyday incidents for this purpose sometimes reminds one of Professor William James. In the following passage, for instance, he is illustrating the law of association, or, more exactly, the fact that the will to remember cannot arise if the "forgotten" incident is really wholly forgotten. Some part of its context, at least, must be in the mind to form a starting-point. "For example, if I wish to remember what I supped on yesterday, either I have already remembered that I did sup, or if not this, yet at least I have remembered something about supper-time, if nothing else; at all events I have remembered yesterday, and that part of the day in which people usually sup. . . . For if I had remembered nothing at all of this kind I could not remember what I had supped on yesterday" (*De Trin.* xi. 12).

"Anger seems to me to be a violent eagerness to take out of the way things which restrict our freedom of action. Hence we vent our anger not only on men, but on such a thing, for example, as a pen with which we write, crushing or breaking it in our annoyance; and so does the gambler with his dice, the artist with his pencil, and

every man with the instrument which he may be using if he feels himself in some way thwarted by it" (*Ep.* 9).

In the following his gift of metaphor enables him to convey an impression very happily. "For anger habitually cherished against any one becomes hatred, since the sweetness which is mingled with what appears to be righteous anger makes us detain it longer than we ought in the vessel, until the whole is soured and the vessel itself is spoiled" (*Ep.* 38. 2).

When he wishes to illustrate the three kinds of vision, literal, imaginative, and intellectual, he brings them together neatly thus: "When you read: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' you see the letters with the bodily eye, your neighbour with the mind's eye,[1] and love by intellectual perception" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* xii. 22).

Among his illustrations of the familiar law of reaction there is a pleasantly human touch about this: "A dear one is sick and his pulse clearly indicates danger. All those who are longing for his recovery are themselves sick at heart. Things go well with him; and even before he can walk with his former vigour there is such rejoicing as was not before when he was safe and well" (*Conf.* viii. 7).

[1] Augustine's expression is "spiritually," but he is using the word in a special sense indicated in the context, which is fairly represented by the above translation.

The common human tendency to inquire into the origin of unusual things while overlooking the mysteries which underlie more familiar things is well illustrated by the following: "Just as in the case of words—on hearing an unfamiliar word men ask first 'what is that,' namely, what it signifies; and then when they have learned that they inquire why it is so called, whereas they contentedly remain in ignorance of the origin of so many words which they use constantly" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* xii. 39).

But if the good psychologist never loses sight of the interest of the commonplace, he does not forget that abnormal states also may have something to teach us; and Augustine has many acute observations of states of hallucination, mental aberration, and the perennial mystery of dreams. He notes, for instance, that intense mental concentration may give rise to hallucination. If the attention be wholly withdrawn from the outward senses and concentrated upon the inner image "then so exact a likeness of the bodily appearance, derived from the memory, is presented, that not even reason itself can discern whether the corporeal object is seen without, or only something of the kind thought of within. For men sometimes through overmuch dwelling in thought upon visible things, either from delight in them or from fear of them, have even suddenly

uttered words as if in real fact they were engaged in the midst of such actions or sufferings" (*De Trin.* xi. 7). From this case, in which the mind is the sole source of the hallucination, he distinguishes this in which "the senses of the body are either lulled to torpor, as with sleepers, or thrown out of gear[1] as with madmen, or disturbed in some other mode as with diviners or prophets, and so, from one or other of these causes, the mind is forced by a kind of necessity upon the images which occur to it" (*ibid.*). Of delirium he distinguishes two stages: that in which, while the senses are not wholly withdrawn from the surroundings, intrusive images occur; and another, in which there is complete unconsciousness of the surroundings. I have known," he says, "persons thus affected to speak with those who were really present, and also with others who were absent as though they had been present." In the other case, corporeal objects which are present, even though the eyes may be open, are not seen nor are any actual sounds heard. "The whole attention of the mind is directed either to inward images of corporeal objects, or to immaterial objects by a purely mental vision" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* xii. 25).

A very remarkable case of second sight is

[1] This seems to be just what is meant by "ab interiore campage turbati."

thus described: "I have heard, too, of a case where a possessed man while in his own home used to say when a certain presbyter, starting from a place twelve miles away, set out to come to him, and at various stages of his journey used to say where he was and what speed he was making, and when he reached the farm, and the house [in which the sick man was], and the room, until he actually appeared in his presence.

"The man was suffering from fever, and used to say these things as if in a delirium, and perhaps he really was in delirium, but on that account was thought to suffer from demonic possession. And [? at such times] he would take no food from any of his own family, but only from this presbyter. For he resisted his own people to the utmost of his ability, and it was only on the coming of the presbyter that he grew calmer; and him he obeyed and answered submissively. But his mental aberration, or demonic possession, did not yield to the presbyter's influence until he recovered from his fever, as delirious people usually recover. Nor did he at any time afterwards experience anything of the kind" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* xii. 35).

Of course one sees that there are a number of questions which the Psychical Research Society would want to ask about this story. "Did the man know that the presbyter had been

sent for?" "Was the synchronism of his statements with the stages of the latter's journey really remarkably accurate?" and so forth. These difficulties do not apply when we come to an experience of his own, a curious dream which seems to be very accurately remembered and reported. It should be said, perhaps, that its interest is not psychic in the special sense which that word has acquired, but purely psychological. There is no question of prediction or extraordinary coincidence, only a rather curious complexity of mental attitude. After noting that, as a rule, objects seen in dreams appear real, he goes on to say: "But it has sometimes happened to me, and I do not doubt, therefore, that it may have happened to others, that when seeing things in a dream I have known that I was seeing them in a dream, and although asleep have been firmly convinced that those images which usually delude us into accepting them were not real corporeal objects. But on some such occasions I have been in so far deceived that I tried to convince a friend of mine, whom I also saw in the dream, that the things which we saw were not real objects, but dream images, though I certainly saw him just in the same way as I saw them. I told him too that it was not even true that we were talking together, but that he himself was seeing something else in a dream and

was quite unaware that I was seeing those things. But at the same time that I was trying to persuade him that he was not real, I was partly inclined to think him real, for I should certainly not have spoken to him if I had altogether felt him to be unreal" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* xii. 3).

VI

THE PSYCHOLOGIST AS THINKER

THE psychology of which we have traced the outlines is not a mere by-product of St. Augustine's thought. It has been worth while to give so much attention to it because we find here the clue to the general character of his thinking. When he has to deal with philosophical or theological problems it is from the psychological point of view that he tends to approach them. It will, I think, be of interest to follow out in detail some examples which illustrate this characteristic.

There has been some controversy as to whether, and if so how far, Augustine anticipated Descartes in enunciating the principle, "I think, therefore I am" ("cogito, ergo sum"). There is always a certain interest in seeing what one great man has to say about another, even though his information may be something less than complete, and we may take as our starting-point some remarks which Pascal, a contemporary of Descartes and an admirer of

Augustine, has made about this question. In the course of his essay, *De l'esprit géométrique*, Pascal writes: "I should like to ask fair-minded persons whether this principle, 'Matter has a natural, invincible incapacity for thought,' and this, 'I think, therefore I am,' are really the same in the mind of Descartes as in the mind of St. Augustine, who had said the same thing twelve hundred years earlier? In truth, I am far from saying that Descartes is not the real author, even if he had learned them by reading the great saint. For I know how great a difference there is between putting down a striking saying at a venture, without reflecting upon it at length, and perceiving in this same saying a remarkable series of consequences . . . and so making it the firm and solid principle of an entire system of philosophy, as Descartes claimed to do. For without examining whether he has really succeeded in what he claims, I assume that he has done so, and on this assumption I say that there is as much difference between this observation in *his* writings and in those authors who have made the remark in passing, as there is between a man full of life and force and an inanimate body."

Now there is a mixture of truth and error in this passage, and I think I shall be able to show that it at least does Augustine considerably less

than justice. That need not surprise us. Pascal was a great thinker, but he was not apparently a great scholar. When he wrote his brilliant *Provinciales*, the references, the materials with which he dealt, were supplied to him by his friends at Port Royal. So it is probable enough that he had not read the passages of Augustine in their sources, but merely knew that Descartes had been accused of plagiarising from him. The reference, moreover, is quite incidental. It is brought in as an illustration of the general principle that the same observation may be much more fruitful in the mind of one man than in that of another.

The fact is, that while it is of course true that Augustine does not formally develop his whole system out of this principle, it is on the other hand no mere passing remark such as an author sometimes throws out without realising its bearing. It occurs repeatedly, in several of his most important works, and he definitely makes it the primary point of certainty, the impregnable fortress against the assaults of scepticism.

In the period of retirement at Cassiciacum—to which I make no apology for recurring so often, for I believe that we find here the seed-bed of much of Augustine's thinking—we find that while he has accepted Christianity on grounds of authority and inner experience, he is still

wrestling with the problem whether there is any independent point of intellectual certainty. In the *Soliloquia*, the most intimate of the writings of this period, at the beginning of the second Book he says:

"You, who wish to know yourself, do you know that you exist?"

And answers: "I know it."

Then, after he has professed ignorance on various other matters, comes the question:

"Do you know that you are thinking?" ("cogitare te scis?")

Answer: "I know it."

"Therefore this is *true*, that you think?"

Answer: "It is true."

That is perhaps the nearest *verbal* coincidence, with its *cogitare te scis*, but it is not by any means the most important passage.

Here, for example, is a passage in which the principle is quite definitely taken as the starting-point of metaphysical investigation.

In the *De Libero Arbitrio*, ii. 7, he proposes to inquire whether God exists, and begins thus: "In order that we may take our point of departure from what is most clear, I ask you in the first place whether you yourself exist? Can you possibly fear to make a mistake in the answer to this question?—for it is obvious that unless you *existed* you could not possibly make a mistake.

'That suffices,' says his interlocutor, 'we may go on.'"

In the *De Vera Religione*, xxxix. 73, after enunciating some Neo-Platonic ideas, he says: "Or if you do not understand these assertions or are doubtful whether they are true, examine at least whether you doubt that you doubt them; and if it is *certain* that you doubt them, ask whence it is certain. . . . And think it out in this way. Every one who knows that he doubts, knows something true [namely, that he doubts], and concerning this thing that he knows, he is certain that there *is* something true. Every one, therefore, who doubts whether truth exists has in himself a truth which he cannot doubt" [namely, his consciousness of doubt]. And this, he indicates, ought to lead to the acceptance of the Neo-Platonic theory that such intuitively apprehended certainties are discerned by contact with the Divine wisdom—so that here one might almost say that it *does* appear as the foundation of a system.

Again, in the *De Civitate Dei*, xi. 26, he says: "For we both are, and know that we are, and we love that being and that knowledge. And in reference to these things we cannot be deceived by any specious probability. For we do not come into contact with these things as we do with things outside ourselves by any of the

bodily senses, nor as we hold in the memory images of these corporeal things. But apart from any visual images, or imaginary images, with their risk of error, I know with absolute certainty that I *am*, and that I know and love my own existence. And in regard to these truths, I do not dread the arguments of the Academicians who say: 'What if you are deceived!' For, if I am deceived, I *am* ('si fallor, sum'). For one who is not at all, cannot possibly be deceived. If then the very fact of being deceived proves my existence, how can I be deceived in feeling certain that I exist?"

Moreover, he treats this as the typical form of certainty, with which others may be compared. "In my inner man," he says, "I both am, and know that I am; and I love that being and knowledge, and I have a *similar* certainty that I love them" (*De Civ. Dei*, xi. 27 *fin.*).

These quotations have at least made it quite clear that for Augustine "I think, therefore I am" is no mere passing remark accidentally thrown out, as Pascal suggests. He does not indeed develop its implications systematically, but it is for him, just as definitely as for Descartes, the primary point of certainty.

But to take self-consciousness in this way as the starting-point of thought is to find a basis

for metaphysics in psychology. Let us now look at his application of psychological analysis to one of the special problems of philosophy—that of the nature of time. Like many important discussions in Augustine it comes up incidentally. In approaching the exegesis of the Creation-narrative he feels it incumbent upon him to meet the difficulty, "What was God doing before He made the world?" He will not, he says, make the reply which was once made by a witty but irreverent person: "He was preparing a hell for people who pry into mysteries." [It is amusing to observe how he gets in the story, while disclaiming moral responsibility for it.] He goes on to suggest the elusive character of the problem in an epigram of a higher order of humour. "So long as no one asks me what time is," he says, "I know perfectly; but if you ask me I cannot tell." He then reviews and rejects with sound criticism the theory that time is the movement of the heavenly bodies. If the movement of the heavenly bodies ceased, he says, and a potter's wheel should continue to revolve, we could still measure the revolutions of the wheel, and say that one was faster or slower than another. Nor is it the motion of any body whatever. For if a body sometimes moves and sometimes stands still we can measure its standing still as well as its motion, and say

it stood still as long as it moved, or twice as long, as the case may be.

So we come to his own analysis. He takes as his starting-point the indisputable fact that in some way or other we do measure time. We *mean* something when we speak of a long time or a short time. How then do we measure it? We cannot measure it when it is future, because it is not yet here to measure; we cannot measure it when it is past, for then it is gone; and we cannot measure it when it is present, because, on reflexion, the present is found to narrow down to a single indivisible instant, a point without parts and without magnitude, and therefore incapable of being measured. So we seem to have reached an *impasse*. But now he takes a concrete example, and the matter begins to clear itself. He selects his illustration from a department with which he is thoroughly familiar, that of metre. It is a line from a well-known hymn by his friend Ambrose—a line of the simplest character, consisting of four iambic feet.

Deus Creator omnium.

"I repeat it," says Augustine, "and my trained ear pronounces that each of the long syllables is *double* the length of a short syllable. But how do I compare them? For while I am pronouncing one of them, the other is not present. More-

over, not one syllable is wholly present at a time, for the whole of it is not sounded until you come to the end of it; and when you have come to the end of it, it is gone. Therefore," he says, "I cannot measure the sounds until they are gone; so it is not the sounds themselves that I measure, but *my memory of them.* Therefore *it is in my mind that I measure time.* . . . The impression which passing events make on the mind, and which remains after they have passed, that is what I measure when I measure time, not the events themselves which are only complete in the moment of passing away" (*Conf.* xi. 12-36). That does not, of course, solve all the difficulties about time, but so far as it goes it is perfectly sound. The Histories of Philosophy note it as a real advance in clearness of thought. It is attained, as we have seen, wholly by psychological methods.

A question which lies on the border-land between philosophy and theology is that of relative priority as between faith and reason in dealing with religious matters. The principle that faith precedes understanding is often treated as characteristic of Augustine's teaching; and it is true that he often uses language to this effect. But he is too good an observer not to know that there is a sense in which reason must precede faith.

In the *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, written quite at the end of his life, he writes: "For who does not see that thought precedes belief? For no one would ever believe anything unless he had first thought that it ought to be believed. For by however brief a moment some kind of thought precedes the will to believe, and however rapidly the latter follows, so as to seem most closely joined with it, yet it is necessarily the case that everything which is believed, is believed after thought has preceded. Though indeed belief itself is nothing else than thinking with assent ('cum assensione cogitare'). Not every one who thinks, believes, but every one who believes, thinks. He both believes in thinking and thinks in believing" (§ 5).

To a correspondent, Consentius, who had remarked that we must not so much ask for reason, as follow the authority of the saints, and had at the same time requested an explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Augustine replied (*Ep.* 120. 2): "If you are not unreasonable in asking me, or any other teacher, to help you to understand what you already believe, you must correct your statement, not in such a way as to repudiate faith, but so that those things which you hold by the strength of faith you may also perceive by the light of reason. It cannot be that God should disapprove in us that very thing

in which He has made us more excellent than other animate beings. Far be it from us, I say, to believe in order to avoid receiving or seeking reason; for we could not even believe unless we had rational minds." He goes on to explain that even the acceptance of the principle that in some matters faith precedes reason, itself involves reason. For, if it is reasonable to accept it, the modicum of reason which persuades us of this itself precedes faith.

It ought perhaps to be pointed out that for Augustine this preliminary exercise of reason does not in any sense lie outside the religious sphere. The passage quoted above from *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* arises in the following way. Augustine quotes 2 Cor. iii. 5 in the form, "For we are not able to *think* of anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." The argument is *a fortiori*. If we cannot believe without understanding, and we cannot understand without God's aid, how much less can we believe without that aid?

Turn now to his theology. When in his important work the *De Trinitate*—his most ambitious theological work—he endeavours to make the doctrine of the Trinity in some measure intelligible, the method which he employs is almost wholly psychological. In *De Trinitate*, ix. 17, indeed, he describes his method

thus: "And this question we are endeavouring in some way to investigate in the human mind, in order that from a lower image, in which our nature itself, as it were, answers, on being questioned, in a way more familiar to ourselves, we may be able to direct a more practised mental vision from the illumined creature to the unchangeable light." He begins with simple combinations of three factors and is careful to say that here there is not the faintest analogy in any strict sense; all that is illustrated is the combination of three somethings in some kind of union. For instance, when we look at any visible object, three things are closely associated —the external object, the mind's perception of the image in the sense-organ, and the act of attention, or will, which keeps the sense fixed upon the object (*De Trin.* xi. 2).

Here, as he freely recognises, the three are in no sense *in pari materia*, the object being corporeal and the other two factors spiritual. From this he passes on to various more subtle combinations of three factors, till at length, at the close of the work, he comes to an illustration which he seems to feel affords some real analogy. It is drawn, to put it briefly and in modern language, from the nature of thought itself. The form in which Augustine himself puts it is rather curious, and we shall have to study his

language rather carefully and see how he leads up to his illustration, if we are to understand exactly what he means by it. It is the Scriptural designation of the Second Person of the Trinity as *The Word* which suggests the form of the illustration. Take, then, as starting-point the ordinary spoken word. It is the function of the word to give form to thought. Even in the word of ordinary speech there is a kind of trinity—the thought, and the word which gives it form, and the will which unites the word with the thought. But this is only a shadow of a deeper process which goes on wholly within the mind. He does not mean, and he is careful to explain that he does not mean, merely that in thinking we usually fit unspoken words to our thoughts. We must go behind that again and ask how thought, how the apprehension of truth, actually proceeds. Thought consists in bringing out into clear consciousness what is already latent in the mind, what is present, so to speak, in the sub-conscious mind. [This is modern terminology, but the quotations which will follow will show, I think, that I am not wresting Augustine's language from its intention.] This process of giving form to our thought may be described as the inward speech of the mind. The formed thought, brought fully to consciousness, is, as it were, the inner word of the mind.

And what causes the formation of it?—metaphorically speaking, the *utterance* of the inner word—why, our *will*, the act of seeking, the turning of things to and fro in the mind, which thus forms the bond of union between the latent and the conscious thought. This preliminary analysis will, I think, enable us to follow Augustine's language, which is made a little difficult by his here giving to the terms which he uses a peculiar sense.

First, there is the peculiar sense of "Word." He justifies this, characteristically, by quoting Scriptural passages in which thought and speech are equated, *e.g. Wisd.* ii. 1: "They *said* within themselves, *thinking* not aright," and concludes, "some thoughts, then, are speeches of the heart" (*De Trin.* xv. 17). This prepares the way for his description of the process of thought (*ibid.* 25). "What is it that is capable of being a word, and is therefore held worthy of the name of word, because it is *capable* of being a word? What is this thing that is formable but not yet formed—what is it but a something in our minds which we toss to and fro by revolving it this way and that. And the true word comes into being when that which we thus toss to and fro arrives at that which we know, and receives its form from it, taking on its likeness in all respects." . . . For our thought,

arriving at that which we know and taking its form therefore, is our true word (*ibid.*).

Now we may come to the analogy (xv. 40). "I have endeavoured, as well as I could," he says, "by this likeness-in-an-enigma [vague likeness], to suggest an analogy to God the Father and God the Son, that is, to God the Begetter, who, so to speak, uttered in His Word, which is coeternal with Himself, all that belongs to His substance—to suggest an analogy in the memory and intelligence of our minds.

[One is inclined to say, But why the *memory*, what is memory doing here? Augustine is prepared for the challenge, and goes on to explain]: "I here understand by memory all that we know, even when we are not thinking of it, and by intelligence I mean the imparting of form to thought. For when by thinking we discover some truth, this is more especially called intelligence, and when we have found it (we say that) we leave it laid up in the memory. *But there is a more profound depth of memory where we first found that truth when we began to think of it, and the inner word, the intelligence which comes to light in thought, is born from the intelligence which was already in the memory, but was latent there.*" So far, then, we have had an analogy, in the primal source of thought and the formed

thought which proceeds from it, to the relation of the Father and the Son in the Trinity. Augustine goes on to say: "But about the Holy Spirit; I have shown nothing in this enigma which might appear to be like Him except our own will, or love or affection, which is but a stronger will—love [as he says a little later], which combines the vision existing in the memory with the thought-vision formed thence, like parent and child."

As an analysis of the process of thought this is very striking. As an illustration of the nature of the Trinity, Augustine is well aware that it has its limitations—he goes on indeed to point out some of them himself.

Its strong point is that it suggests a movement of life within the Deity, a dynamic, and not a static, conception. The idea of a movement of self-realisation eternally complete within the Divine nature offers interesting points of comparison and contrast with some modern speculations. But into this it is not our business to enter. We may notice, however, that another of his illustrations, which he does not develop by any means so fully, has met with still more favour in modern times. That is the Trinity which he suggests as involved in love. In the love of friend for friend he says there are three things: He that loves and that which is loved,

and the love which is the bond between them (*De Trin.* viii. 14).

It was suggested in a former chapter that there is a remarkable difference in the degree of efficiency which Augustine shows as a psychologist and as a metaphysician, respectively. We find a striking example of this in the fact that he held a metaphysical theory of evil which is very nearly nonsense, and a psychological theory of sin which can give a very good account of itself. He held, to put it quite briefly, that the evil of the world is due to its having been created out of nothing. The "nothing" out of which the world is made, continues in some mysterious way to exercise an influence upon that which is, according to the usual figure of speech, made out of it.

In his *Contra Epistolam Manichaei*, § 44, Augustine says: "When we speak of a 'corruptible thing' we use two terms [namely, 'corruptible' and 'thing']; and again when it is said God made out of nothing we use two terms ['God' and 'nothing']. Now in these two pairs of terms, combine each one with the one to which it is appropriate in the other pair, and refer the 'thing' to God, the corruptibility to the 'nothing.'"

It is not surprising that in the Pelagian controversy his opponent Julian of Eclanum,

who was a skilful debater, should have seized on this peculiar view as a remnant of the Manichaean Dualism. "This nothing," he says, "plays the same part in your teaching as the Ruler of the Realm of Darkness does for the Manichaeans." And he proceeds sarcastically: "This thing which had no existence, has had, according to you, great influence, from the very fact that it never existed; and its power was at the maximum after it had lost even its name [by becoming something]. Truly it obtained a great dominion after its very appellation had perished" (*Op. imperf. c. Jul.* v. 32. 33). Now, so far as I can see, that criticism is in essence perfectly justified. Only, I believe that Julian is wrong in attributing the peculiarity of the view to Manichaean influence. It was really a desperate attempt to combine the Neo-Platonic doctrine of matter with the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing.

Now let us look at his theory of sin. It belongs to the idea of the soul to find its chief good in a living relation to its Creator. It is incomplete in itself, and conscious of this incompleteness, and only in Him can it find completeness and satisfaction. Sin consists in seeking its satisfaction in itself or in other lesser goods. Evil is not sought *per se*. It is mistaken for a good, *i.e.* for something intrinsically desirable.

There is thus an element of self-deception in all sin. "Pride imitates true loftiness, ambition seeks honour, severity desires to be feared—all prerogatives which belong to God. Curiosity professes to be the desire for knowledge; ignorance and folly assume the name of simplicity and innocence; cowardice affects to desire quiet; luxury would fain be called sufficiency and abundance; lavishness assumes the semblance of liberality, and so forth" (*Conf.* ii. 13). "For souls in their very sins strive after some kind of likeness of God, though they use a proud and preposterous, and, so to speak, slavish liberty" (*De Trin.* xi. 8). When obvious crimes are committed we assume that there is some further motive, that the man is seeking not the shameful thing itself but something else by means of it. If we hear of a murder, we ask why did he do it? And the answer is: he desired the other man's wife, or his lands, or he was trying to steal the means to live, or he dreaded to meet with like treatment at the other's hands, or he had suffered wrong from him and sought vengeance. "Would any one do a murder for the mere pleasure of it? Who could believe it?"

No doubt this theory has its dangers. It may be so handled as to become, in Tennyson's phrase, "Procuress to the Lords of Hell." But there is no suggestion in Augustine that

the motive is *innocent*; in some of the cases mentioned it is not less bad than the action. The point is merely that it is rational; the motive of sin is not mere malignity.

When we turn to the special doctrines of sin and grace which are more particularly associated with his name we find a number of points of psychological interest arising. These doctrines are usually thought of in connexion with the Pelagian controversy, but it is important to remember that in all essentials they were developed many years before that controversy broke out. In the first Book of the *Retractations*, section 9, paragraph 6, Augustine remarks that he had answered Pelagius by anticipation in his work *De Libero Arbitrio*, written within a few years of his conversion; and if in conjunction with this we take another early work, *De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, we find the outlines of his system already pretty fully present. That suggests what I believe to be the fact, that his doctrines of sin and grace were mainly based on his experience—his experience, of course, as interpreted through Scripture, and more especially through the Pauline Epistles. In one of the anti-Pelagian writings, the *De Dono Perseverantiae* (53), he remarks that the account in the *Confessions* of how he was granted to his mother's tears is a striking illustration of the

way in which God by His grace can convert men to the faith even when they are opposing it. Augustinianism, in fact, did not arise as a protest against Pelagianism, but *vice versa*, and their first encounter, as described by Augustine himself, was of a curiously personal character. The incident is narrated in the passage of *De Dono Perseverantiae* referred to above. There is, he recalls, a saying which recurs several times in the *Confessions*: "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." This is a prayer, faith's challenge to God, as it were, a paraphrase of St. Paul's "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Now, this saying, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," happened to be quoted by a bishop at Rome in the presence of Pelagius. It roused Pelagius to indignant protest, so much so that he almost quarrelled with the bishop who had quoted it. The encounter is, as I said, almost personal, for though Augustine was not present in person it was his intimate self-expression in the *Confessions* which roused the indignation of his opponent. And the passage where the phrase occurs is not a theoretic discussion; it introduces that account of his spiritual condition at the time of writing his *Confessions* with which he closes his narrative. It is in the main an expression of confidence, of

a confidence based on his experience. Something, he feels, has been already attained, he has attained it through the Divine aid, and for what remains he trusts the same source of power.

It was this sense of a truth verified in experience which was the ultimate driving power of his anti-Pelagian polemics. It is unnecessary here to review that long, weary, and in parts unpleasant controversy. It will be sufficient just to recall the main outlines by way of introduction to some points in which Augustine's psychological treatment of the questions is of interest.

We may sum up Augustine's view broadly thus: Man, in his present condition, has not the power of effectively willing good. He has a bias towards evil which he cannot by his own efforts overcome. But this condition does not belong to the idea of human nature. It is not normal, so to speak, but is a penal condition resulting from the sin of the first man, who *was* in a condition of real freedom, in the sense of having the power to choose between good and ill. As a consequence of his sin he lost this power, and transmitted to his descendants the bias towards evil which he had thus acquired. In regeneration God restores to man the power of choosing good, and the goal of redeemed humanity is to arrive at a condition where it will have the

power of choosing good only, and not evil. The first man, as Augustine puts it, possessed the *posse non peccare*, the capacity not to sin; the redeemed man is destined to possess the *non posse peccare*, incapacity to sin. The grace by which God turns man to Himself operates irresistibly, or rather invincibly, for though it may be resisted it cannot be overcome. God has His way with the man. Of course, a statement on this small scale can only be roughly accurate. If we were treating the History of Doctrine as such we should have to introduce various shadings and modifications. As against the above tenets, Pelagius held that Adam's sin affected no one but himself, except by way of bad example, and further, that the commission of personal sin left the will just as free as it was before. As to grace, that consisted merely of all the external aids which God has provided.

As regards man's actual condition, in the Pelagian controversy, where Scripture is common ground to himself and his opponents, Augustine generally prefers to use Scriptural arguments, but in his great apologetic work, the *De Civitate Dei*, where he is addressing a wider audience, he also appeals to experience. That the whole human race has been condemned in its origin, this life itself, if life it can be called, bears witness by the host of cruel evils with which it is filled.

Then he gives a long catalogue of sins and evils, hatred, deceit, flattery, fraud, theft, robbery, perfidy, and the like. He does not, however, exaggerate the universality of the grosser forms of evil. He holds them to be potentially rather than actually present. These, he says, are the crimes of wicked men, but they spring from that root of error and misplaced love which is born with every son of Adam. "For who has not observed with what a superfluity of foolish desires, beginning to appear even in boyhood, man comes into this life, so that if he were left to live as he pleased and to do whatever he pleased, he would plunge into all, or certainly into many, of those crimes and iniquities which I have mentioned" (*De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 22. 1). This is put more concretely in the *Confessions*. In *Conf.* i. 30, after speaking of childish greed, deceit, and ill-temper, he exclaims: "Is that the innocence of childhood? It is not, O Lord, nay surely it is not, O my God! For these are the same offences which, as our years advance, come to be committed, not against tutors and teachers, and for the sake of nuts and balls and sparrows, but against kings and governors for the sake of gold, estates, and slaves—just as the rod gives place to proportionately heavier penalties."

But what he perhaps feels to be even more

convincing evidence of something amiss with human nature is the constant conflict, the warfare with temptation, which has to be waged by those who desire to do right. "For," he says, "though sometimes more violently and sometimes less so, yet without intermission does the flesh lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would, and extirpate all evil desire, but can only refuse to consent to it as God gives us ability, and keep it under; vigilantly keeping watch lest a semblance of truth deceive us, lest a subtle discourse blind us, lest error involve us in darkness, lest fear should hinder us in doing what is good, or desire precipitate us into doing what we ought not"—and so on through a long catalogue, which leads up to the inference: "Consequently even this our warfare, in which we are exposed to peril, belongs to the ills of this life, which is proved by the witness of so many grave evils to be a life under condemnation" (*De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 23).

This doctrine of original sin is not attractive to the natural man; but many thinkers who have not accepted its dogmatic basis have come to a result not in essence very different. It is interesting to note, for example, that Goethe changed his mind on this point. In his younger days he had attacked Kant with extreme bitter-

ness for admitting radical evil, declaring in language the violence of which strikes us as unworthy of one great man in speaking of another, that after spending a long lifetime in cleansing his philosopher's cloak from many dirty prejudices, he had wantonly defiled it with the shameful stain of radical evil, in order that Christians also might be drawn to kiss its hem.

But in a review written in 1827 [1] he holds a different language, admitting that certain phases of human nature compel us to ascribe to it a certain *Erbsünde*, original or inherited sin. He adds, no doubt, that other features of human nature require us to recognise in it an *Erbtugend* or "original virtue," an inborn goodness and rectitude — and especially an inclination to reverence. But to this latter point also a complete parallel may be quoted from Augustine — a recognition not merely of the original sin but also of the original virtue.

In the *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 24. 1, he writes: "But in this river, as I may call it, of the human race, two currents flow together, the evil which is drawn from the parent and the good which is bestowed by the Creator." He is not merely referring here to the possibility of redemption,

[1] I am indebted for this interesting reference to my friend Dr. Gibb, Emeritus Professor of Church History in Westminster College, Cambridge.

for he is speaking of what man receives by natural generation; and he continues, a little further on: "It is God, then, who has given to the human soul a mind in which reason lies dormant during infancy . . . but is destined to be awakened and exercised as years increase. . . . It is by this capacity that the soul drinks in wisdom, and becomes endowed with the virtues. . . . And even though this be not uniformly the result, yet who can competently utter or even conceive the grandeur of this work of the Almighty, and the unspeakable boon which He has conferred upon our natural nature by giving us the capacity for such attainment?"

Thus his views on original sin by no means blinded him to what is excellent in human nature. Moreover, while he insists on the ravages which original sin has made in our nature, he distinctly recognises that only freely committed sin is sin in the full sense. In the *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. § 54, he has the following striking illustration: "As we use the word tongue not only of the member, but of what follows the movement of the member, namely, language [as we speak, he means, of 'the Latin tongue'], so we call sin, not only what is properly called sin, as being committed voluntarily and knowingly, but also the existing consequences which necessarily follow from the punishment of this sin."

In support of the view that only that is sin which is done wilfully, he is content to appeal to the universal consciousness, using the following examples: "Suppose when a man was asleep some one else wrote with his hand something criminal—would he be responsible? Or suppose a man was bound, all but his hand, and then some one stronger than he forced him to write something criminal, would he be responsible?" Any one, he says, to whom these questions are put would be indignant at being asked anything so absurd.

To turn to another point, it hardly needs proof that he is on much firmer psychological ground than his opponents in holding that the commission of sin—or indeed for the matter of that action of any kind—does not leave the will exactly as it was before. Indeed I suppose there is hardly any one nowadays who hold so completely atomistic a view of human action as that implies. It may be just worth while, however, to quote a passage from his Pelagian opponent, Julian of Eclanum, showing how distinctly he *did* profess this view, and a passage from Augustine on the other side.

In his unfinished work against Julian (*Opus imperf. c. Jul.* i. 91), Augustine quotes the latter as roundly asserting that "Free will is as complete after sins as before sins." It is not

that he attributes this view to Julian inferentially as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. His method in this work is to quote a passage from Julian, and comment upon it, and this is one of the quotations.

In this place he is content to answer it by an appeal to Scripture, quoting St. Paul's avowal: "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do."

In the *De Libero Arbitrio*, iii. 52, however, he writes more fully: "Nor is it to be wondered at that a man should not have free will to choose to do right, either from ignorance or from the resistance of the habit of our carnal nature, which by the strong force of mortal succession grows inveterate as it were naturally, so that while he sees what ought to be done and wills it, he is unable to perform it. For it is a most just punishment of sin that a man should lose what he was unwilling to use when he could have done so without difficulty had he willed it; namely, that he who, *knowing* what is right, does not do it should lose the power of *knowing* what is right, and that he who is unwilling to do what is right when he could, should lose the *power* of doing it when he would."

That is a very clear statement not merely of a theological doctrine, but of the well-established natural law of the atrophy of unused faculties.

Then again, his doctrine that true freedom is only reached when the will loses the capacity to choose anything but good, though paradoxically expressed, contains the recognition of a truth. It is paradoxical, in that it uses freedom in a sense different from the ordinary; it is true, in that it is based on a sound psychological generalisation, namely, that character does tend towards fixity. Probably every one of us has some friend in regard to whom, if some particular charge were made against him, we should say: "The thing is inconceivable. I would not believe it unless he told me himself." We constantly see character attaining to that kind of fixity on certain lines. Augustine's ideal is that it should end by attaining to that kind of fixity all round.

Thus in the *Tractates on St. John* (xli. 10) he writes: "The beginning of liberty is to be free from gross sins. When Paul prescribed rules for the choosing of presbyters and deacons he did not say: 'If any man is without sin,' but, 'if any man is without crime'—such as murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, fraud, sacrilege, and the like. When a man has begun to be free from these (and every Christian man ought to be free from them) he has begun to raise his head towards liberty; but that is an incipient not a perfect liberty. . . . So far as

we serve God we are free; so far as we still serve sin we are slaves."

Again, grace, though it acts irresistibly, does not act magically. It is not thought of as a stream of force turning our will this way or that. Its action may sometimes be mysterious, but where we can trace it we find that grace acts psychologically—it acts by providing the strongest motive. "But the will itself, unless something be presented to it which delights and attracts the mind, cannot possibly be set in motion; but to cause this 'something' to be presented to it, is not in the power of man. What was Saul's will, save to assail, drag off, bind and kill Christians? How raging, how mad, how blind a will! Yet when by a single utterance from above he was cast down, and there was presented to him a vision by which, his rage being broken down, his mind and his will might be turned back and brought to faith, suddenly from a persecutor of the Gospel he was made a preacher of it" (*De Div. Quaest. ad Simplic.* i. 22).

On the same lines, in expounding Galatians v. 22, 23, he says: "These spiritual fruits reign in the men in whom sins do not reign. These good things reign if they uphold the mind amid temptations, that it may not fall into sin. For we must necessarily act in accordance with the strongest motive ("Quod enim amplius nos

delectat, secundum id operemur necesse est," *Expos. Ep. in Gal.* 49). This, of course, does not mean that we are always obliged to do what appears pleasantest at the moment. All it means is that in a balance of motives which may include, besides the sense of immediate pleasantness, expectation of reward or punishment, ethical conviction, love of God or one's neighbour, — that on a balance of all these the strongest or the strongest combination prevails. Except as against a magical theory it is, in fact, a truism. What Augustine has in mind is perhaps made clearer by the following examples. In *De Musica* (vi. 52) he writes: "The love of temporal things would never be driven out except by a certain sweetness of the things eternal"; while in the warmer, more personal language of the *Confessions* he exclaims: "How sweet it suddenly became to me to give up the sweetness of those vanities. . . . For Thou, the true, the supreme sweetness hadst cast them out and hadst entered in their stead, sweet to me beyond all pleasures" (*Conf.* ix. 1).

VII

ST. AUGUSTINE AS EXPOSITOR AND PREACHER

ST. AUGUSTINE himself treats as two parts of one whole the two subjects which we are to consider in this chapter—his work as a preacher and as an interpreter of Scripture. Scripture he thinks of as the quarry from which the preacher draws his materials; preaching as the means by which the expositor brings home the truths of Scripture to the minds of those whom he has to instruct. Thus it comes that his work "On Christian Instruction," *De Doctrina Christiana*, is a treatise both on Exegetical method and on the principles of Homiletics.

That both interpretation and preaching are arts, needing to be acquired by careful study, he had the fullest conviction. In his day, as in ours, there were people who distrusted such preparation, and he meets them with an ingenious *argumentum ad hominem*. "As regards those who talk vauntingly of Divine grace and boast that they

can understand and explain Scripture without the aid of such instructions, it should mitigate their wrath if they would remember that, however justly they may rejoice in God's great gift, it was, after all, from human teachers that they themselves first learned to read. Now, they would hardly think it right that they should for that reason be held in contempt by the Egyptian monk Antony, a just and holy man, who, not being able to read himself, is said to have committed the Scriptures to memory by hearing them read by others, . . . or by that barbarian slave Christianus, of whom I have lately heard from very respectable witnesses, who, without any teaching from man, attained a full knowledge of the art of reading, simply through prayer that it might be revealed to him; after three days' supplication obtaining his request that he might read through a book presented to him on the spot by the astonished bystanders. *But if any one think that these stories are false, I do not strongly insist on them*" (*De Doct. Christ. Prol.* 4). In the context, I think that last remark must be suspected of a touch of irony. He goes on to recall that the Ethiopian eunuch, for example, was not enlightened by an angel, but that, "by the suggestion of God, Philip, who did understand the prophet, came to him and sat with him, and in human words

and with a human tongue opened to him the Scriptures."

What, then, does Augustine consider to be the proper equipment of the interpreter? In the first place, he ought to know the languages in which Scripture is written, Hebrew and Greek. Then there are the subsidiary studies of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, which help us to appreciate the niceties of language, the force of argument, or the energy and beauty with which the thoughts are expressed. History helps us to organise our knowledge of Scriptural events and relate them to the general history of the world. The knowledge of mechanical arts and of natural objects helps us to understand circumstances, allusions, figures, and so forth.

And in regard to matters of this kind it is interesting to note, in view of modern developments, that he suggests the compilation of something in the nature of a Bible Dictionary. He refers to an existing dictionary of proper names and to "what Eusebius has done in regard to the history of the past with a view to the questions arising in Scripture that need a knowledge of history for their solution," and proceeds: "The same, I think, might be done in other matters if any competent man were willing in a spirit of benevolence to undertake the labour for the advantage of his brethren. In this way he might

arrange in their several classes and give an account of the unknown places and animals, and plants and trees, and stones and metals, and other species of things which are mentioned in Scripture" (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 59). The philosophy of the heathen, too, especially, for example, of the Neo-Platonists, is not to be left out of account. To use this is to follow the example of the Israelites, who, when they came up out of Egypt, borrowed from their heathen neighbours gold and silver and raiment. In an eloquent passage he exclaims: "Do we not see how richly laden with gold and silver and raiment Cyprian came up out of Egypt, and Lactantius, Victorinus, Optatus, and Hilary—not to speak of living men and Greeks without number?" (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 61).

Thus a wide and thorough general education belongs to the equipment of Augustine's ideal expositor. What are the special principles which he is to apply when he comes to the practical work of exegesis?

Theoretically, Augustine accepts the principle that the primary object of exegesis is to discover what the author actually meant. "We all," he says, in *Confessions*, xii. 27, "endeavour to discover and understand what he whom we are reading intended." But it is fair to say that he does not give it the same finality as a

modern expositor would do. In the same passage from which we have quoted this he goes on: "While therefore every one endeavours to understand the Scriptures in the sense intended by him who wrote them, what harm is it if he understands *something* that is true, even if the author intended some other truth." It should be said, however, that he is here speaking of difficult and ambiguous passages, not of prejudiced interpretations or arbitrary allegorisation. And in *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 41, he guards the principle in this way: "If his mistaken interpretation tends to build up love, which is the end of the commandment, he goes astray in much the same way as a man who by mistake quits the high-road, yet reaches through the fields the same place to which the road leads. He is to be corrected, however, and to be shown how much better it is not to quit the straight road, lest if he get into a habit of going astray he may sometimes take a road at right angles to the true road, or even go in the wrong direction altogether." In regard to those obscure passages where diversity of interpretation is legitimate, he lays down the sound general rule that we should, where possible, "draw examples from the plainer expressions to throw light upon those that are more obscure, and use the evidence of passages about which there is no doubt, to

remove all hesitation in regard to the doubtful passages" (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 14).

We turn now to the department in which he sins most against modern canons — that of allegorisation. It is to be noted, in the first place, that he is not, in theory, at any rate, a wild and reckless allegoriser. In the *De Unitate Ecclesiae*,[1] chap. v., for instance, he recognises that in dealing with heretics or schismatics it is useless to appeal to allegorical interpretations, in which an arbitrary element necessarily comes in. Only plain passages in their obvious literal sense are here of any avail.

Further, he insists that when we are going to allegorise, the allegorical sense must, as a rule, not oust the literal sense, but be built upon it. In *Serm.* ii. 7, when about to give an allegorical interpretation of the ram at the sacrifice of Isaac as prefiguring Christ, he says: "Before all things, brethren, we earnestly exhort and instruct you in the name of the Lord that when you hear expounded the symbolical meaning of a passage of Scripture which narrates facts, you should first believe that what you read happened as it is stated; lest, the foundation of fact being removed, you should seek to build, as it were, in the air."

The only exception to this is in the case of

[1] Otherwise known as *Ad Catholicos Epistola contra Donatistas.*

passages which, when literally understood, do not make in favour of purity of life or soundness of doctrine. It has often been pointed out that this was a necessary resource, so long as men had not fully grasped the principles of historical evolution, progressive revelation, and the human element in Scripture. Caird, for instance, in his *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (ii. 187), speaking of Philo, writes: "[The allegorical method] served in fact the same purpose which in modern times has been served by the theory of evolution, enabling men to connect the present with the past, without allowing that connexion to become a hindrance to progress." It is clear, of course, that to accept the ethics of the Old Testament as in every respect valid for later times would be reactionary; and in this connexion the allegorical method did valuable service to the Christian Church in its early days. It should be said, however, that Augustine himself had a perception of the truth of historical development which, consistently carried out, might have rendered him largely independent of the allegorical method so far as this purpose is concerned. In *De Doctrina Christiana* (iii. 15) he writes: "As men are prone to estimate sins not by reference to their inherent sinfulness, but rather by reference to their own customs, it frequently

happens that a man will think blamable nothing except what the men of his own country and time are accustomed to condemn, and nothing worthy of approval except what is sanctioned by the custom of his companions; and thus it comes to pass that if Scripture either enjoins what is opposed to the custom of the hearers, or condemns what is not so opposed, and if at the same time the authority of the word has a hold upon their minds, they think that expression is figurative." "Surely they might understand," he writes again, in *Confessions*, iii. 13, "when they see that in one man, one garment fits one member and one another; that in one day a thing is permitted at one time and prohibited later; that in one house something is permitted, or it may be commanded to be done, in one part, which in another, close to it, is forbidden under threat of punishment. Does this mean that justice is changing and inconstant? No, but times, over which it is enthroned, change, for that is the very quality of time." One could hardly ask a clearer statement than this of the principle of historical evolution.

Further, he recognises that some passages of Scripture are there, not so much for their own sake, but as a framework to bind the others together, as in a stringed instrument the frame is there for the sake of the strings (*Contra Faustum*,

xxii. 94). If this be taken in conjunction with the principle of development, it is obvious that he was not forced back on the allegorical method quite so inevitably as a thinker of less breadth of mind might have been. His fondness for allegory has therefore to be explained partly on other grounds. The fact seems to be that, for one thing, he enjoyed the exercise of ingenuity for which the allegorical method gives scope; and, for another, he found as a preacher that it gripped the minds of the people better. In *De Doctrina Christiana* (ii. 7) he gives the following curious illustration: "Why is it, I ask, that if any one says there are holy and just men whose life and conversation the Church uses as a means of redeeming those who come to it from all kinds of superstitions, and making them, through their imitation of good men, members of its own body, —how is it that if a man says this, he does not please his hearer so much as when he draws the same meaning from a passage in Canticles, where it is said of the Church, when being praised under the figure of a beautiful woman: 'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are shorn, which came up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them?'" "I do not know why," he says, "but I feel greater pleasure in contemplating holy men when I think of them as the teeth of the Church tearing

away men from their errors, and bringing them into the Church's body with all their harshness softened down, just as if they had been masticated by the teeth. It is with the greatest pleasure, too, that I recognise them under the figure of sheep that have been shorn, laying down the burdens of the world like fleeces, and coming up from the washing, that is from baptism, and all bearing twins, that is the twin commandments of love, and none of them barren in that holy fruit."

He remarks elsewhere on the freedom and absence of artificiality which characterises the Scriptural use of figures. There is no fixed system of symbolism: the same figure may in different passages signify opposite things. The lion is at one time the Lion of the tribe of Judah, at another a figure for the Devil; the serpent at one time typifies the Tempter, at another it is a symbol of the wisdom of the saints, and so forth (*De Doct. Christ.* iii. 36; *Serm.* 32. 6).

So far we have been occupied with his theory in regard to exegesis; let us now turn to his qualifications and his practice.

In regard to his knowledge of languages he freely admits his deficiencies. He knew practically no Hebrew, and he knew much less Greek than he could have desired. His ignorance of Hebrew had various consequences; among them

an exaggerated reverence for the Septuagint translation. We touched on this in an earlier chapter in connexion with his epistolary controversy with Jerome, and we then saw that he objected to Jerome's new translation from the Hebrew, partly from a perverted scholarly instinct, because he liked to check the Old Latin version by the Septuagint, from which it was made; partly from a theory that the Seventy translators in their departures from the Hebrew were divinely guided, being, as he puts it, not only interpreters but prophets. Occasionally he mentions Punic words known to his hearers which had some resemblance to the Hebrew; but he did not himself speak Punic, or he might perhaps have approached Hebrew from this side with the aid of some of the numerous Jews who were to be found in North African towns. He seems to have possessed a kind of dictionary which gave the meanings of the Hebrew proper names.

As regards his knowledge of Greek, there has been some controversy, and his ignorance has often been greatly exaggerated by writers who have made passing allusions to it. The evidence on which they rely—where they are not merely repeating some one else's opinion—supplies a very interesting example of the fallacy of building a theory on a sentence detached from its

context. The sentence is this. In the *Contra Litteras Petiliani*, Augustine certainly says quite definitely: "I indeed have studied Greek very little, indeed almost not at all." Now this is, of course, quite enough for the "young man in a hurry." He immediately writes down, "Augustine, unfortunately, knew next to no Greek, see *Contra Litteras Petiliani*, ii. 91," and goes on his way with a virtuous sense of having given his references. But if he had "looked before and after," in addition to "sighing for what is not" (namely, Augustine's ignorance), he would have found another illustration of the fact that things are not always what they seem—at least to him who wants to read while running. For, having made this profession of profound ignorance, Augustine immediately proceeds to trip up his adversary in a mistake in Greek! Under these circumstances the profession of ignorance is hardly to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. It is simply the rhetorical trick of fence which prepares the way for the thrust that follows. An appeal, of course, lies to the facts. Now, we find that Augustine has written six short books of comments on the verbal difficulties of the first six books of the Bible. He is dealing primarily with the Latin, but it is quite evident that for a large portion of them, at least, he had compared the Latin with the

Septuagint verse by verse. In his Commentaries generally, he frequently appeals to the Greek text. In the *Contra Julianum* (i. 26) he quotes a passage from Chrysostom, and, the current version being inaccurate, he gives a more exact rendering of his own. He can remark, too, on the force of a particular tense, notes a construction like the accusative of limitation, and in several passages discriminates accurately between synonyms. Now, the capacity to do all these things is far removed from gross ignorance of a language. The fact seems to be that he had had the elements painfully drilled into him at school, as he tells us in the *Confessions*, and that later, with the aid probably of some of the Greek-speaking clergy, he increased his knowledge very considerably. His bishop, Valerius, was, we are told, more at home in Greek than Latin. Thus, though he never acquired the power of reading Greek authors with ease, he knew his way about quite well in the New Testament and Septuagint.

As regards the general equipment which he desiderates in an expositor—grammar, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, history, and general knowledge—he was, as we know, unusually well provided.

We may now turn to some examples of his practice. The literary training included under the term "grammar" in ancient education

included some knowledge of textual criticism, and he frequently remarks on textual points. In discussing the difficulty of the ascription to Jeremiah in Matt. xxvii. 9 of a prophecy which comes from Zechariah, he shows a sound knowledge of critical principles. Some MSS., he points out, have no name, reading simply "by the prophet." "He who is satisfied with this defence," he says, "may use it, but it does not satisfy me, for the following reasons. The MSS. which have the name of Jeremiah are more numerous, and those who have studied the matter say that they find it in the more ancient Greek manuscripts.[1] And, moreover, there was no reason for putting in the name and making it wrong; but there was reason enough why in certain manuscripts a rash ignorance should remove it, in alarm at the difficulty that this prophecy was not found in Jeremiah" (*De Consensu Evangelistarum*, iii. 29).

With the question of interpolation on a wider scale he was brought in contact in connexion with the Manichaean heresy. The Manichaeans, it seems, were great exponents of *Interpolationskritik*. Professing to accept the New Testament, they got rid of any passage which did not square

[1] Among Greek MSS. he gives most weight to those found in the Churches which are distinguished for learning and research (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 22).

with their views by declaring it to be spurious. On this Augustine writes trenchantly in *Contra Faustum*, xi. 2: "It is one thing to reject the books as a whole . . . as the Pagans reject our Scriptures, or the Jews the New Testament . . . and it is another thing to say, 'This holy man wrote only the truth, and this is his epistle, but some verses are his and some are not.' And when you are asked for a proof, instead of referring to more correct or more ancient manuscripts . . . your reply is, 'This verse is his because it makes for me; and this is not his because it is against me.' Are *you* then the rule of truth? What answer could you make to an opponent as unreasonable as yourself who should assert, 'The passage in your favour is spurious, and that against you is genuine'?"

In one of his vigorous metaphors he describes this plea of wholesale interpolation as "the last gasp of a heretic in the grip of truth." [1]

As regards what may be called higher criticism, we do not, of course, find him going very far, but it is interesting to note that he had too much historical acumen to be troubled by discrepancies between the Evangelists in the narration of the same event. For instance, when his Manichaean opponent, Faustus, attacks the narrative of the

[1] "Manifesta veritate faucibus pressis, anhelitu saucio dicitis esse falsata" (*C. Faust.* x. 3).

healing of the Centurion's servant on the ground that in one gospel the Centurion himself comes to Jesus, in the other makes his request through the Jewish elders, Augustine replies: "I wish one of those foolish people who found their captious objections to the gospel on trifling difficulties of this kind would himself tell a story twice over, honestly endeavouring to give a true account of what happened, and that his words should be taken down and read over to him. We should then see whether he would not say more at one time than another; and whether the order would not be changed, not only of words but of things; and whether he would not put some opinion of his own into the mouth of another, because, though he never heard him say it, he knew it perfectly well to be in his mind; and whether he would not sometimes express in a few words what he had before narrated at length. In these and other ways, *which might perhaps be reduced to rule*,[1] the narratives of the same thing by two persons, or two narratives by the same person, might differ in many things without being opposed, might be unlike without being contradictory" (*C. Faust.* xxxiii. 8).

It will be noted that it is Augustine's psycho-

[1] This is an interesting suggestion of the possibility of a science of historical criticism.

logical insight which here serves him as guide in his criticism, just as in a former chapter we saw it supplying argument and illustration to his theology.

Augustine's acute mind and trained dialectical skill are seen to advantage in dealing with apparent contradictions. We saw in a former chapter how he reconciled the temporary retention with the subsequent setting aside of Jewish ceremonies as "the honourable burial" of customs, good in their time and place, which yet must not be resuscitated. A more limited and verbal difficulty is the apparent contradiction between Galatians vi. verses 2 and 5, "Bear ye one another's burdens," and "Every man shall bear his own burden," which he doubtless interprets rightly in remarking, "The burden of bearing infirmity is one thing, the burden of responsibility to God for our actions is another. The bearing of the former we are to share with our brethren, the latter must be borne by each individual for himself" (*De Cons. Evang.* ii. 72).

In his Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians he dismisses with equal ease the difficulty that Paul repudiates in Gal. i. 10 the idea of pleasing men, whilst in 1 Cor. x. 33 he says that he pleases all men in all things. The difficulty is solved by noticing the motive added in the latter case, that Paul pleases them for their

profit, with a view to their salvation; for "to please men thus is to please not men but God."

In regard to the precept, "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also," Augustine shows both ethical and exegetical insight in dealing with the question whether it is to be taken literally. He points out that we have an authoritative interpretation in our Lord's action. When the servant of the High Priest struck Him, we do not read that He offered the other cheek, but that He quietly rebuked the smiter. "And hereby," says Augustine, "He rather showed what needed to be shown, namely, that those great precepts of His are to be fulfilled not by bodily ostentation, but by the preparation of the heart. For it is possible for a man literally to hold out the other cheek, with rage in his heart the while" (*Tract. in Ioann.* cxiii. 4). But he is not "screwing down" the ethical demand of the saying; the standard is love. If a literal fulfilment will best touch the heart of the wrong-doer, then it becomes right; in another case a rebuke may be more profitable to him (*Ep.* cxxxviii. 11 f.).

That frequent stumbling-block, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, he explains soundly as not some particular form of words that a man might chance to utter, nor even some particular

sin that he might commit, but "a desperate and impious obstination in sin, with a proud refusal to humble oneself before God" (*Inchoata Expositio Epistolae ad Romanos*, § 23).

It is interesting to note that he takes what is usually thought of as the "Protestant" view in regard to the famous passage, "Thou art Peter," Matt. xvi. 18 ff. In *Serm.* 76. 1 he says: "The Lord conferred upon him this name Peter, and the meaning of it is that he symbolises the Church. For since Christ was the rock (Petra), Peter is the Christian people. For Petra is the root-word ('principale nomen'). Hence Petrus is from Petra, not Petra from Petrus, just as Christian is from Christ, and not *vice versa*. 'Thou art Petrus,' He says, 'and I will build my Church on this *petra* which thou hast confessed, on this *petra* which thou didst recognise when thou saidst, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." That is, upon myself, the Son of the living God, will I build my Church. I will build thee upon myself, not myself upon thee.'" In another Sermon (295, § 2) he adds that it was as the representative of the Church that the keys were given to Peter: "These keys were received not by a single man, but by the unity of the Church."

It should be added that in the *Retractationes*, i. 21, he mentions that in a single work against

the Donatists, now lost, he had given the interpretation which makes Peter the rock, but that in a great many passages ("saepissime") he had given the other interpretation. He does not repeat the argument from the lost work, but repeats in brief the argument quoted above, and then remarks that the reader may decide for himself which is the more probable interpretation.

Having dwelt hitherto on the more favourable aspects of St. Augustine's exegesis, it would hardly be fair not to give an example of his artificial allegorisation. We may take as an outstanding specimen Sermon 8, in which he makes the ten plagues of Egypt the counterpart of the ten commandments, each plague typifying the vice which is opposed to the commandment.

As the counterpart of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," the first plague, the turning of water into blood, is allegorised thus: God, as the one source of all things, is symbolised by the water, out of which all things are born. Blood, on the other hand, typifies mortal flesh. Therefore the turning of water into blood stands for the changing of the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man—that is, idolatry.

Interpreting the second commandment,

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," in the sense "Thou shalt speak the truth and not vanity," he says that the loquacity, the constant croaking, of frogs, typifies speaking vanity.

The Sabbath calm finds its contrary in the plague of lice, which are, however, understood as gnats, which are never still and give no rest, and are therefore like the vain imaginations of the contentious.

The greatest triumph of ingenuity is perhaps that by which the plague of flies is brought into relation with the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." The word for the special fly here mentioned is in the Septuagint *κυνόμυια*, dog-fly. Now, indifference to parents is, it seems, characteristic of the canine race, quite in accordance with the fact that puppies are born blind! After this we have, of course, no difficulty in perceiving the appropriateness of the locust to typify the false witness, since both have a destructive tooth!

There are many curious allegorical interpretations of numbers, of which we may take as an example the interpretation of the 153 fishes in John xxi. "Start with the number 10, standing for the Law; add 7, the number symbolical of the Spirit, and you have 17. Add together all the numbers from 1 to 17—1+2+3+4, etc.—and

you get 136. To this add the original 17, and you get 153. This stands for all those who have shared in the grace of the Spirit (typified by 7); by which grace harmony is established with the Law of God (represented by 10).

"This number has, besides, three times over the number 50, and three in addition, with reference to the mystery of the Trinity, while, again, the number 50 is made up by multiplying 7 by 7 with the addition of 1. The *one* is added to show that there is One who is expressed by seven on account of His sevenfold operation, and we know that it was on the fiftieth day after our Lord's ascension that the Holy Spirit was sent" (*Tract. in Ioann.* cxxii. 8).

As a final example of his ingenuity and, in certain respects, also of his philosophic grasp, we may take the various interpretations of Gen. i. 1, 2 which he gives in *Confessions*, xii. There are no fewer than five of these, so they have been numbered for clearness.

(1) "The heaven" means the dwelling-place of the angels, the visible heaven being comprehended under the term earth. "Without form and void"—in the Old Latin "invisible and unordered"—implies that the earth was created first as formless matter, which was subsequently formed during the days of creation. No "day" is mentioned in connexion with this

first creation, because the angels, so long as they retained their right relation to God, were above mutability, while the formless matter, incapable of showing any variation, was below it, and the idea of time is inseparable from that of mutability—hence no "day" is mentioned until we come to the detailed acts of creation.

(2) The heaven and earth means the whole material universe. "God made the heaven and the earth" is a summary statement which is afterwards amplified in the succeeding verses. The detailed account then begins with verse 2, in which the earth without form and void means, as before, the formless matter prior to its being shaped.

(3) In verse 1, as in verse 2, it is the formless matter which is referred to, but it is called heaven and earth by anticipation, merely as a figure of speech.

(4) Heaven and earth are used by anticipation as in the former view, but they include the spiritual as well as the material universe. In this case, however, verse 2 describes each of them in its original inchoate condition, the earth without form being formless matter, and "darkness upon the deep" being spiritual existence as yet not fully organised.

(5) The original formlessness was called heaven and earth because all things spiritual and

material were contained in it, as yet confusedly, but destined to be formed and differentiated. This last, it will be seen, is a thorough-going theory of what may be called "creative evolution," and it would appear that Augustine, who admits it as a possible view, could have faced modern scientific progress with a calmer mind than many of its contemporaries.

Having studied Augustine's ideas as to the proper way of ascertaining the meaning of Scripture, we now turn to his observations on the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained. It is in this close fashion, as we saw, that he himself connects Exegesis and Preaching.

He has no doubt that preaching is an art, and that it deserves careful study. "Who will dare to say," he writes, "that those who attack the truth are to tell their falsehoods briefly, clearly, and plausibly, while the defenders of it are to express the truth in such a way that it is tedious to listen to, hard to understand, and, in fine, not easy to believe it? . . . That the former, while imbuing the minds of their hearers with erroneous opinions, are by their power of speech to awe, to melt, to enliven and arouse them, while the latter shall in defence of the truth be sluggish, frigid, and somnolent? Who is such a

fool as to think this wisdom ? " (*De Doct. Christ.* iv. 3).

But it does not follow that the Christian preacher should undergo a rigid training in the formal art of rhetoric. Eloquence can better be learned by becoming familiar with good models than by poring over rules—as a child brought up among educated people speaks good grammar without knowing it. Examples of unstudied eloquence, composed probably without a thought of the rules, yet naturally exemplifying them, can be found in abundance in the Scriptures. Augustine analyses two of these—St. Paul's reference to his sufferings in 2 Cor. xi., and the prophet Amos's invective against luxury. Both are well chosen, and Augustine's analysis of them, from the rhetorical point of view, is of great interest. It is unfortunately too long to quote. We may just recall that he finds the effect of the former to depend mainly on its movement, the variation of pause, the sharp, quick sentences interspersed with longer ones : " Are they ministers of Christ ? (I speak as a fool) I more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the

deep . . ." We do not need to follow Augustine into his detailed analysis to see that he has seized on the distinctive feature. The passage from Amos is that beginning, "Woe unto you that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, who are heads and chiefs of the people, entering with pomp into the house of Israel! Pass ye into Calneh and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines, and to all the best kingdoms of these: is their border greater than your border?" and so forth. Augustine's analysis is again too long to quote, but I cannot refrain from noticing one admirable touch of literary criticism. He calls attention to the effect of those sounding names—Zion, Samaria, Calneh, Hamath the great, and Gath of the Philistines. "The style," he says, "is adorned with the names of places *as with lamps*." That is an effect which the great stylists have always understood. One recalls how by means of it Milton makes sheer magic out of the commonplace statement that the western extremity of England looks somewhere in the direction of Spain—

> Where the great vision of the guarded mount
> Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold.

Coming to more specific directions, Augustine, though he does not recommend the detailed

study of formal rhetoric, offers what he evidently considers a useful division of rhetorical styles, into subdued, temperate, and magnificent. The subdued is what we should call, rather, plain or simple; the temperate is what we should call ornate or elegant—that does not appear from the name but from the applications; and the magnificent is perhaps rather what we should call vehement. The aim of the simple style is to teach, explain; of the elegant to please; of the vehement to rouse the feelings and produce action.

Augustine illustrates these various styles both from Scripture and from famous preachers, such as Cyprian and Ambrose. We must not stay to follow his illustrations, but I cannot resist the temptation to quote one touch from Cyprian. Inveighing against the practice of dyeing the hair, he exclaims, "With rash and sacrilegious hand thou wouldst fain change the colour of thy hair; I would that, with a prophetic look to the future, thou shouldst dye it the colour of flame!" (*De Doct. Christ.* iv. 49). This, it need hardly be said, is in the *vehement* style.

It is a mistake, Augustine says, to suppose that because the preacher's theme is inherently great, he must always be using the magnificent or vehement style. In fact this, from its intensity, wearies the audience soonest. The preacher

should stimulate attention by passing frequently from one to the other even within the limits of a single sermon. He gives an especially sympathetic description of the simple style. "The plain style again in its own naked simplicity, when it unravels questions of very great difficulty, and throws an unexpected light upon them; when it draws forth and brings to light acute observations from a quarter whence nothing was expected; when it seizes on and exposes the falsity of an opposing opinion, which seems at its first statement to be unassailable; especially when all this is accompanied by a natural unsought grace of expression, and by a rhythm and balance of style which is not ostentatiously obtruded, but seems rather to be called forth by the nature of the subject; this style so used frequently calls forth applause so great that we can hardly believe it to be the plain style. For the fact that it comes forth without either ornament or defence, and offers battle in its own naked simplicity, does not hinder it from crushing its adversary by weight of sinew and muscle, and overwhelming and destroying the falsehood that opposes it by the mere strength of its own right arm" (*ibid.* iv. 56).

In accordance with this admiration for the simple style, we find Augustine insisting that while beauty and persuasiveness as well as

perspicuity are to be sought in all styles, yet clearness is to be the first preoccupation of the preacher. He is not to shrink even from a vulgar word-form if it will be better understood. African ears, for example, being rather dull as regards the distinction of long and short vowels, were apt to confuse *ōs*, mouth, with *ŏs*, bone. It is therefore better, he says, to use the vulgar form *ossum* for bone.

When we turn to Augustine's Sermons we find that he took his own advice in this respect—clearness and liveliness are the usual characteristics of the style. If you want purple patches from Augustine, it is not to the Sermons that you turn for them. Even the grammar has sometimes a colloquial freedom, and there are words which, to use Milton's famous phrase, "would make Quintilian stare and gasp." This was doubtless all to the good from the point of view of the effectiveness of the spoken word—it is not, as a rule, the man whose sermons "read like a book" who is really the best preacher. Nor are the Sermons distinguished for any architectonic quality; they are not models of form and arrangement. As a rule, they are loosely-constructed expository discourses. I do not think that they give us any clue to the character of his oratory in the days when he was a pro-

fessional rhetorician. There are passages in the *De Civitate Dei*, ostensibly addressed to an educated pagan audience, which are probably much more nearly in that vein, such as the great passage on human achievements in Book xxii. As a preacher he felt that something simpler, less formal, more direct, was required. The Sermons were to breathe the air—to use a metaphor of his own—not of the proud cedars of Lebanon, but of the humble salutary herbs of ecclesiastical piety (*Conf.* ix. 7).

Of the spirit in which he does his work as a preacher it is not necessary—if our previous studies have given us any just impression of his character—to speak at length here. It may suffice to say that no preacher could read without profit the incidental remarks bearing on this subject in his work "On the Catechising of the Unlearned." It is perhaps worth noting, however, that he writes with knowledge and insight on that sense of discouragement which often besets the conscientious preacher. Advising one who had written to him under this sense of discouragement, he says: "I would not have you to be disturbed by the consideration that you have often appeared to yourself to be delivering a poor and wearisome discourse. For it may very well be the case that the matter has not so presented itself to the persons whom you

are trying to instruct, but that what you were uttering seemed to you unworthy of the ears of others, simply because it was your own earnest desire that there should be something better to listen to. *Indeed with me too, it is almost always the fact that my speech displeases myself.* For I am covetous of something better, the possession of which I frequently enjoy within me before I begin to body it forth in intelligible words; and then, when my capacities of expression prove inferior to my inner apprehensions, I grieve over the inability which my tongue has betrayed of answering to my heart" (*De Catechizandis Rudibus*, 3).

An impression of his qualities as a preacher will perhaps best be given by first quoting some incidental sayings, then a longer passage, and then, by way of illustrating the simplicity and liveliness of the Sermons, we may compare the different style and method in which he treats the same subject in a theological treatise and in a sermon.

As might be expected from what we have seen earlier of his skill in the use of metaphor, his imagery and illustrations are often very effective, and not infrequently have a touch of poetry.

Thus, for example, in illustrating the statement about John the Baptist, "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that

light," he compares John to an illumined mountain, catching the first gleams of the rising sun. That is one of those simple, absolutely fitting images which satisfies the mind as completely as it delights the imagination. Many readers will remember the exactly similar use of the same image by the late F. W. H. Myers in his *St. Paul*:—

> John, than which man a sadder or a greater
> Not till this day has been of woman born;
> John, like some lonely peak, by the Creator
> Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

Augustine adds the further and sufficiently appropriate thought that it was easier for the weak eyes of men to look first on the illumined mountain before looking on the light itself (*Tract. in Ioann.* ii. 5 f.).

Another simple and effective image is that which he uses in speaking of the effect of the persecution after the death of Stephen. "The church of Jerusalem," he says, "suffered grievous persecution." "The brethren were driven away; only the apostles remained, the rest were scattered. But, like burning torches, wherever they came they kindled a fire. The Jews in their folly, when they drove them from Jerusalem, were casting firebrands into a wood" (*Serm.* 316. 4). The brands, as he says in another place

(*Serm.* 116. 6), were scattered, and the world was set on fire.

We get a poetic touch, too, though not of the same inevitable character—rather, indeed, of a certain ingenuity—when he suggests the dove's "moan" as one reason why it is a fitting emblem of the Spirit. "Now if the dove's note is a moaning, as we all know it to be, hear what the apostle says, and wonder not that the Holy Ghost willed to be manifested in the form of a dove. 'For what we should pray for as we ought, says the apostle, we know not, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered'" (*Tract. in Ioann.* vi. 2).

An example of bold playing on a Scripture figure is seen in his comment on Ps. civ. 15, "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man": "If the glorious cup of the Lord intoxicate you, it shall be seen indeed in a certain alienation of your mind, but an alienation from the things of earth to those of heaven" (*Enarr. in Ps.* 103, *Serm.* 3, § 13).

We find some examples of the imaginary natural history which was to play so large a part in the preaching of the Middle Ages: "The statement that the serpent gets rid of its old skin by squeezing itself through a narrow opening and thus acquires new strength—how appro-

priately this fits in with the direction to imitate the wisdom of the serpent, and to put off the old man, that we may put on the new; and to put it off, too, by coming through a narrow place, according to the saying of our Lord, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate'" (*De Doct. Christ.* ii. 24).

But sometimes these natural history metaphors have a touch of homely truth, as when, to illustrate Christ's saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings," he remarks that a hen with a brood of chickens suffers in health, weakens herself, for the sake of her offspring. "I refer to a well-known fact," he says, "which constantly comes under our notice. The hen's voice grows hoarse, her whole plumage grows rough, the wings trail, the feathers droop . . . and it is her maternal love which is thus found weakness. . . . And the Lord gathers all nations as a hen gathers her chickens, becoming weak for us, taking flesh of us, that is, the human race. This His weakness arises, not from the loss of majesty, but from mother-love" (*Enarr. in Ps.* 58, *Serm.* 1, § 10).

Augustine's ethical insight comes out in the recognition that a severe rebuke may be the truest expression of love. "The Lord rebuked the Jews sharply and harshly, 'Woe unto you,

Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,' but it was in love. When He said this, who would not have thought He hated them? But He came to the cross, and He said, 'Father, forgive them.' So Stephen, too, in his discourse arraigned them: 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit.' So saying he seemed to hate them, to rage against them. But, whilst the tongue chides, love abides (*lingua clamat, cor amat*). For when they made haste to stone him, he kneeled down and said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'" (*Serm.* 317. 5).

An impressive spirituality speaks in such sayings as "There is no voice for the ears of God save the affection of the soul" (*De Cat. Rud.* 13), or this from a sketch of Christian character in a specimen discourse which he gives in his work "On Catechising": "A person of this character will also advance in attainments until he comes to that disposition of mind which will make him love God more than he fears hell; so that even were God to say to him, 'Avail yourself of material pleasures for ever, and sin as much as you are able, and you shall neither die nor be sent into hell—only, you shall not dwell with me,' he would be terribly dismayed, and would altogether abstain from sinning, not now with the purpose of not falling into that

which he formerly dreaded, but with the wish not to offend Him whom he so greatly loves; in whom alone also there is that rest which eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive—the rest which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (*De Cat. Rud.* 27).

A considerable number of Augustine's sermons were delivered on the anniversaries of the martyrs. These festal orations, being more of the character of set pieces, tend to have a more formal eloquence than the expository sermons, and a passage from one of these may be quoted as illustrating another side of Augustine's pulpit oratory. For Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, martyred in 258, the great churchman and champion of orthodoxy among the North African Fathers, Augustine had an especial admiration, and several sermons preached upon his festival are extant. In one of these, alluding to the words in Psalm xxxv. 3, "Draw out the sword and stop the way against them that persecute me," he says that the faithful are as a sword[1] in the hand of God:—

"This sword he drew when he flung forth his martyrs on every side and stopped the way against

[1] *Framea*, more properly "spear," came to be used in Late Latin in the sense of "sword," and is so understood by Augustine, who says explicitly "framea Dei, hoc est gladius Dei" (*Serm.* 313. 4).

those who were persecuting the Church, that since the adversaries could not be bent by the words of the preachers they might be broken by the valour of their deaths. For God prepares, as strong weapons against His enemies, the men whom He makes His friends. And so that sword of God, the soul of the most blessed Cyprian, shining with charity, keen-edged with truth, wielded by the valour of God who Himself fought in the battle—what wars did he bring to an end! What troops of gainsayers did he refute and overcome! How many assailants did he smite, how many adversaries did he lay low! In the minds of how many enemies did he slay the enmity by which he was attacked, and turn them into friends, to strengthen the forces of God against other foes! But when the time came that his enemies should seem to prevail against him and take him, then, lest he should go down, overwhelmed by their impious hands, God was at hand to keep him undefeated; he won his final victory when there remained no longer any victory for him to win over this world. God was present to His faithful witness when contending for the truth even unto death, and, answering his prayer, He delivered his soul from the wicked, his own sword from the enemies of his hand—whose sacred flesh, as though the sheath of that sword, we honour here with an altar dedicated

to God—that flesh destined to be restored at the resurrection to the triumphant soul, thenceforward to be no more laid aside in death" (*Serm.* 313. 5).

There are few severer tests of a preacher than his power of popularising speculative thought. Nothing is more common than for a man of some mental force to be able to interest his intellectual equals, but to be helplessly tongue-tied when he endeavours to communicate his ideas to men of less capacity or narrower education. The first thing he needs to realise is that the same method of presentation will not do in the two cases; something of the suggestiveness of the thought must often be sacrificed for the sake of clearness, and it must be more concretely and, if possible, more personally expressed. It will therefore, I think, be of some interest if we take, by way of conclusion, a case in which Augustine has presented the same thought in a theological treatise and in a sermon, and note the contrast in his method.

In a former chapter, the reader may recall, we examined the psychological illustration in which Augustine shows how memory, intelligence, and will combine in the process of thought as a kind of trinity, distinct yet united. In one of his sermons he has given a popular presentment of the same illustration, so that the

materials for a comparison are ready to our hand. In the *De Trinitate* he writes—I give the passage as it comes, heavy with parentheses: "Whoever, therefore, is able to understand what is meant by a 'word,' not only before it is uttered in sound, but also before the images of it are considered in thought—for this is the word which belongs to no tongue, to wit, of those which are called the tongues of the nations, of which our Latin tongue is one—whoever, I say, is able to understand this is able now to see, through this glass and in this enigma, some likeness of that Word of whom it was said, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' For of necessity when we speak what is true—that is, speak what we know—there is born from the knowledge itself, which the memory retains, a word which is altogether of the same kind with that knowledge from which it is born. For the thought when it is formed by the thing which we know is the word which we speak in our heart; which word is neither Greek nor Latin nor of any other tongue." He adds that he uses memory here not in the ordinary sense, but as meaning "that more profound depth of memory in which we found the thought before we thought it."

This does not make exactly easy reading. Augustine expected people who undertook to

read a disquisition on the Trinity to be prepared to study it slowly and carefully, and he is more concerned to give them all his thought than to make it easy for them to follow.

Now compare the popular treatment. In *Serm.* 52, "On the Trinity," he proposes to show (§ 18 f.) some adumbration of the Trinity in the mind of man. First, he puts his hearers on their guard against expecting any too exact analogy: "No one is to say, 'See what he is comparing to God!' I told you before, and I tell you again; I warned you, and I warned you carefully. The things are widely distant, as low things from highest, as mutable from immutable, as created from Creator, as human from divine. So, when I ask your ears, there is no reason to show your teeth instead, for what I have promised to show you was simply three things which can be distinguished in thought, but are inseparable in action.

"So now I ask you, 'My friend, *have you a memory*?' If you have not, how can you remember what I have said? But perhaps you have forgotten what I said a moment ago? Well, then, this very word that I am now saying, 'dixi'—you could not retain its two syllables unless you had a memory. For how would you know there *were* two syllables unless you remembered the first while the second was being

spoken? That need not delay us longer. It is clear you have a memory.

"So I ask you a second question, 'Have you an intelligence?' 'I have,' you say. If you had no memory, you would not remember what I had said; if you had not an intelligence, you would not recognise that you remembered it. So you have this too. You direct your intelligence to that which you have within, and you look at it, and by looking at it you give it form, that you may know it and speak of it. You have then a memory, by which you remember what is said; you have an intelligence, by which you understand what is remembered.

"I ask you a third question, 'Do you *wish* to remember and understand?' 'Certainly, I do,' you say. You have then also a *will*.

"These are the three things which I promised to tell you of. In you there are these three things which you can count, but you cannot separate."

What a difference! He has deliberately sacrificed that more recondite conception of memory, valuable as it is in the original passage; for once bring that in and the thing is not only difficult but mysterious—and mystery does not yield to treatment.

Then, instead of the long, cumbrous, involved periods, he uses short, crisp sentences, and, above

all, he takes his audience into his confidence and makes them work with him by asking them direct questions, and forcing them to perform the experiment upon themselves, so to speak, thus keeping their minds awake instead of letting them go to sleep while they listened to a description of it.

One is inclined to think that there are preachers even at the present day who might have something to learn from St. Augustine.

VIII

HIS PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY, POLITICS, AND SOCIAL ETHICS

PHILOSOPHY of History is one of those high-sounding titles which do not convey any very exact information as to the character of the subject. History we know, and philosophy we know—or at least we think we know what we mean by the terms—but what is philosophy of history? Even the suggestion which, though not too obvious, is perhaps the most natural, does not turn out to be right. Since history is for the race very much what remembered experience is for the individual, and since philosophy sometimes bears the sense of practical wisdom, it would not be unnatural to think that the philosophy of history meant the study of the lessons of the past as a guide to policy and statecraft. But that is not the meaning, and the philosophy of history takes no direct account of such applications.

The question with which the philosophy of

history is primarily concerned is simply this: Is it possible to discern in the course of history a meaning and a purpose? When we look at the past, spread out as from some point of vantage beneath the eye of the thinker, does it present itself to us as a confused welter, a dim plain "where ignorant armies shock by night," a succession of episodes which lead nowhere, such as we sometimes experience in dreams? or is it, on the other hand, a drama of which we can trace the plan, appraise the significance, and to some extent conjecture the conclusion?

The conditions under which this question has to be answered are, in a rough analogy, these. We come into the theatre while the action is in progress. We do not even know beforehand whether it is a drama or only a series of tableaux. We receive from our neighbour, a moderately intelligent person, a whispered account of what has gone before—that may serve to suggest to some extent the difficulties and uncertainties of recovering the past from history; we watch the stage for a little while, and we have to leave before the close. From what we see, and from our neighbour's fragmentary account, we have to conjecture whether it be a drama or no, and, if so, what is its meaning and purpose.

Of course, if on other grounds we believe in a Divine all-ruling Providence, we have at once,

a priori, a principle of unity and purpose in history. But that is not philosophy of history in the strict sense. It approximates thereto so soon as we begin to confirm or illustrate this belief by reference to the facts. In this sense we find the germ of a philosophy of history in the prophets—when Amos, for example, tells us that God has not only brought up Israel out of Egypt, but the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Amos ix. 7); when Cyrus is described in Isaiah xliv. 28 as the shepherd of the Lord; or when a scheme of world-history is laid down in Daniel ii.; and still more consciously and explicitly in St. Paul's address at Athens. Augustine, of course, shares with these thinkers their *a priori* belief in Providence. What gives him a claim to be considered a pioneer of the philosophy of history in the stricter sense is the comprehensive way in which he attempts to illustrate and confirm his thesis from the facts, by outlining, from this point of view, the whole history of the world so far as known to him.

The juncture in the history of the world at which the attempt was made lends to it a peculiar interest, and certainly enhances our respect for Augustine's boldness as a thinker. *A priori* one would have said that the most probable moment for such an attempt to be made by a Christian thinker would have been when Constantine

established Christianity as the religion of the Empire. At the moment when the attempt was actually made by Augustine the world was still ringing with the fall of a professedly Christian Rome.

This disaster was, in fact, used as an argument against Christianity. The pagans asserted, and the half-hearted were inclined to believe, that so long as Rome had worshipped her ancient gods, she had prospered; since she had turned from them, these calamities had overtaken her. Augustine's friend Marcellinus, who was in touch with high government officials, some of whom were interested in Christianity, but whom he found impressed by these arguments, urged Augustine to write a refutation of them. At first Augustine thought a few letters would suffice, but the work grew on his hands till it became the great *De Civitate Dei*, in twenty-two books. The earlier books are devoted to answering the argument which attributed Rome's disasters to Christianity. It is answered by showing that calamities no less great had befallen her in the past, at a time when her old gods held undisputed sway.

So far this is merely an argument from historical fact; there is no question as yet of the philosophy of history. But Augustine seems to have felt that the negative argument derived

its real strength in the minds of the pagans from a deeper feeling, namely, that the old religions had on their side the prescription of antiquity; compared with them Christianity was an upstart. As against this, Augustine undertakes to show that the contrast of the two communities now represented by Christianity and Paganism lay in the plan of God from the first.

The form into which he throws the contrast is that of two "cities," but we must remember that while for us a city suggests primarily streets and buildings, the Latin *civitas* suggests primarily an organised community, and can indeed be used without any reference to a material city. The two contrasted communities come into being at the fall of the angels. Passing to humanity, we see the two communities incorporated in Cain and Abel; and after the murder of Abel, his place is taken by Seth as the head of the Divine community. The constitutive principles of these two communities were respectively the love of God in the one, and the love of self or earthly goods in the other. From that point onward Augustine sketches the history of the two communities side by side. With Abraham begins a clear prophetic reference to the consummation of the Divine community in Christianity. Of this, Israel is the type and shadow, and Augustine follows its history right down to the

coming of Christ and the establishment of His Church. Over against Israel he sets as the embodiment of the earthly community the Assyrian Empire. Here he supplements the Old Testament from such other sources as are known to him,[1] and tells us that the Assyrian Empire comprised all Asia with the single exception of India (*De Civ.* xvi. 17). Assyria was the Rome of the East; other nations and kingdoms are but as appendages to these. Of the western countries prior to the rise of Rome only Greece calls for mention, because of her fame in the arts and sciences.

When the power of Assyria was waning, Rome was founded—Rome destined to be the new head and fullest embodiment of the earthly city, especially in its persecution of the heavenly city, namely, the Christian Church. Nevertheless the heavenly city is confident, looking to its end, an eternal life of blessedness, which, true to its character as the "city" of God, is still thought of as social in character.

Of course, this brief abstract gives no idea of the fulness and richness and, it must be said, the bewildering multiplicity of detail in Augustine's treatment. It has hardly even, I am afraid, shown us clearly where we are to

[1] For the East chiefly Justinus, the Epitomiser or Excerptor of the historian Trogus Pompeius, whom he names in *De Civ. Dei* iv. 6.

look for the unity which Augustine finds in history. But this may now be pointed out.

There is, in fact—if it be not a contradiction to say it—more than one kind of unity suggested, or, to put it better, the unity is envisaged from more than one point of view. There is first what may be called a transcendental unity. The two communities, in their opposition, both belong to the plan of God; together they constitute a revelation, in face of which we may say with the Apostle, "Behold the goodness and the severity of God." The evil of the world is made subservient to the plan of God. Here Augustine makes use of an aesthetic conception. As the shadows, as well as the lights, go to make a picture, so the world, even with sinners, is beautiful (xi. 23).

But alongside of these conceptions, which belong to theology and metaphysics, there is the more genuinely historical conception that the nations, even those summed up in the earthly city, make their contribution to progress. This is not much worked out, except in the case of Rome. Augustine does, of course, refer to the intellectual achievements of Greece, but he has nothing so fine in this connexion as Clement of Alexandria's saying that philosophy was the "covenant of the Greeks." But he has a large appreciation of the civilising influence of Rome.

He valued the *pax Romana* with its order and organisation. "Rome," he says, "by which God was pleased to conquer the whole world, and subdue it far and wide, by bringing it into one fellowship of government and laws"; and again: "While Herod therefore reigned in Judea, and Caesar Augustus was Emperor at Rome, *the world being set at peace by him*, Christ was born in Bethlehem. . . ." (xviii. 22, 46).

Yet another principle of unity—again not fully worked out—is suggested by his representation of the success, the temporal greatness, of Rome as a kind of survival of the ethically fittest. The virtues of the Romans had not, indeed, the true root of love to God, but yet they did recognise that the way to honour was virtue, "for they built in very close proximity the temples of Virtue and Honour, worshipping as gods the gifts of God." . . . "And God granted to this nation such men as, for the sake of honour and praise and glory, consulted well for their country, in whose glory they sought their own, and whose safety they did not hesitate to prefer to their own, suppressing the desire for wealth and many other vices for this one vice, namely, the love of praise." And so they had their reward. "By all these means . . . they pressed on to honours, power, and glory; they were honoured among almost all nations; they imposed the laws of their Empire upon

many nations; and at this day, both in literature and history, they are glorious among almost all nations. They have no reason to complain against the justice of the true God—'they have their reward'" (vv. 12-15).

There are several other directions in which Augustine threw out suggestions which have been regarded as fruitful.

The idea of development appears under the interesting form of a parallel between the life of the race and that of the individual. This is a favourite idea with Augustine, appearing, for example, in a quite early work, the *De Vera Religione* (§ 50), where he speaks of "the whole human race, whose life from Adam up to the end of the age may be compared to the life of a single individual." And he applies to the race the divisions of life, the successive ages seen in the individual. Sometimes this takes the simpler form of three ages—childhood, manhood, and old age, the first being before the law, the second under the law, the third under grace. Sometimes he has a more elaborate division into six ages. These are, in the individual, infancy, childhood, youth, early manhood, later manhood, old age. In the race, the period of infancy extends from Adam to Noah, childhood from Noah to Abraham, youth from Abraham to David, early manhood from David to the

captivity, later manhood from the captivity to the coming of Christ, and old age from the coming of Christ to the end of the world.

No special value can be attributed to the divisions as such; the significant thing about the analogy is that it is definitely associated with the two great principles of development and education.

The infancy of the race is the time when the physical predominates, as shown in the giant size and protracted life of primeval man.

The age of early manhood was the age of the kings and prophets, a time of vigour and splendour.

As regards the time of Christ's coming being that of man's old age, he points out that old age does not in the race, as in the individual, necessarily mean declension of vigour, and makes the analogy to consist in the fact that in this age the inner life takes precedence of the outward; so it should be a time of spiritual renewal and putting off of the old man (*Retract.* i. 26; *De Gen. c. Manich.* i. 40).

As regards the educational analogy, Augustine has himself distinctly stated it thus in the *De Civitate*, x. 14: "The education of the human race, represented by the people of God, has advanced like that of an individual through certain epochs, as it were, or ages, so that it

might gradually rise from earthly to heavenly things, and from the visible to the invisible."

A curious and interesting, though not wholly satisfactory, application of this educational principle is his reference to the value of Roman patriotism as an example for the citizens of the city of God. "And therefore," he says, "it was not only for the sake of recompensing the citizens of Rome that her empire and glory had been so signally extended, but also that the citizens of that eternal city during their pilgrimage here might diligently and soberly contemplate these examples, and see what a love they owe to the supernal country on account of life eternal, if the terrestrial country was so much beloved by its citizens on account of human glory (v. 16)."

One would have welcomed a recognition that this training in patriotism, besides serving as an example to others, would tend to make those who subsequently became members of the heavenly city better citizens of that also. For it should be said, and this is perhaps the best place to say it, that the outward division between the heavenly and the earthly city, between, for example, Rome and the Church, is not absolute. Augustine recognises that there are always some members of the one within the external boundaries of the other. He gets rid, that is to say,

of the artificiality which is likely to arise from this external conception, by applying to both "cities" what we may perhaps conveniently describe in theological terminology as the conception of the visible and invisible Church.

We may now turn to Augustine's views on Politics, understood, of course, in the wider sense of the theory of the State.

The social instinct, the impulse to form some kind of community within which there shall be peace and concord, is the subject of an eloquent passage in the *De Civitate*, xix. 12. We cannot believe, he says, in the giant Cacus of whom Virgil tells, whose whole attitude towards the human race was one of pure enmity. "For even the most savage animals encompass their own species with a ring of protecting peace. For what tigress does not purr over her cubs and lay aside her ferocity to caress them? What kite, though he wheels solitary when he seeks his prey, does not take to himself a mate, build a nest, help to hatch out the brood and feed the nestlings? . . . How much more powerfully do the laws of man's nature move him to hold fellowship and maintain peace with all men, so far as in him lies; since even wicked men wage war for the peace of their own circle, and wish that if possible all men belonged to them, and that

all men and things might serve but one head, and might either through love or fear make an agreement of peace with him."

The primary unit of social life is the family (xix. 14). Domestic peace, he says, is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among citizens (xix. 13).

As regards the ruler, it is the Divine appointment that he should receive honour, even though his subjects may be better than he (*Enarr. in Ps.* cxxiv. 7). Augustine does not shrink from the consequences of this view. In *De Civitate* v. 21 he says boldly, "God who gave power to Augustus gave it also to Nero. He who gave it to the most benignant emperors, the Vespasians, father and son, gave it also to the cruel Domitian. He who gave it to the Christian Constantine gave it also to the apostate Julian." And the Christian is to obey even bad rulers, *except* when their commands come into direct conflict with his religion. "Julian," he says, "was an unbelieving Emperor, nay, he was an apostate, unjust, an idolater. There were Christian soldiers in the service of the unbelieving Emperor. Where the cause of Christ was at stake, they recognised only that Ruler who is in heaven. If the Emperor desired them to worship idols, to throw incense on their altars,

they put God before him; but when he said 'form line of battle,' or 'march against this or that nation,' they at once obeyed. They distinguished between the eternal ruler and the temporal; nay, indeed, it was for the sake of the eternal ruler that they were subject to the temporal" (*Enarr. in Ps.* cxxiv. 7).

In *Serm.* 62. 13 he uses the analogy that if a minor official commands something against the will of the proconsul, he is rightly to be disobeyed; if a proconsul commands something against the will of the Emperor, *he* is rightly to be disobeyed; similarly if the Emperor command something against the will of God, *he* is rightly to be disobeyed. For God is the Higher Power. This has the effect of making the civil powers a kind of hierarchy with God at its head.

The foundation of the State is, ideally, justice, though this has never been perfectly realised in any earthly state. A saying of Augustine's in this connexion has often been misquoted in the form that "great states are great robber-bands"; what he did say was that *without justice* states were great robber-bands; and what he had in mind in saying it was not primarily the outward relations, but the inner relations of such states. The point is that even a robber-band has a bond of cohesion, only it is an unsound one—self-interest instead of justice—

and that is the respect in which a state without justice resembles it (*De Civ. Dei*, iv. 4, cf. xix. 12).

There is an interesting passage in which he recognises that different forms of government may be appropriate to different national circumstances. It is cast in dialogue form, and we may give it as it comes, with its pleasantly Platonic flavour:

Augustine. First tell me whether the law which is outwardly promulgated is for the service of men in this present life.

Evodius. Manifestly it is; for of these men certainly nations and states consist.

Augustine. Well, then—are these men and nations so constituted that they cannot perish or change, and are truly eternal? Or are they mutable and subject to temporal vicissitude?

Evodius. Who can doubt that the human race is mutable.

Augustine. Therefore, if a people be self-restrained and serious, a faithful guardian of the common good, and every member of it be less concerned for his individual prosperity than for that of the whole; would not a law be justly passed whereby this people should be permitted to create its own magistrates, by whom its own wealth, namely, the commonwealth,[1] might be administered?

Evodius. Certainly it would be right.

Augustine. But now if this same people became gradually demoralised and preferred private interest

[1] "Sua res, id est publica."

to the common weal, and put up its vote for sale, and, corrupted by office seekers, committed the rule over itself to wicked and criminal persons; would it not then be right that if some good man arose of sufficient ability he should deprive this people of the power of bestowing office, and transfer authority to a few good men, or even to one?

Evodius. That also would be right (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 14).

Augustine is not, of course, here advocating the "sacred right of revolution." The passage is couched in an abstract philosophic vein. It is the desirability in certain circumstances of change, not the manner or practicability of it that he has in view.

Among Augustine's political views, one of the most far-reaching in its consequences, and, we may be permitted to think, one of the most regrettable, was his justification of persecution by the State on the ground of religious opinions. It is the more regrettable because it represents a change of opinion on his part.

In an early work against the Manichaeans, *Contra Epistolam Manichaei*, i. 1, he writes: "It behoves us to desire the better part, that we might attain our end in your correction, not by contention and strife and prosecutions, but by kindly consolation, by friendly exhortation, by quiet discussion; as it is written: 'The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be

gentle towards all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness opposing them that oppose themselves.' "

But in his African diocese he was brought into contact with heretics, or rather schismatics, of a harder temper than the Manichaeans. These were the Donatists, who laid claim to greater purity of principle and life than the Catholic Church, and denied the validity of the latter's sacraments. Their consequent practice of re-baptizing those who came over to them from the Catholic Church was, from the ecclesiastical point of view, the head and front of their offending, but relations were still further embittered by the bands of fierce fanatics—known as Circumcelliones—who espoused their cause, and subjected Catholics to the most aggravated personal violence.

The extent to which the Donatist leaders were responsible for these people was a moot point, and Augustine took up at the outset a conciliatory attitude. While he was still a presbyter, a case occurred in which a Donatist bishop had baptized a deacon who had "gone over." By so doing he had put himself within the grasp of the law, for re-baptism had been illegal since 373. But Augustine explicitly refuses to bring the law into operation against him, and is content to rely on argument. He

would have liked the Donatist to meet him in debate and attempt to justify his action. Failing that, he asks him to send a reply to his letter, in order that he may read both in the Church before the people. If the Donatist refuses even that, Augustine will at least read his own letter as a warning to his people. But, he adds, he will take good care not to do this in the presence of a detachment of Imperial soldiers who were temporarily in Hippo, but only after their departure, "that all who hear me may understand that I do not propose to *compel* men to embrace the communion of any party, but desire the truth to be made known to persons who, in their search for it, are free from disquieting apprehensions. On our side there shall be no appeal to the civil power; on your side let there be no intimidation by a mob of Circumcelliones" (*Ep.* 23. 7). This letter dates from 392.

As late as 403 we find him proposing to meet Donatist bishops in conciliatory conference. About this time, however, the excesses of the Circumcelliones took a more aggravated form. "Not content," says Augustine, "with beating us with bludgeons, and killing some with the sword, they even, with incredible ingenuity in crime, threw lime into our people's eyes to blind them."

In 404 the bishops met in council in Carthage

and resolved to petition the Emperor to put in practice retaliatory measures. They were amply justified in demanding protection from the violence of the Circumcelliones, but what they asked was that an existing law should be put in force which imposed a severe fine on every Donatist as such. Augustine, indeed, and his party favoured a restriction of the penalty to the districts where Donatist bishops did not take steps to repress the Circumcelliones. In this form it might be justified as an administrative expedient; but before the petition was actually presented, the Emperor, moved by the death of a bishop who had been maltreated by Donatist adherents, had resolved on sterner measures. The liability to the heavy fine was made universal, while the clergy were made liable to banishment.

It is evident that the civil arm was not called in without provocation; but it must be clearly pointed out that what ultimately led Augustine to approve of the principle of religious persecution was not the provocation given by the outrages of the Circumcelliones, but *the apparent success of the severe measures in bringing about the conversion of the Donatists.* Whole cities, he says, once Donatist, are now Catholic, vehemently detesting that diabolical schism, and ardently loving the unity of the Church. Therefore, so

ran the unfortunate inference, the part of love is to apply compulsion. "For if any one saw his enemy running headlong to destroy himself when he had become delirious through dangerous fever, would he not in that case be much more truly rendering evil for evil if he permitted him to run on thus, than if he took measures to have him seized and bound?" (*Ep.* 93. 2). And in the same connexion he appeals—certainly not in his best exegetical style—to the verse in Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in," which has, I suppose, been the favourite motto of persecutors ever since (*Ep.* 93. 5).

Having once adopted these principles, he is prepared to go to all lengths. We find him even writing to officials and men of influence to incite them to increased zeal in the enforcement of the penal laws (*Epp.* 89, 97).

On the other hand, it is to be said that he did his utmost to prevent a death sentence from being carried out, even in the case of certain Circumcelliones who were proved to have done to death two Catholic priests. He disliked the death sentence on principle, as cutting off the last hope of repentance, and he felt that it befitted the Church to show mercy and not demand a life for a life (*Ep.* 133). His theory might make him hard, but vengeful cruelty was not one of his natural temptations.

It has been worth while, I think, to trace in some detail the curious, gradual, and round-about course by which Augustine became a champion of persecution. First, the violence of the Circumcelliones makes repressive measures necessary, on grounds that would be recognised by any civil government, apart from any question of persecution or toleration. Then the severity appears to have a good effect—good not only for others but for the sufferers, and on that ground Augustine approves it, as being only the due severity of love; and so, tragically enough, takes his place in the line of development which leads to the tortures and burnings of the Inquisition; whereas had he remained firm in his earlier convictions, he might have stood forth as one of the earliest champions of religious liberty.

A subject which lies rather on the borderland between Politics and Social Ethics is that of the legitimacy or otherwise of *war*. Augustine has no doubt on this point. War would not have a place in an ideal state of things, but in present conditions it is legitimate. That is to say, there are just wars and unjust wars. "To carry on war and extend a kingdom over subjugated nations seems," he says, "to bad men to be felicity, to good men to be necessity. But

because it would be worse that the injurious should rule over those who are more righteous, therefore even that is not unsuitably called felicity. . . . If, therefore, by carrying on wars that were just, not impious or unrighteous, the Romans have been able to acquire so great an Empire, ought they not to worship as a goddess the Injustice of Foreigners?" (This is a hit at the Roman practice of assigning every possible quality and condition to a separate divinity.) "For we see that this has co-operated much in extending the Empire, by making foreigners so unjust that they became people with whom just wars might be carried on, and the Empire increased" (*De Civ. Dei*, iv. 15). There is irony here, of course, but it is directed against false pleas of justice, not against the idea of a just war as such.

Quite definitely in *Ep.* 138. 15 he says that, "If the Christian religion condemned wars of every kind, the command given in the Gospel to soldiers asking counsel as to salvation would be to cast away their arms and withdraw themselves wholly from military service . . . whereas the command to be content with their wages manifestly implied no prohibition to continue in the service."

This attitude in regard to war is the more remarkable as he takes the very strictest view

in regard to private homicide. Roman, like English, law treated it as justifiable homicide to slay a man in defence of one's life or honour. Augustine held it right that this should be permissible by the law of the land, but that a Christian ought not to avail himself of the permission. As we saw in a previous chapter, this is not due to a literalist interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.

He writes in answer to a questioner: "As to killing others in order to defend one's own life, I do not approve of this, unless one happens to be a soldier or a public functionary acting in defence of others" (*Ep.* 47. 5). Short of killing the aggressor, however, he would not object to the use of force. He goes on to say: "When, however, men are prevented, by being put in fear, from doing wrong, it may be said that a real service is done to themselves. The precept 'Resist not evil' was given to prevent us from taking pleasure in revenge . . . not to make us neglect the duty of restraining men from sin."

On what principle, then, does he hold that the Christian should not kill even in self-defence? The principle was this, that a Christian should not hold any temporal possession, even his life, so dear to him as to be willing to take another's in defence of it. As he puts it in *De Libero Arbitrio*, i. 13, it is not right to shed men's blood

for the sake of those things which we ought to despise.

This last passage has already brought us into touch with Augustine's Social Ethics, and we may now take one or two examples of his application of the Christian standards to some of the relations and problems of practical life.

It will give us, I think, the right point of view for appreciating his breadth and sanity, if we begin by recalling that his personal practice was of the strictest. He was an ascetic, eschewing marriage as a hindrance to the highest Christian life, and living along with his clergy a life of communistic semi-poverty.

This personal attitude gives piquancy to the liberality of some views not in themselves, or from a modern standpoint, very remarkable. There is perhaps no subject on which one might have expected him *a priori* to take a less adequate view than marriage; and of course, if any one expects to find in him as sound teaching, from the modern Protestant point of view, as in the Reformers, he will no doubt be disappointed. We have to remember the background. The absolute condemnation of marriage was, of course, only found in some heretical sects, but several of the Fathers taught that, but for the Fall, the human race would have been preserved

and multiplied by some other means. As against this, Augustine points out that the blessing upon marriage was given before men sinned, that the rearing of children might be recognised as belonging to the glory of marriage (*gloria connubii*), and not to the punishment of sin (*De Civ. Dei*, xiv. 21).

In the *De Bono Conjugali* (32) he says that the good of marriage is threefold — fidelity, posterity, and its sacramental significance. He fully recognises also the spiritual side of marriage. In fact, this was rather forced on his attention because he had to consider the nature of the bond in cases where both parties to the marriage, as sometimes happened in those days, adopted the ascetic life. So that he speaks with emphasis of the special relation of friendship which should characterise marriage (*ibid.* 3). The family, we have already seen, is, so to speak, the germ-cell of ethical life, where the children are "lovingly welcomed, kindly nurtured, conscientiously trained and educated" (*De Gen. ad Lit.* ix. 12).

Again, we should hardly expect an ascetic to have a high appreciation of the material goods of civilisation, of man's progress in shaping the external world to his purposes. But—setting aside the famous chorus in the *Antigone*—I hardly know where we should turn for a more

eloquent passage on this subject than the following: "What wonderful—one might almost say astounding—advances has human industry made in the arts of weaving and building, of agriculture and navigation! With what endless variety are designs in pottery, painting, and sculpture produced, and with what skill executed! What wonderful spectacles are exhibited in the theatres, which those who have not seen them can hardly credit! How skilful the contrivances for catching, killing, or taming wild beasts! And for the injury of men also how many kinds of poisons, weapons, engines of destruction, have been invented; while for the preservation and restoration of health the appliances and remedies are infinite. . . . To express and gain entrance for thoughts, what a multitude of signs there are, among which speaking and writing hold the first place. What ornaments has eloquence at command to delight the mind! What wealth of song is there to captivate the ear! How many musical instruments and strains of harmony have been devised! What skill has been attained in measures and numbers! With what sagacity have the movements and relations of the stars been investigated! Who could tell all the thought that has been spent upon nature, even though, despairing of recounting it in detail, he endeavoured only to give a general view of it?

In fine, even the defence of errors and misapprehensions, which has illustrated the genius of heretics and philosophers, cannot be sufficiently declared" (*De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 24).

Of course he does not approve of all these activities equally. He expressly says that some of them are dangerous and some superfluous. But the note of honest pride in human achievement is unmistakable. If this ascetic "despised the world," it was not with an ignorant contempt.

If we ask what is the right attitude of the individual towards temporal goods, the answer is that they are to be *used*, but not *enjoyed*. This does not mean that we are painfully to eschew any feeling of satisfaction in the use of them. The equivalent in modern religious terminology would be that they are not to be "loved." In fact, Augustine himself gives the definition: "To enjoy a thing is to rest with love on it for its own sake" (*De Doct. Christ.* i. 3, 4).

This brings us to speak of his views as to poverty and wealth. There is no merit, he holds, in poverty in itself. A humble rich man is better than a proud poor man, he says in *Serm.* 36. 7.

When the disciples exclaimed, "Who then can be saved?" after hearing Christ's saying about the rich man, had they forgotten that the

majority of men are poor? No, but they remembered that most poor men are at heart rich men, that is, they *desire* to be rich (*Quaest. in Evang.* xxvi.). It is a matter not of possessions but of attitude. "You see," he says, in *Serm.* 14. 5, "that though poverty abounds, it takes some searching to find a real poor man." Apparently there were in his day a good many poor men who boasted of their poverty, and affected to despise their richer brethren. He reminds them with a touch of his usual humour that while Lazarus was a poor man, his reward was to be received into the bosom of Abraham, who was a rich one. If they hope for the same reward, they had better not begin by slandering Abraham!

He regards inheritance of property as permissible, and he refused to accept for the Church property of which a son had been disinherited. "Any one," he says, "who wishes to disinherit his son and make the Church his heir, may look for some one else to receive his benefaction, and not Augustine." It is one of the few passages where he names himself. "Nay, God willing," he adds, "he will find no one to receive it." And he applauds the action of Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, who in a case where a childless man had made a donation of his property to the Church, and subsequently had children born to

him, restored the property without being asked to do so (*Serm.* 355. 5).

His views in regard to Charity—in the modern sense—are interesting, especially in view of the immense stress laid on almsgiving in those days.

The command, "Give to every man that asketh of thee," is not to be taken literally. "Am I," he asks, "to give to a man that he may consume it upon his lusts?" You are to give him what will do no hurt either to him or to you. Sometimes the best thing you can "give" an unworthy beggar is a rebuke; as Our Lord, when some one asked of Him that He would make his brother divide the inheritance, gave him a warning against covetousness (*In Serm. Dom.* i. 67; *Serm.* 359. 3).

And there is a very interesting passage about not giving to satisfy our own feelings, the force of which I think I may bring out by first quoting a few sentences from an article in a modern Review: "If your heart is touched by misfortune, that is no virtue in you, but only a natural physiological reflex; if you respond by casual almsgiving, that is only a natural human weakness; but it is the intelligent preoccupation of your mind with the misfortunes that your heart has pointed out to you which constitutes at once the difficulty and the strength of sustained

social endeavour" (*Cambridge Review*, January 1913, p. 206).

Augustine is equally emphatic that we are not to act merely to satisfy emotion. In his work on Christian Morals he writes: "Hence those who seasonably and wisely supply all things required for the warding off these evils and distresses [he has mentioned above food, shelter, clothing, medicine] are called compassionate, although they may have been so wise that no painful feeling disturbed their mind in the exercise of compassion. . . . Still the epithet compassionate is a proper one, although he acts with tranquillity of mind, not from the stimulus of painful feeling, but from motives of benevolence." [1]

We are apt to think that what is sometimes called the "Gospel of Work" is a modern discovery. Augustine, however, has a high estimate of its ethical value. One of his short treatises is called "Concerning Work for Monks." It was called forth by the fact that some African monks claimed that the life of the cloister should be wholly contemplative, and that no manual tasks should be undertaken. Augustine wrote

[1] The analogy must not be pressed too far. Augustine when he wrote this passage was probably still somewhat under the influence of the Stoic condemnation of any "perturbatio"; and in the *Retract.* i. 7. 4 he remarks, practically, that no one ever really is so free from feeling.

to bring them to a better mind. He uses some sharp language about those who "would fain make idleness the patroness of piety." He points to the example and precept of St. Paul, and suggests that if nothing whatever is to call them from their prayers it seems hardly logical to pause for meals! (*De Opere Monachorum*, 20). If he held work necessary to men's spiritual well-being in the cloister, it goes without saying that he held it to be necessary in the world.[1] Indeed, in one of the passages where he admits the legitimacy of inheritance he clearly implies that a man is none the worse for having to earn his own living (*Serm.* 86. 9 *fin.*).

His economic attitude in general is interesting. Gains from business (as well as from handicrafts) are allowable (*Serm.* 177. 5),[2] and, in his lively preaching style, in a sermon on Ps. 70, § 17, he makes the merchant himself explain the legitimate basis of his gains: "See now, says the merchant, I bring merchandise from a distance to places in which the goods which I bring are not found, and in order that I may live, I ask as a reward for my labour that I may sell dearer than I have bought. Does not

[1] There is an interesting passage about Adam's work in Paradise, *De Gen. ad Lit.* viii. 15 ff.

[2] In the Middle Ages the Church was inclined to look askance on the profits of the trader, partly from a want of the clearness of thought which Augustine shows in the passage quoted.

the Scripture say that he who works is worthy of his reward?" In the *De Trinitate*, xiii. 6, he tells a good story of an actor who drew an immense crowd by promising that he would tell them what was the secret wish of every man's heart, and when he made his great revelation, it was this: that every man wished to buy cheap and sell dear!

Augustine, however, declares that he has known cases to the contrary, and tells how he himself had known an honest collector. He was offered a manuscript at much below its value, and instead of taking advantage of the vendor's ignorance, gave him the just price.

These examples, which have illustrated mainly the interest, from the modern point of view, of Augustine's social ethics, may be fittingly concluded with a passage in which he insists on the power of a Christian public opinion, and the responsibility of putting it in operation. It occurs in a sermon preached in a town where a riot had lately taken place, in which some unpopular official had been killed. Augustine gives an impressive warning against such attempts at reform by assassination, and touches very effectively upon that sense of irresponsibility which goes with mob violence. "How ready men are to say, 'What the people has done it has done; who is to punish a whole people?' 'Who is

there ? ' you say. Have you forgotten God ? God is not afraid of a mob (*Deus non timet turbas*) ! "

This will indicate the circumstances in which he makes the following appeal : " But it is not enough that you should not yourselves have a hand in it ; it is not enough that you should be sorry for it ; unless you do what in you lies to prevent such action by the populace. I do not say, brethren, that any one of you can go out and restrain the people. . . . But let each of you in his own home restrain his son, his slave, his friend, his client, his dependant. Use your influence with them to prevent them from doing such things. Persuade such as you can persuade, and in the case of those over whom you have authority, exercise constraint. I am well aware, and you are well aware, that there is in this place not a single household in which there are not some Christians ; there are many in which there is not a single pagan. Nay, on careful examination you will find no household in which there is not a majority of Christians. That is true ; I see you assent to it. You see, then, that the bad deeds cannot be done if the Christians will not permit them. There is no denying that. Secret misdeeds can be done ; but public crimes are impossible if the Christians oppose them " (*Serm.* 302. 19, 20).

The nature of these detached studies makes any summing up unnecessary. It is possible that they may have introduced some readers to St. Augustine; to others they may have offered a new point of view. If in either case the result is an increase of interest in a great man and great teacher, whose appeal is somewhat unnecessarily restricted by the fact that he is thought of as belonging to the supposedly dull subject of Ecclesiastical History, their purpose will have been fulfilled.

THE END

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