

THE  
LIFE AND LABOURS OF  
ST. AUGUSTINE.

A HISTORICAL SKETCH.

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D.

Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.  
*Aug. Confess. i. 1.*

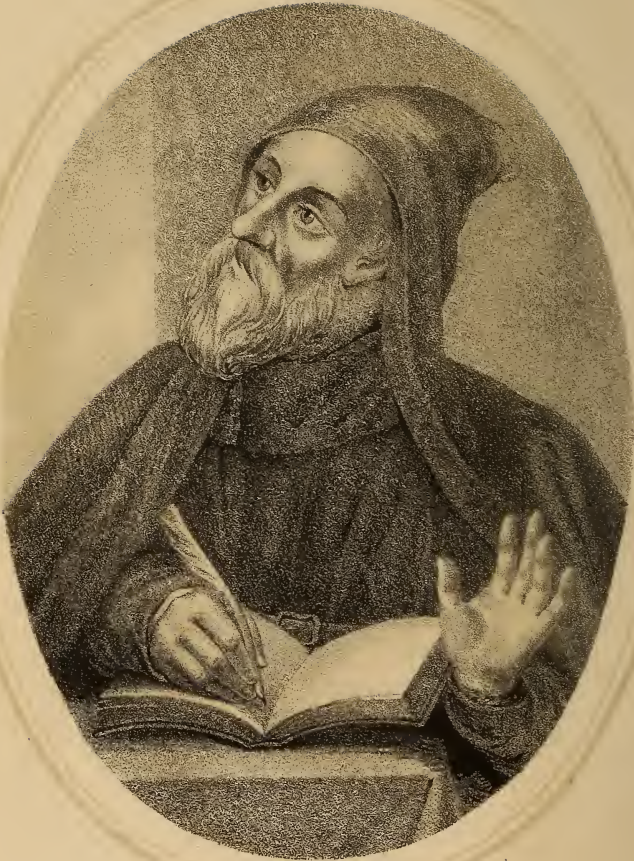


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OF  
ST. AUGUSTINE.



AUGUSTINE.

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## PREFACE.

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ST. AUGUSTINE is acknowledged on all hands to be one of the greatest and best men that adorn the history of the Christian Church. The piety of his tender years, the theoretical and practical aberrations of his youth and early manhood, his wanderings through the wilderness of heresy and scepticism, his constant burning thirst after God, the only true and living God, his painful mental and moral conflicts in the search of truth and peace, his striking and thorough conversion, his commanding position as a bishop and divine, his invaluable services to the Church of his age, the number, character, and influence of his writings upon the later fathers, the schoolmen and mystics of the Middle Ages, the Reformers of the sixteenth, and the Jansenists of the seventeenth century, and the veneration in

which he is still held to this day both by the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Church :— all this clothes his life with a peculiar interest, not only to the professional theologian, but also to every intelligent Christian.

A faithful, clear, and popular account of such a man is still a desideratum in our literature. The biography, which we here present to the public, is conscientiously derived from the original sources, especially Augustine's own "Confessions," one of the most edifying books ever written ; but to make it accessible to the general reader, we have omitted the critical apparatus, and all those minute expositions of his philosophical and theological system, which are only interesting to the learned divine.

May the Lord bless this humble sketch of one of His most devoted and useful servants, to the benefit of His people !

PH. S.

LONDON, *March*, 1854.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
AUGUSTINE'S YOUTH . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II.	
AUGUSTINE AMONG THE MANICHAEANS . . . . .	10
CHAPTER III.	
AUGUSTINE IN ROME.—HIS SCEPTICISM . . . . .	19
CHAPTER IV.	
AUGUSTINE IN MILAN.—AMBROSE AND THE CHURCH.—MONICA'S ARRIVAL . . . . .	24
CHAPTER V.	
AUGUSTINE'S STRUGGLES.—STUDY OF PLATO AND THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL . . . . .	37
CHAPTER VI.	
AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION . . . . .	46
CHAPTER VII.	
AUGUSTINE'S SOJOURN IN THE COUNTRY.—HIS ACTIVITY AS AN AUTHOR.—HIS RETURN TO MILAN, AND BAPTISM . . . . .	55

	PAGE
CHAPTER VIII.	
HOMeward JOURNEY TO AFRICA.—MONICA'S DEATH . . . . .	63
CHAPTER IX.	
SHORT STAY IN ROME.—WRITINGS AGAINST THE MANICHAEANS. —RESIDENCE AT TAGESTUM.—APPOINTMENT AS PRIEST AND BISHOP. . . . .	71
CHAPTER X.	
AUGUSTINE'S DOMESTIC LIFE AND ADMINISTRATION OF HIS EPISCOPAL OFFICE . . . . .	74
CHAPTER XI.	
THE LAST YEARS OF AUGUSTINE'S LIFE.—HIS DEATH . . . . .	79
CHAPTER XII.	
AUGUSTINE'S WRITINGS . . . . .	82
CHAPTER XIII.	
THE SIGNIFICANCE AND INFLUENCE OF AUGUSTINE ON HIS OWN AND SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS . . . . .	89

# THE LIFE AND LABOURS

OF

## ST. AUGUSTINE.

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Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.

*Aug. Confess. i. 1.*

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### CHAPTER I.

#### AUGUSTINE'S YOUTH.

AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, the most original, spirited, profound, and influential of the Church Fathers, was born on the 13th of November, 353, at Tagestum, in Numidia. His father was a member of the city council, and an irritable, sensual man, but at the same time kindly disposed. Although he remained a heathen until shortly before his death, he did not, as it appears, lay any obstruction in the Christian course of his wife. Monica, the mother of Augustine, is counted among the most noble and pious women, who adorn the temple of Church-history. She had rich gifts of mind and heart, which were developed



by an excellent Christian education, and dedicated to the Saviour. To the violent temperament of her husband she opposed an angelic meekness, and, when the outburst was over, reproached him so tenderly, that he was always shamed, which, had it been done sooner, would only have fed the unhallowed fire. His conjugal infidelity she bore with patience and forgiving love. Her highest aim was to win him over to the faith, not so much by words, as by a truly humble and godly conversation, and the most conscientious discharge of her household duties. In this she was so successful, that, a year before his death, he enrolled himself among the catechumens, and was baptized. To her it was not a necessity only, but the greatest pleasure also, to read the Holy Scriptures, and to attend church regularly every morning and evening, "not," as Augustine says, "to listen to vain fables, but to the Lord, in the preaching of his servants, and to offer up to Him her prayers." She esteemed it a precious privilege to lay on the altar each day a gift of love, to bestow alms on the poor, and to extend the rites of hospitality to strangers, especially to brethren in the faith. She brought up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For thirty years she prayed for the conversion of her distinguished son, until at last, a short time before her death, after manifold cares and burning tears, in the midst of which she never either murmured against God or lost hope, she found her prayers answered beyond her expectations. She has become a noble example for mothers; and, as Augustine boasts of her, bare

her children spiritually with greater pains than she brought them forth naturally into the world.\*

From such parents sprang our church-father. Strong sensual passions he inherited from his father; but from his mother those excellent gifts of mind and heart, which, though long perverted, were at last reclaimed by the regenerating grace of God, and converted into an incalculable blessing to the Church of all ages. He had also a brother, by the name of Navigius, and a widowed sister, who presided over a society of pious women till the day of her death.

Augustine says, that with his very mother's milk his heart sucked in the name of the Saviour, which became so firmly lodged there, that nothing that did not savour of that name, however learned and attractive it might otherwise be, could ever fully charm him. He early lisped out prayers to God, whose all-embracing love revealed itself to his childish spirit. It is true, indeed, that these germs of piety were overgrown by the weeds of youthful vice and impure lusts, but were never wholly smothered. Even in the midst of his farthest theoretical and practical wanderings, he still heard the low, sad echo of his youthful religious impressions, was attended by the guardian genius of his praying mother, and felt in the

\* Confess. l. v. c. 9. Non enim satis eloquor, quid erga me habebat animi, et quanto majore sollicitudine me parturiebat spiritu, quam carne perpererat. Likewise l. ix. c. 8: quae me parturivit, et carne, ut in hanc temporalem, et corde, ut in aeternam lucem nascerer.

depths of his noble spirit the pulse-beat of that strong desire after God, to which, in the opening of his "Confessions," he gives utterance in the incomparable words: "Thou, God, hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless, until they rest in Thee."\*

He was sent to school at an early age, with the hope,—on the part of his father, that he might become distinguished in the world,—on that of his mother, "because she thought the common scientific studies might not only prove innocent, but also in some degree useful in leading him afterwards to God." Elementary instruction and mathematics were, however, too dry for the boy, and he was, in consequence, severely punished by his teachers. Play was his chief delight. In order to shine as the first among his companions, he even cheated them; and, for the purpose of providing himself with play-things, or of gratifying his appetites, he went so far as to steal from the store-room and the table of his parents. At public shows he passionately crowded himself into the front ranks of the spectators. And yet for all this he had to endure the reproaches of conscience. On one occasion, when, seized by a violent cramp in the stomach, he believed his last hour had come, he earnestly begged to be baptized; but, after his mother had made the necessary preparations, he grew better, and the baptism, according to the notions of the age, was postponed, lest this precious

\* Confess. l. i. c. 1. Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.

means for the washing away of past sins might be rendered vain by the contraction of new guilt, in which case no other remedy was to be found. At a later period he thought it would have been far better for him, had he been early received by baptism into the communion of the Church, and thus placed under her protecting care.

His dislike for learning ceased, when Augustine passed over from rudimentary studies into the grammar-school. The poet Virgil, especially, charmed his fancy, and filled him with fresh enthusiasm. With the deepest interest he followed Æneas in his wanderings, and shed tears over the death of Dido, who slew herself for love, whilst at the same time, as he tells us, he ought to have mourned over his own death in estrangement from God.\* The wooden horse full of armed warriors, the burning of Troy, and the shade of Creusa were continually before his soul. The Grecian classics were not so much to his taste, because his defective knowledge of the language, which he never had the patience to acquire, prevented the enjoyment of their contents. By his gift of lively representation and brilliant oratorical talent, he made a figure in the school, and awakened in the hearts of his parents the fondest hopes. His father destined him to the then highly respectable and influential office of a rhetorician,

\* Conf. i. 13. Quid enim miserius misero non miserante se ipsum, et flente Didonis mortem, quae fiebat amando Æneam, non flente autem mortem suam, quae fiebat non amando Te, Deus, lumen cordis mei, et panis oris intus animae meae, et virtus maritans mentem meam, et sinum cogitationis meae?

or public teacher of oratory. For further improvement he sent him to the larger neighbouring city of Madaura, where Heathenism still held almost exclusive sway. His residence there was probably injurious to him in a moral point of view.

In the sixteenth year of his age he returned home, in order to prepare himself, in as cheap a manner as possible, for the university of the metropolis of Northern Africa. But, instead of growing better, he entered upon the path of folly, and plunged into the excesses of sensuality. His mother earnestly exhorted him to lead a chaste life; but he was ashamed to heed the exhortation of a woman. This false shame drove him even to pretend frequently to crimes which he had never committed, so as not to seem to fall behind his comrades. He himself confesses, "I was not able to distinguish the brighter purity of love from the darkness of lust. Both were mingled together in confusion: youth in its weakness, hurried to the abyss of desire, was swallowed up in the pool of vice." Yet, amid these wild impulses it was not well with him. That longing after God, so deeply rooted in his soul, asserted its power again and again. He became more and more discontented with himself, and after every indulgence felt an inward pang. The guiding hand of the Lord mixed in the cup of his enjoyment "the wholesome bitterness, that leads us back from destructive pleasure, by which we are estranged from God."

In his seventeenth year, the same in which his father died, he entered the High School of Carthage, supported

by his mother and the richest citizen of Tagestum, Romanianus, who was a distant relative. Certainly Monica did not see him depart for the great and voluptuous city without fear and trembling; but she was not willing now to interrupt the career of her son, and she knew Him who is stronger than all temptation, and listens to the prayer of the righteous. In Carthage, Augustine studied oratory and other sciences, astrology even, and raised himself to the first rank by his talent. This increased his ambition and fed his pride. With his morals it fared badly. He consorted with a class of students who sought their honour in deriding good morals, and called themselves "Destroyers." Although their rough and vulgar doings were peculiarly disagreeable to a nature so noble as his, yet their society must have exerted over him a pernicious influence. He frequently visited also the tragic theatre, "because it was always," says he, "filled with pictures of my misery, and tinder for my desires." In his eighteenth year he took up with a woman, with whom he lived thirteen years without marriage, and was faithful to her. She bore him a son, Adeodatus, whose promising gifts gave his father much joy, but he died at an early age.

Meanwhile, beneath this rushing stream of external activity, the soul of Augustine sighed after redemption. His ardent thirst for something ideal and enduring, first of all showed itself in the study of the "Hortensius" of Cicero, which came up regularly in the course of his education. This lost volume contained an encouragement



to true philosophy, and gave the direction, in its study, to aim at truth only, and, above all, to hail her footsteps with enthusiasm, and without regard to the interests of party. This roused the young man to an earnest struggle after truth. "This book," says he, "transformed my inclinations, and turned my prayers to Thee, O God, and changed my wishes and my desires. Every vain hope was extinguished, and I longed, with an incredible fervour of spirit, after the immortality of wisdom; I began to raise myself, that I might return to Thee. I studied this book again and again, not for the refinement of my language, nor for aid in the art of speaking, but in order that I might be persuaded by its doctrine. O how I burned, my God, how I burned, to fly back from the things of earth to Thee! and I knew not what Thou hadst designed with me: for with Thee is wisdom; and these writings excited me toward love, toward wisdom, toward philosophy. And this particularly delighted me, that I was not asked therein to love, to seek, to attain, and to hold in firm embrace, this or that school, but Wisdom alone, as she might reveal herself. I was charmed and inflamed." But this volume contained one blemish,—the name of Christ was not there;—such a secret power did this name, imprinted on his tender, youthful soul, exert over him, even during his wanderings.

In this thirst after truth, he laid hold of the records of revelation, that holy Book to which his mother clung with such reverent devotion. But there was yet a great gulf fixed between him and the Bible. In order to be

understood, it requires a humble, childlike disposition. To the proud in spirit it is a book with seven seals. The natural man perceives not the things that belong to the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned. Augustine was not yet acquainted with the depth of his corruption, which the Holy Scriptures disclosed to him on every page. "They are they," he so beautifully says, "which thrive among the childlike; I refused to become a child, and thought myself great in my own presumption." He desired not Truth in her simple beauty, but arrayed in a specious garb of rhetoric, to flatter his vanity; he desired her not as a chaste virgin, but as a wanton harlot. Hence he now turned to the sect of the Manichaeans, who had the word "truth" always on their lips, but by this very means held their disciples captive in the circle of mere nature.



## CHAPTER II.

## AUGUSTINE AMONG THE MANICHAEANS.

THE Manichaeans, so called from their founder, the Persian Mani, or Manichaeus (277 A.D.), were a sect allied to the Gnostics. They blended together Heathenism and Christianity in a fantastic system, which they set up in rude opposition to Judaism and the Catholic Church. The ground-work of their doctrine is the Old Persian religion of Zoroaster, into which a few Christian elements are introduced in a distorted form. They were of course dualists: they taught, as Zoroaster, an original antagonism between God and matter, between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, between good and evil. Man stands in the middle between both these kingdoms; he has a spark of light in him, which longs after redemption, but at the same time is possessed of an original and substantially evil body, and, corresponding to it, a corrupt soul, which is to be gradually annihilated. To a certain degree they acknowledged Christ as a Saviour, but confounded Him with the sun, for they were accustomed to drag down the spiritual ideas of the Gospel into the sphere of natural life, and to these subjected every other signification. In the entire economy of nature, which, along with the perfume of the flower, sends the

miasmatic breath, and causes the gloomy night to succeed the clear day, they saw a conflict between these two kingdoms, in every plant a crucified Christ, an imprisoned spirit of light, which worked itself up from the dark bosom of the earth, and strove toward the sun. The class of the *perfect* among them durst slay or wound no animal, pluck no flower, break no stalk of grass, for fear of injuring the higher spirit dwelling in it. They regarded the whole Catholic Church as contaminated by Judaistic elements. Mani is the Paraclete promised by Christ, who is to restore again the true Church. They reproached the Catholic Christians for believing blindly, on mere authority, and for not elevating themselves to the stand-point of knowledge. They, the Manichaeans, thought themselves, on the contrary, in the possession of perfect knowledge, of Truth in her pure, unveiled form. The words, "truth," "science," "reason," never out of their mouths, were esteemed as excellent baits for strangers.

These lofty pretensions and promises to unravel all the riddles of existence, the longing after redemption characteristic of the system, its inward sympathy with the life of nature, the dazzling show of its subtle dialectics and polemics against the doctrines of the Church, and the ascetic severity of its course of life, explain the attractive power which it exerted over many of the more profound spirits, and the extensive propagation which it met with even in the West. We can readily imagine, how Augustine, taken up with his struggles after truth, but at the same time full of intellectual pride, as he then was,

should be won over by its delusive charms. He enrolled himself in the class of the *auditors*, or catechumens. His mother mourned over this new aberration, but was consoled by a dream, in which a shining youth told her that her son shall stand just where she shall stand. When she informed her son of it, he interpreted the dream as implying the speedy conversion of his mother to his side. "No, no," answered she; "it was not said to me: where he is, there shalt thou be also; but, where thou art, there shall he be also." Augustine confesses that this prompt reply made a greater impression on him than the dream itself. She was likewise comforted by a bishop, who, at a former period, had been himself a Manichæan. She begged him to convince her son of his error; but he thought disputation would be of no avail: she should only continue to pray for him, and gradually, of his own accord, through study and experience, he would come to a clearer understanding. "As sure as you live," he added, "it is not possible that a son of such tears should be lost." Monica treasured up these words as a prophetic voice from heaven.

For nine years, up to the twenty-eighth of his life, Augustine remained in connection with these heretics, led astray and leading others astray. The discovery of seeming contradictions in the doctrines of the Church, their polemics against the Old Testament, their speculations concerning the origin of evil, which they traced back to a primordial principle co-existent with God Himself, spoke to his understanding, whilst their symbolical interpretations of the varied aspects of nature addressed

his lively imagination. And yet for all this, the deepest want of his reason, in its struggle after unity, and of his longing soul, remained unsatisfied. At the time of the high church-festivals particularly, when all Christians flocked to the services of the altar, in order to die with the Lord, on Good Friday, and rise again with Him, on Easter morning, he was seized with a strong desire after their communion. He took no step toward entering the higher class of the initiated, or *elect*, among the Manichaeans, but devoted himself more zealously to those studies which belonged to his calling as a rhetorician.

After the completion of his course of study, he returned to Tagestum, in order to settle there as a teacher of rhetoric. He was master of every qualification for inspiring his scholars with enthusiasm; and many of them, especially Alypius, adhered to him through life with the most heartfelt gratitude.

About this time he lost a very dear friend, who, with an almost feminine susceptibility, had resigned himself to the commanding power of his creative intellect, and had even followed him into the mazes of Manichaeism. He was suddenly prostrated by a fever. Baptism was administered to him without his knowledge. Augustine, who was with him night and day, made a mock of it. But his friend, when he again became conscious, withstood him with an independence that he had never before exhibited. The empty shadow of a Christ, the sun, the moon, the air, and whatever else was pointed out by Manichaeism to the soul thirsting after salvation, could

now yield him no comfort, but the simple, childlike faith of the Catholic Church alone. In this faith he departed, when the fever returned with renewed violence. The death of this friend filled Augustine with inexpressible anguish. He had lived so much in him, that his own life seemed to be buried with him. Neither the splendour of light, nor the peaceful innocence of the flower-world, nor the joys of the banquet, nor the pleasures of sense, had any interest for him now; even his books for a long while lost their charms. "Everything I looked upon was death. My fatherland became a torment to me, my father's house a scene of the deepest suffering. Above all, my eyes sought after him; but he was not given back to me again. I hated everything, because he was not there. I had become a great enigma to myself." He afterwards saw how wrong it was to place such unbounded dependence on the creature. "O the folly," he laments, "of not knowing how to love men as men! O foolish man, to suffer what is human beyond due measure, as I then did!" "Blessed is he, O Lord, who loves Thee," are his inimitable words, "and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for thy sake. He alone loses no dear ones, to whom all are dear in Him, who can never be lost to us. And who is He, but our God, the God who made heaven and earth, and fills them all! No one loses Thee, but him who forsakes Thee."\* And yet we see, in this un-

\* Conf. iv. 9. *Beatus qui amat Te, et amicum in Te, et inimicum propter Te. Solus enim nullum carum amittit, cui omnes in illo cari sunt, qui non amittitur. Et quis est Iste, nisi Deus noster,*

controllable anguish, what a deep fountain of love was gushing in his bosom. Could this love only find its proper object, and be purified by the Spirit of God, what a rich ornament and source of blessing must it become to the Church! At the same time, this severe suffering reveals the internal weakness of the Manichæan dogmas, and of mere human wisdom. Its consolations cannot reach into the dark hours of trouble; its promises are convicted of falsehood at the brink of the grave. It is true, indeed, that this visitation to his soul passed by without waking him up from his sleep of sin. Still, the death-bed of his friend, which he could not banish from his memory, had certainly the effect of undermining his faith in the Manichæan system.

In consequence of this loss, which embittered his life in his native city, and impelled also by an ambitious desire for a distinguished career, Augustine went back to Carthage, and there opened a school of forensic eloquence. Amid new relationships, and in the society of new friends, his wounds were gradually healed, and he went forward in his accustomed path with success, though, at times, the recklessness of the students gave him great pain. He appeared also as an author, and published a large philosophical work on Fitness and Beauty (*de apto et pulchro*). For some time, yet, he adhered to Manichæism, until at last, in his twenty-ninth year, a crisis arrived. By degrees

*Deus, qui fecit coelum et terram, et implet ea, quid implendo ea fecit ea! Te nemo amittit, nisi qui dimittit. Et qui dimittit, quo it aut quo fugit, nisi a Te placido ad Te iratum?*



many doubts had arisen in his mind concerning the system. His confidence in the boasted sanctity of the Manichæan priesthood, the class of the *elect*, was shaken by the not unfounded rumour of secret vices, which held sway among them, under the hypocritical mask of peculiar, ascetic virtues. By the thorough study of philosophy, he obtained an insight into the many contradictions and untenable points of Manichæan speculation. The notion of evil as a substance co-eternal with God could not satisfy his spirit in its struggle after unity. The Manichæans were unable to solve his doubts, and, instead of attempting it, promised to introduce him to their famous bishop, Faustus of Mileve, a city in the north-western part of Numidia, who was then regarded as their oracle. Augustine himself was very desirous of becoming acquainted with him. This honour was at last granted. They met in Carthage. He discovered in him a brilliant orator, and a subtle dialectician, but at the same time a man of moderate culture, and without any depth or earnestness of spirit. He compares him to a cup-bearer who with graceful politeness presents a costly goblet without anything in it. "With such things," says he, in allusion to his discourses, "my ears were already satiated. They did not appear better because beautifully spoken, nor true because eloquent, nor spiritually wise because the look was expressive, and the discourse select. Thou, my God, hast taught me, in wonderful and hidden ways, that a thing should not seem true because portrayed with eloquence, nor false because

the breath of the lips is not sounded according to the rules of art; on the other hand, that a thing is not necessarily true because conveyed in rude, nor false because conveyed in brilliant, language; but that wisdom and folly are like wholesome and noxious viands;—both may be contained in tasteful or unadorned words, as they in rough or finely-wrought vessels.” In the private conversations which he held with Faustus, the latter could not answer questions of vital importance to the truth of the Manichaean system, and was obliged to resort to the Socratic confession of ignorance. But that did not agree well with the intellectual arrogance of this sect. Now, after their boasted champion had so sadly disappointed his expectations, Augustine resolved on breaking with the heresy, although he did not yet formally renounce his place among its adherents.

Before we go on with our church-father, let us take a glance at the connection between his wanderings and his later activity in the Church. The marvellous wisdom of God reveals itself especially in this, that he knows how to bring good out of evil, and makes even the sins and errors of his servants contribute to their own sanctification, and an increase of their usefulness. And yet by no means does this render wickedness excusable. To the question,—“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” the Apostle Paul answers with horror, “God forbid!” (Rom. vi. 1.) The wild, reckless life of Augustine prepared him to look, afterwards, in the light of grace, far down into the abyss of sin, into the thorough



corruption and ingratitude of the human heart. The bare thought of it must have deeply humbled him ; but the humility that can say with Paul, " I am the chief of sinners," is one of the most beautiful pearls in the crown of the Christian character, whilst spiritual pride and self-righteousness gnaw like worms at the root of piety. There is scarcely a church-father, who, in regard to deep, unfeigned humility, bears so much resemblance, or stands so near to the great Apostle, as Augustine. He manifests, in all his writings, a noble renunciation of self in the presence of the Most Holy, and his spirit goes forth in thankfulness to the superabounding grace, which, in spite of his unworthiness, had drawn him up out of the depths of corruption, and overwhelmed him with mercy. By his own painful experience he was also fitted to develop the doctrine of sin with such rare penetration and subtlety, as to refute completely the superficial theories of Pelagius, and thus to render an invaluable service to theology and the Church. Further, his theoretical aberration into Manichaeism fitted him to overthrow this false and dangerous system, and to prove by a striking example how fruitless the search after truth must be, outside of the simple, humble faith of the Church. Thus also was St. Paul, by his learned, Pharisaic education, better qualified than any other apostle for contending successfully against the false exegesis and legal righteousness of his Judaistic opponents.

## CHAPTER III.

## AUGUSTINE IN ROME.—HIS SCEPTICISM.

AFTER Augustine had lost faith in Manichaeism he found himself in the same situation as he was ten years before. There was the same longing after truth, but linked now with a feeling of desolation, a bitter sense of deception, and a large measure of scepticism. He was no longer at ease in Carthage. He hankered after new associations, new scenes, new fountains, out of which to drink the good so ardently desired.

This disposition of mind, in connection with a dislike for the rudeness of the Carthaginian students and the exactions of friends, made him resolve on a journey to Rome, where he ventured to hope for a yet more brilliant and profitable career as a rhetorician. Thus he drew nigher to the place where his inward change was to be decided. He endeavoured to conceal his resolution from his mother, who, in the meantime, was attracted to him. But she found out something about it, and wished either to prevent him from going, or to go with him. Augustine would listen to neither proposal, and resorted to a trick to carry out his plan. One evening, in the year 383, he went down to the sea-shore, in order to take ship near the place, where two chapels had been dedicated to

the memory of the great church-father and martyr, Cyprian. His mother suspected his design, and followed him. He pretended that he merely wished to visit a friend on board, and remain with him until his departure. As she was not satisfied with this explanation, and unwilling to turn back alone, he insisted on her spending at least that one night in the church of the martyr, and then he would come for her. Whilst she was there in tears, praying and wrestling with God to prevent the voyage, Augustine sailed for the coasts of Italy; and his deceived mother found herself the next morning alone on the shore of the sea. She had learned, however, the heavenly art of forgiving, and believing, also, where she could not see. In quiet resignation she returned to the city, and continued to pray for the salvation of her son, waiting the time when the hand of Supreme Wisdom would solve the dark riddle. Though meaning well, she this time erred in her prayer, for the journey of Augustine was the means of his salvation. The denial of the prayer was, in fact, the answering of it. Instead of the husk, God granted rather the *substance* of her petition in the conversion of her son. "Therefore," says he, "therefore hadst Thou, O God, regard to the *aim* and *essence* of her desires, and didst not do what she *then* prayed for, that thou mightest do for me what she *continually* implored."

After a prosperous voyage, Augustine found lodging, in the chief city of the world, with a Manichæan host, of the class of the *auditors*, and mingled also in the

society of the *elect*. He was soon attacked, in the house of this heretic, by a disease, to bring on which, the agonies of his soul, dissatisfaction with his course of life, remorse for the deception practised on his excellent mother, and home-sickness, may have contributed. The fever rose so high, that signs of approaching dissolution had already appeared, and yet Providence had reserved him for a long and active life. "Thou, O God, didst permit me to recover from that disease, and didst make the son of thy handmaid whole, first in body, that he might become one on whom Thou couldst bestow a better and more secure restoration."

Again restored to health, he began to counsel his companions against Manichaeism, to which before he had so zealously laboured to win over adherents. And yet he could not lead them to the truth. His dislike to the Church had rather increased. The doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God had become particularly offensive to him, as it is to all Gnostics and Manichaeans. He despaired of finding truth in the Church; yet scepticism could not satisfy him; and so he was tossed wildly between two waters that would not flow peacefully together. "The more earnestly and perseveringly I reflected on the activity, the acuteness, and the depth, of the human soul, the more I was led to believe that truth could not be a thing inaccessible to man, and came thus to the conclusion that the right path to its attainment had not hitherto been discovered, and that this path must be marked out by Divine authority. But now the question arose, what

this Divine authority might be, since, among so many conflicting sects, each professed to teach in its name. A forest full of mazes stood again before my eyes in which I was to wander about, and to be compelled to tread, which rendered me fearful.”

In this unsettled state of mind he felt himself drawn toward the doctrines of the Newer Academy.\* This system, whose representatives were Arcesilaus and Carneades, denied, in most decided opposition to Stoicism, the possibility of an infallible knowledge of the object; it could only arrive at a subjective probability, not truth. It was not possible for our church-father to rest content with a philosophy so sceptical. It only served to give him a deeper sense of his emptiness, and thus, in a negative manner, to pave the way for something better. A change in his external circumstances soon occurred, which hastened the great crisis of his life.

After he had been in Rome not quite a year, the prefect, Symmachus, the eloquent advocate of declining Heathenism, was requested to send an able teacher of rhetoric to Milan, the second capital of Italy, and the frequent residence of the emperor. The choice fell on Augustine. The recommendation of Manichaean patrons, and still more his trial-speech, obtained for him the honourable and lucrative post. He forsook Rome the

\* Conf. v. 10. Etenim suborta est etiam mihi cogitatio, prudentiores caeteris fuisse illos philosophos, quos Academicos appellant, quod de omnibus dubitandum esse censuerant, nec aliquid veri ab homine comprehendi posse decreverant.

more willingly, because the manners of the students in Rome did not please him. They were accustomed to leave one teacher in the midst of his course, without paying their dues, and go to another. With this removal to Milan, we approach the great crisis in the life of Augustine, when he was freed for ever from the fetters of Manichaeism and Scepticism, and became a glorious, never-to-be-extinguished light in the Church of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IV.

AUGUSTINE IN MILAN.—AMBROSE AND THE CHURCH.  
—MONICA'S ARRIVAL.

IN the spring of the year 384, Augustine, accompanied by his old friend Alypius, journeyed to Milan. The episcopal chair at that place was then filled by one of the most venerable of the Latin fathers, one who not only earned enduring honours in the sphere of theology, but also in that of sacred poetry and sacred music, and especially distinguished himself as an ecclesiastical prince, by the energetic and wise management of his diocese, and his bold defence of the interests of the Church, even against the emperor himself. Ambrose (for so this man was called) was born, at Treves, in the year 340, of a very ancient and illustrious Roman family. His father was governor of Gaul, one of the three great dioceses of the western Roman empire. When yet a little boy, as he lay sleeping in the cradle with his mouth open, a swarm of bees came buzzing around, and flew in and out of his mouth without doing him any injury. The father, astonished at the unexpected vanishing of the danger, cried out in a prophetic mood, "Truly, this child, if he lives, will turn out something great." A similar story is told of Plato. After the early death of the prefect, his



pious widow moved to Rome with her three children, and gave them a careful education. Ambrose was marked out for a brilliant worldly career, by men, but not by God. After the completion of his studies, he made his appearance as an attorney, and acquitted himself so well by his eloquent discourses, that Probus, the governor of Italy, appointed him his counsellor. Soon after, he conveyed to him the prefecture or vicegerency of the provinces of Liguria and Æmilia, in Upper Italy, with the remarkable words, afterwards interpreted as an involuntary prophecy,—“Go, and act, not as judge, but bishop.” Ambrose administered his office with dignity, justice, and clemency, and won for himself universal esteem.

The Milan Church was then involved in the giant-battle between Arianism, which denied the divinity of Christ, and Nicene orthodoxy, which maintained the essential equality of the Son with the Father. Auxentius, an Arian, had succeeded in driving into exile the Catholic bishop, Dionysius, and usurping the episcopal chair; but he died in the year 374. At the election of a new bishop, bloody scenes were to be apprehended. Ambrose thought it his duty, as governor, to go into the church and silence the uproar of the parties. His speech to the assembled multitude was suddenly interrupted by the cry of a child,—“Ambrose! Be bishop!” As swift as lightning the voice of the child became the voice of the people, who with one accord would have him and no other for their chief shepherd. Ambrose was confounded. He was then still in the class of the catechu-



mens, and hence not baptized, and had, moreover, so high an opinion of the dignity and responsibility of the episcopal office, that he deemed himself altogether unworthy of it and unfit for it. He resorted to flight, cunning, and the strangest devices in order to evade the call. But it availed nothing; and when now also the imperial confirmation of the choice arrived, he submitted to the will of God, that addressed him so powerfully through these circumstances. After being baptized by an orthodox bishop, and having run through the different clerical stages, he received episcopal ordination on the eighth day.

His friend Basil of Caeserea was highly rejoiced at the result. "We praise God," so he wrote, "that in all ages He chooses such as are pleasing to Him. He once chose a shepherd and set him up as ruler over his people. Moses, as he tended the goats, was filled with the Spirit of God, and raised to the dignity of a prophet. But in our days He sent out of the royal city, the metropolis of the world, a man of lofty spirit, distinguished by noble birth and the splendour of riches, and by an eloquence at which the world wonders, and who renounces all these earthly glories, and esteems them but loss, that he may win Christ, and accepts, on behalf of the Church, the helm of a great ship made famous by his faith. So be of good cheer, O man of God!"

From this time forward till the day of his death, which occurred on Good Friday of the year 397, Ambrose acted the part of a genuine bishop. He was the shepherd of the congregation, the defender of the oppressed, the watchman

of the Church, the teacher of the people, the adviser and reprover of kings in the highest sense of the word. He began by distributing his lands, his gold, and his silver, among the poor. His life was exceedingly severe and simple. He took no dinner, except on Saturdays, Sundays, and the festivals of celebrated martyrs. Invitations to banquets he declined, except when his office required his presence, and then he set an example of moderation. The day was devoted to the duties of his calling, the most of the night to prayer, meditation on Divine things, the study of the Bible and the Greek church-fathers, and the writing of theological works. He preached every Sunday, and in cases of necessity during the week also, sometimes twice a-day. To his catechumens he attended with especial care, but exerted an influence on a wider circle by means of his writings, in which old Roman vigour, dignity, and sententiousness, were united with a deep and ardent practical Christianity. He was easy of access to all,—to the lowest as well as to the highest. His revenues were given to the needy, whom he called, on this account, his stewards and treasurers. With dauntless heart he battled against the Arian heresy; and, as the Athanasius of the West, he helped Nicene orthodoxy to its triumph in Upper Italy.

Such was Ambrose. If any one was fitted for winning over to the Church the highly-gifted stranger who came into his neighbourhood, it was he. Augustine visited the bishop, not as a Christian, but as a celebrated and eminent man. He was received by him with paternal kindness,

and at once felt himself drawn toward him in love. "Unconsciously was I led to him, my God, by Thee, in order to be consciously led by him to Thee." He also frequently attended his preaching, not that he might be converted by him, and obtain food for his soul, but that he might listen to a beautiful sermon. The personal character and renown of Ambrose attracted him; the influence of curiosity was predominant; and yet it could not but happen that the contents of the discourses also should soon make an impression on him, even against his will. "I began to love him," says he, "not indeed at first as a teacher of the truth, which I despaired of finding in thy Church, but as a man worthy of my love. I often listened to his public discourses, not, I confess, with a pure motive, but only to prove if his eloquence were equal to his fame. I weighed his words carefully, whilst I had no interest in their meaning, or despised it. I was delighted with the grace of his language, which was more learned, more full of intrinsic value, but in delivery less brilliant and flattering, than that of Faustus. In regard to the contents, there was no comparison between them; for whilst the latter conducted into Manichæan errors, the former taught salvation in the surest way. From sinners, like I was then, salvation is indeed far off; yet was I gradually and unconsciously drawing near to it. For, although it was not my wish to learn *what* he said, but only to hear *how* he said it,—this vain interest was left me, who despaired of the truth,—still, along with the words, which I loved, there stole also into my spirit the substance, which I had

no care for, because I could not separate the two. And whilst I opened my heart to receive the eloquence which he uttered, the truth also, which he spake, found entrance, though by slow degrees.”\*

By this preaching, the Old Testament was filled with new light to Augustine. He had imbibed a prejudice against it from the Manichaeans. He regarded it as little else than a letter that kills. Ambrose unfolded its life-giving spirit by means of allegorical interpretation, which was then in vogue among the church-fathers, especially of the Alexandrian school. Its aim was, above all, to spiritualise the historical parts of the Bible, and resolve the external husk into universal ideas. Thus, gross violence was often done to the text, and things were dragged into the Bible which, to an unbiassed mind, were not contained there,—at least not in the exact place indicated. And yet this mode of interpretation was born of the spirit of faith and reverence, which bowed to the word of God as to an uncreated source of the most profound truths, and so far was almost always edifying. To Augustine, who himself used it freely in his writings, often to capriciousness, although he afterwards inclined rather to a cautious, grammatical, and historical apprehension of the Scripture, it was then very acceptable, and had the good effect of weaning him still farther from Manichaeism. He soon threw it aside altogether. But even the Platonist philosophers, whom he preferred to it, he would not blindly

\* Conf. v. 13, 14.

trust, because "the saving name of Christ was wanting in them," from which, according to that ineffaceable impression of his pious childhood, he could never imagine the knowledge of the truth separated.

We could suppose that he was now ready to cast himself into the arms of the Church, which approached him by a representative so worthy and so highly-gifted. But he had not yet come so far. Various difficulties stood in the way. To think of God as a purely spiritual substance gave him peculiar trouble. In this he was yet under the influence of Manichaeism, which clothed the spiritual idea of God in a garb of sense. Nevertheless he took a considerable step in advance. He enrolled himself in the class of the catechumens, to which he had already belonged when a boy, and resolved to remain there, until he could arrive at a decision in his own soul.\* He says of his condition at this time, that he had come so far already, that any capable teacher would have found in him a most devoted and teachable scholar.

Thus did our church-father resign himself to the maternal care of the communion, in which he had received his early, indelible, religious impressions. It could not happen otherwise than, after an honest search, he should at last discover in her the supernatural glory, which, to the offence of the carnal understanding, was concealed under the form of a servant. A man, possessed of his

\* Conf. v. 14. Statui ergo tam diu esse catachumenus in Catholica Ecclesia, mihi a parentibus commendata, donec aliquid certi eluceret, quo cursum dirigerem.

ardent longing after God, his tormenting thirst for truth and peace of mind, could obtain rest only in the asylum founded by God Himself, and see there all his desires fulfilled beyond his highest hopes.

The Church had just then emerged from the bloody field of these witnesses who had joyfully offered up their lives, to show their gratitude and fidelity to the Lord who had died for them. Their heroic courage, which overcame the world; their love, which was stronger than death; their patience, which endured the most unnatural tortures without a murmur, as a lamb led to the slaughter; and their hope, which burst out in songs of triumph at the stake and on the cross,—were yet fresh in her memory. Everywhere, altars and chapels were erected to perpetuate their virtues. From a feeling of thankfulness for the victory so dearly purchased by their death, and in the consciousness of an uninterrupted communion with the glorified warriors, their heavenly birth-days were celebrated.\* Whilst Heathenism, in the pride of its power, its literature, and its art, was falling into swift decay, the youthful Church, sure of her promise of eternal duration, pressed triumphantly forwards into a new era, to take possession of the wild hordes of the invading nations who destroyed the Roman empire, and communicate to them, along with faith in the Redeemer, civilisation, morality, and the higher blessings of life. The most noble and profound spirits sought refuge in her

\* So were the days of their death called.



communion, in which alone they could find rest for their souls, and quench their thirst after truth. She fearlessly withstood the princes and the potentates of earth, and reminded them of righteousness and judgment. In that stormy and despotic period, she afforded shelter to the oppressed, was a kind and loving mother to the poor, the widow, and the orphan, and opened her rich treasures to all who needed help. Those who were weary of life found in the peaceful cells of her monasteries, in communion with pilgrims of like spirit, an undisturbed retreat, where they could live at a trifling cost, and give themselves wholly up to meditation on Divine things. Thus she cared for all classes, and brought consolation and comfort into every sphere of life. She zealously persevered in preaching and exhorting, in the education of youth for a better world, in prayer and in intercession for the bitterest enemies, and in ascriptions of glory to the Holy Trinity. Her devotion concentrated itself on the festivals recurring yearly in honour of the great facts of the Gospel, especially on Easter and Whitsuntide, when multitudes of catechumens, of both sexes and all ages, clad in white garments, the symbol of purity, were received into the ranks of Christ's warriors, amid fervent prayers and animating hymns of praise. How glorious it must have been to behold the prince bowing with the peasant in baptism before their common Lord, and the famous scholar sitting like a little child, and to hear blooming virgins, "those lilies of Christ," as Ambrose calls them, make their vow before the altar, to renounce

the world and sin, and live for the heavenly Bridegroom! The activity of Ambrose was in this respect richly rewarded. He frequently had, on the solemn night before Easter, as many incorporated into the communion of the Church, by baptism, as any five other bishops together.

Hence it came, that the Church of that time was, still, in the highest and fullest sense of the word, an undivided unity, without excluding, however, the greatest diversity of gifts and powers. And this it was that enabled her to overcome so victoriously all heresies and schisms, all persecutions, and at last the collected might of Heathenism itself. "One body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,"—this declaration of the Apostle was more applicable to the first centuries of the Church than to any others since. The dweller on the Rhine found on the borders of the African desert, and the Syrian on the shores of the Rhine, the same confession of faith, the same sanctifying power, and the same ritual of worship. The Christian of the fourth century felt himself in living communion with all the mighty dead who had long before departed in the service of the same Lord. That age had no idea of an interruption in the history of God's kingdom,—a sinking away of the life-stream of Christ. From the heart of God and his Son it has rolled down from the days of the Apostles, through the veins of the Church-catholic, amid certain infallible signs, in one unbroken current, to the present, in order gradually to fertilise the whole round of earth, and empty itself into the ocean of eternity.



And yet we have just as little reason to think the Church, at that time, free from faults and imperfections, as at any other period. Some dream indeed of a golden age of untroubled purity. But such an age has never been, and will only first appear, at the coming of Christ in his glory. Even the Apostolic Church was, in regard to its membership, by no means absolutely pure and holy; for we need only read attentively and with unbiassed mind any Epistle of the New Testament, or the letters to the seven Churches in the Apocalypse, in order to be convinced, that they collectively reprov'd the congregations, to which they were sent, for various faults, excrescences, and perversions, and warned them of manifold dangers and temptations. When, moreover, through the conversion of Constantine, the great mass of the Roman heathen-world crowded into the Church, they dragged along with them also an amount of corruption, which it was not possible to overcome in a brief space of time. A very sad and dreary picture of the Christianity of the Nicene period can be drawn from the writings of the church-fathers of the fourth century,—Gregory Nazianzen for example,—so that the later Catholic Church, in comparison, appears in many respects like an improvement. But, in spite of all this, there were yet remedies and salt enough to preserve the body from corruption. The militant Church, in her continuous conflict with a sinful world, must ever authenticate and develope the power of genuine sanctity; and this she did during the Nicene period. Who can mistake the agency of the Holy

Ghost, who, amidst the stormy and wildly-passionate battles with Arianism and semi-Arianism, at last helped the Nicene faith to victory? And who will venture to deny his genuine admiration to those great heroes of the fourth century, an Athanasius, a Basil, a Gregory of Nyssa, a Gregory of Nazianzen, a Chrysostom, and an Ambrose, who were distinguished as much by earnestness and dignity of character, and depth and vigour of piety, as by their eminent learning and culture, and who are even to this day gratefully honoured by the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant communions, as true church *fathers*? Notwithstanding all the corruption in her bosom, the Catholic Church of that age was still immeasurably elevated above Heathenism sinking into hopeless ruin, and the conceited and arrogant schools of the Gnostics and Manichaeans; for she, and she alone, was the bearer of the Divine-human life, powers of salvation, and the hope of the world.

Such was the state of the Church, when Augustine entered the class of catechumens, and listened attentively to her doctrines. His good genius, Monica, soon came to Milan, as one sent by God. She could no longer stay in Africa without her son, and embarked for Italy. While at sea, a storm arose which made the oldest sailors tremble. But she, feeling strong and secure under the protection of the Almighty, encouraged them all, and confidently predicted a happy termination to the voyage; for God had promised it to her in a vision. In Milan she found her son delivered from the snares of Manichaeism, but not yet a believing professor. She was

highly rejoiced, and accepted the partial answer of her tearful prayers as a pledge of their speedy and complete fulfilment. "My son," said she, with strong assurance, "I believe in Christ, that before I depart this life, I will see thee become a believing Catholic Christian!"\* She found favour with Ambrose, who often spoke of her with great respect, and thought the son happy who had such a mother. She regularly attended his ministrations, and willingly gave up certain church-usages, which, though observed by her at home, were not in vogue at Milan, such as fasting on Saturdays, and love-feasts at the graves of the martyrs. With renewed fervor and confidence she now prayed to God, who had already led the idol of her heart to the gates of the sanctuary. She was soon to witness the fulfilment of her desires.

\* Conf. vi. 1. Placidissime et pectore pleno fiducia respondit mihi, credere se in Christo, quod priusquam de hac vita emigraret, me visura esset fidelem catholicum.

## CHAPTER V.

AUGUSTINE'S STRUGGLES.—STUDY OF PLATO AND THE  
EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL.

AUGUSTINE continued to listen to the discourses of Ambrose, and to visit him at his house, although the bishop, on account of pressing duties, could not enter, so fully as he wished, into his questions and doubts. He now obtained a more just idea of the doctrines of the Scriptures and the Church, than the perversions of the Manichaeans had afforded him. He saw, "that all the knots of cunning misrepresentation, which these modern betrayers of the Divine word had tied up, could be unloosed, and that for so many years he had been assailing, not the real faith of the Church, but chimeras of a fleshly imagination." He now first began to prize and comprehend the Bible in some measure, whilst, before, it had been to him a disagreeable volume, sealed with seven seals; and such it ever is to all those who wilfully tear it loose from living Christianity in the Church of the Lord, and drag it into the forum of the carnal understanding, "which perceives not the things of the Spirit of God," and thus factiously constitute themselves judges over it, instead of surrendering themselves to it in humble obedience.

Meanwhile, he had many practical and theoretical struggles to pass through, before reaching a final decision. About this time, in conjunction with his friends, among whom were Alypius, who had come with him to Milan, and Nebridius, who had lately left Africa, in order to live together with Augustine "in the most ardent study of truth and wisdom," he resolved to form a philosophical union, and, in undisturbed retirement, with a community of goods, to devote himself exclusively to the pursuit of truth. In such a self-created, ideal world, which commended itself to the lofty imagination of one so gifted and noble as Augustine was, he sought a substitute for the reality of Christianity, and the deeper earnestness of practical churchly life and activity. "Diverse thoughts were thus in our hearts, but thy counsel, O God, abides in eternity. According to that counsel Thou didst laugh at ours, and work out thine own, to bestow on us the Spirit at the set time." "Whilst the winds were blowing from every quarter, and tossing my heart to and fro, time went by, and I delayed in turning to the Lord, and put off living in Thee from day to day, and did not put off dying daily in myself. Desiring a life of blessedness, I shunned the place where it dwelt, and, flying thence, did seek after it." \*

The romantic scheme fell to pieces, because the friends could not agree as to whether marriage ought to be wholly forbidden in their philosophic hermitage, as Aly-

\* Conf. vi. 11. *Amans beatam vitam, timebam illam in sede sua, et ab ea fugiens, quaerebam eam.*

pius desired, in the fashion of the ascetic piety of that age, or not, as Augustine proposed. He was unable then to give up the love of women. "I believed I would become very unhappy, if I was deprived of the embraces of woman, and I did not consider the medicine of thy grace for the healing of this weakness, for I was inexperienced; for I esteemed continency an affair of natural ability, of which I was not conscious, and was foolishly ignorant of what the Scripture says (Wisdom 8. 21), no one can be continent, unless God gives him power. Surely Thou wouldst have given it me, had I prayed to Thee with inward groaning, and with firm faith cast my care upon Thee."\* On this account Augustine resolved to enter into formal wedlock, though, for certain reasons, the resolution was never carried into effect. His mother, who, in common with the whole Church of that era, regarded perfect abstinence as a higher grade of virtue, still, under the circumstances, eagerly laid hold of the plan. In the haven of marriage she believed him secure from debauchery, and then every hindrance to his baptism, which she so ardently desired, was also taken away. Both looked around for a suitable match. The choice was not easily made, for Augustine wished to find beauty, amiability, refinement, and some wealth, united in one person. In this matter the mother, as usual, took counsel of God in prayer; and at last a lady was discovered, answerable to their wishes, who also gave her consent;

\* Conf. vi. 11.



but, because of her youth, the nuptials had to be postponed for two years longer. Augustine immediately discharged his mistress, whom he had brought with him from Carthage, and who, as one would think, was best entitled to the offer of his hand. The unhappy outcast, who appears to have loved him truly, and had been faithful to him, as he to her, during thirteen years of their intercourse, returned to Africa with heavy heart, and vowed that she would never know any other man. Their natural son, Adeodatus, she left with his father. Just after the separation, Augustine felt with bleeding heart the strength of his unlawful attachment. But so strong had the power of sensuality become in him through habit, that neither recollections of the departed, nor respect for his bride, could restrain him from forming a new immoral connection for the interval. Along with this carnal lust came also the seductions of ambition, and a longing after a brilliant career in the world. He felt very miserable; he must have been ashamed before his own better self; before God and man. "But the more miserable I felt, the nearer didst Thou come to me, O God." The Disposer of his life had his hand over all this. "I thought, and Thou wert with me; I sighed, and Thou heardest me; I was tossed about, yet Thou didst pilot me; I wandered on the broad way, and still Thou didst not reject me."

Yet more violent and painful were his theoretical conflicts,—the tormenting doubts of his philosophic spirit. The question concerning the origin of evil, which once

attracted him to the Manichaeans, was again brooded over with renewed interest. The heresy, that evil is a substance, and co-eternal with God, he had rejected. But whence then was it? The Church found its origin in the will of the creature, who was in the beginning good, and of his own free choice estranged himself from God. But here the question arose,—Is not the possibility of evil, imprinted by God in its creation on the will, itself already the germ of evil? Or could not God, as the Almighty, have so created the will, as to render the fall impossible? How can He then be a being of perfect goodness? And if we transfer the origin of evil, as the Church does, from the human race to Satan, through whose temptation Adam fell, the difficulty is not thereby settled, but only pushed farther back. Whence then the devil? And if he was first transformed from a good angel into a devil by a wicked will, whence then that wicked will? Here he was again met by the spectre of Gnostic and Manichaean dualism, but soon reverted to the idea of the absolute God, whom he had made the immovable ground-pillar of his thinking, and who naturally cannot suffer the admission of a second absolute existence. Perhaps evil is a mere shadow? But how can anything unreal and empty prepare such fears and torments for the conscience? He revolved such questions in his mind, and found no peace. “Thou, my God, Thou alone knowest what I suffered, but no one among men.” He was not able to communicate fully the tumult of his soul even to his most intimate friends. But these con-

flicts had the good effect of driving him to prayer, and strengthening in him the conviction, that mind, left to itself, can never reach a satisfactory result.

About this time, somewhere in the beginning of the year 386, he fell in with certain Platonic and New Platonic writings, translated into Latin by the rhetorician Victorinus, who in after life was converted to Christianity. No doubt he had a general acquaintance with this philosophy before. But now for the first time he studied it earnestly in its original sources, to which he was introduced by an admiring disciple. He himself says that it kindled in him an incredible ardour.\* Platonism is beyond dispute the noblest product of heathen speculation, and stands in closer contact with revelation than all the other philosophical systems of antiquity. It is in some measure an unconscious prophecy of Christ, in whom alone its bold ideals can ever become truth and reality. The Platonic philosophy is distinguished by a well-marked character, which elevates it above the materialistic doings and sensual views of every-day life into the invisible world, to the ideals of truth, beauty, and virtue. It is indeed *philosophy*, or love of wisdom, home-sickness, deep longing after truth. It reminds man of his original likeness to God, and thus gives him a glimpse of the true end of all his endeavour. Platonism

\* Contr. Academ. l. ii. § 5. Etiam mihi ipsi de me ipso incredibile incendium in me concitarunt. Comp. my Church History, vol. i. p. 97, where the relation of Platonism to Christianity and to the church-fathers is settled in detail.

also approaches revelation in several of its special doctrines, at least in the form of obscure intimation. We may here mention its presentiment of the unity, and in a certain measure the trinity, of the Divine Being; the conception that the world of ideas is alone true and eternal, and the world of sense its copy; and, further, that the human soul has fallen away from a condition of original purity, and merited its present suffering existence in the prison of the body, but that it should have longing aspirations after its home, the higher world, free itself from the bands of sense, and strive after the highest spiritual and eternal good. Hence it was no wonder that Platonism, to many cultivated heathens and some of the most prominent church-fathers, especially in the Greek Church, became a theoretical schoolmaster for leading to Christ, as the Law was a practical schoolmaster to the Jews. It delivered Augustine completely from the bondage of Manichæan dualism and Academic scepticism, and turned his gaze inward and toward the world of ideas. In the height of his enthusiasm he believed that he had already discovered the hidden fountain of wisdom. But he had soon to learn, that not the abstract knowledge of the truth, but living in it alone, could give peace to the soul; and that this end could only be reached in the way of the Church, and practical experience of the heart.

Although the Platonic philosophy contained so many elements allied to Christianity, there were yet two important points not found therein: first, the great mystery

—the Word made flesh; and then—Love resting on the basis of humility.\* The Platonic philosophy held up before him beautiful ideals without giving him power to attain them. If he attempted to seize them, ungodly impulses would suddenly drag him down again into the mire.

Thus, the admonition to study the Holy Scriptures was addressed to him once more, and in a stonger tone than ever. He now gave earnest heed to it, and drew near the holy volume with deep reverence, and a sincere desire for salvation. He was principally carried away with the study of the Epistles of St. Paul, † and read them through collectively with the greatest care and admiration. Here he found all those truths, which addressed him in Platonism, no longer obscurely foreshadowed, but fulfilled, and yet much more besides. Here he found Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, between heaven and earth, who alone can give us power to attain those lofty ideals, and embody them in life. Here he read that masterly delineation of the conflict between the spirit and the flesh (Rom. 7.) which was literally confirmed by his own experience. Here he learned to know aright the depth of the ruin, and the utter impossibility of being delivered from it by any natural wisdom or natural

\* Conf. vii. 20. Ubi enim erat illa aedificans caritas a fundamento humilitatis, quod est Christus Jesus? Aut quando illi libri (Platonici) docerent me eam?

† Conf. vii. 21. Itaque avidissime adripui venerabilem stilum Spiritus tui, et prae caeteris Apostolum Paulum.

strength, and at the same time the great remedy, which God graciously offers to us in his Incarnate Son. Such light, such consolation, and such power the Platonic writings had never yielded. "On their pages," he says, very beautifully, in the close of the seventh book of his "Confessions," "no traces of piety like this can be discovered: tears of penitence, thy sacrifice, the broken spirit, the humble and the contrite heart, the healing of the nations, the Bride, the City of God, the cup of our salvation. No one sings there, 'Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved' (Ps. 62. 2, 3). There no one hears the invitation,—'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11. 28). They (the Platonists) disdain to learn of Him, who is meek and lowly in heart; they cannot imagine why the lowly should teach the lowly, nor understand what is meant by his taking the form of a servant. For Thou hast hidden it from the wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes. It is one thing, to see afar off, from the summit of a woody mountain, the fatherland of peace, and, without any path leading thither, to wander around, lost and weary, among by-ways, haunted by lions and dragons, that lurk in ambush for their prey,—and quite another, to keep safely on a road that leads thither, guarded by the care of a Celestial Captain, where no robbers, who have forsaken the heavenly army, ever lie in wait. This made such a wonderful impression on my



spirit, when I read the humblest of thine Apostles (1 Cor. 15. 9), and considered thy works, and saw the depths of sin."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION.

WE now stand on the threshold of his conversion. Theoretically, he was convinced of the truth of the doctrines of the Church, but practically had yet to undergo in his bitter experience the judgment of St. Paul,—“The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5. 17). No sooner did his soul rise into the pure ether of communion with God, than the cords of sense drew him down again into the foul atmosphere of earth. “The world,” said he, “lost its charms before thy sweetness and before the glory of thy house, which I had learned to love; but I was yet bound by strong ties to a woman.” “I had found the beautiful pearl: I should have sold all I possessed to buy it, and yet I hesitated.” Amid the tumult of the world, he often sighed after

solitude. Desiring counsel, and unwilling to disturb the indefatigable Ambrose, he betook himself to the venerable priest, Simplicianus, who had grown gray in the service of his Master. The latter described to him, for his encouragement, the conversion of his friend Victorinus, the learned teacher of oratory at Rome, and the translator of the Platonic writings, who had passed over from the Platonic philosophy to a zealous study of the Scriptures, and cordially embraced the Saviour, with a sacrifice of great worldly gain. For a long time he believed he could be a Christian without joining the Church; and when Simplicianus replied to him, "I will not count you a Christian before I see you in the Church of Christ," Victorinus asked with a smile, "Do the walls, then, make Christians?"\* But afterwards he came to see, that he who does not confess Christ openly before the world, need not hope to be confessed by Him before his heavenly Father (Matt. 10. 32, 33), and therefore submitted in humble faith to the washing of holy baptism. Augustine wished to do likewise, but his will was not yet strong enough. He compares his condition to that of a man, who, drunk with sleep, wishes to rise up, but who, for the first time, truly feeling the sweetness of slumber, sinks back again into its arms. In a still more warning and pressing tone the voice sounded in his

\* Conf. viii. 2. Ergo parietes faciunt Christianos? This passage is sometimes torn from its connection, and misused for a purpose directly opposite, since Augustine quotes it to show that a man could not be a Christian without joining the visible Church.

ears,—“Wake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5. 14); but he answered lazily, “Soon, yes soon! Only wait a little”; and the *soon* passed on into hours, days, and weeks. In vain his inward man delighted in the law of God, for another law in his members warred against the law of his mind, and brought him into captivity to the law of sin (Rom. 7. 22, 23). His disquietude rose higher and higher, his longing became violent agony. Oftentimes he would tear his hair, smite his forehead, wring his hands about his knees, and cry out despairingly, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7. 24.)

These conflicts, in connection with the weight of his literary labours, had exerted such an injurious influence on his health, that he began to think seriously of resigning his post as rhetorician. One day, as he sat in a down-cast mood, with his bosom-friend Alypius, who was involved in similar struggles, their countryman Pontitianus, a superior officer in the Roman army, and at the same time a zealous Christian, entered the chamber. He was surprised, instead of a classic author or a Manichaean writer, to see the Epistles of the Apostle Paul lying on the table. He began a religious conversation, and in the course of his remarks took occasion to speak of the Egyptian hermit Antony (356 A. D.), who, in literal pursuance of the Saviour’s advice to the rich young man (Matt. 19. 21), had given up all his property, in order to live to the Lord, unrestricted and undisturbed

in solitude, and there to work out the salvation of his soul. The two friends had as yet heard nothing of the wonderful saint of the desert, the venerable father of Monachism; and just as little of a cloister outside of the walls of Milan, under the supervision of Ambrose; and were now charmed and ashamed at the information. Their countryman related further, how, during his stay at Treves, two of his friends, who were both engaged at the time, obtained, on a visit to a cell, the biography of Antony, by Athanasius; and, on reading it, fell so in love with the contemplative life and the higher perfection there portrayed, that they threw up their commissions in the army, and took leave of the world for ever. Their brides did likewise. This was a sting for the conscience of Augustine. They had heard the call of the Lord only once, and obeyed it immediately. And he! It was now more than twelve years since the "Hortensius" of Cicero had stirred him up so powerfully to search after truth, and ever clearer and clearer the voice of the Good Shepherd had sounded in his ears; and yet his will rose up in rebellion: he was not ready to renounce the world *wholly*, but desired to retain at least some of its pleasures.

Pontitianus left the house. Then the storm in the soul of Augustine broke loose with greater violence, and expressed itself in the features of his countenance, his looks, and his gestures, still more than in his words. "What has happened us?" said he to Alypius; "What is it? What hast thou heard? The unlearned rise up and lay hold of the kingdom of heaven; and we, with

our heartless knowledge!—see! how we wallow in flesh and blood! Shall we be ashamed to follow them, because they have gone before, and not ashamed not to follow them at all?”\*

After he had said this, and more in a similar strain, he rushed out, with the Epistles of Paul in his hand, into an adjoining garden, where no one would be likely to interrupt the agitation of his soul, until God Himself should allay it. For it was, as he said, despair or salvation, death or life. Alypius followed in his footsteps. “We removed as far as possible from the house. I groaned in spirit, full of stormy indignation, that I had not entered into covenant and union with Thee, my God; and all my bones cried out, ‘Thither must thou go!’ But it was not possible to go by ship, or waggon, or on foot, as we go to any spot we please. For going thither and coming there is nothing else than *to will* to go thither, and to will with *full* power; not to waver and be tossed to and fro with a divided will, which now rises up and now sinks down in the struggle.”† He was angry at the perverseness of his will. “The spirit orders the body, and it obeys instantly; the spirit orders itself, and it refuses. The spirit orders the hand to move, and it does it so quickly, that one can scarcely distinguish be-

\* Conf. viii. 8. An quia praecesserunt, pudet sequi, et non pudet nec saltem sequi?

† Conf. viii. 8. Nam non solum ire, verum etiam pervenire illuc, nihil erat aliud, quam velle ire, sed velle fortiter et integre, non semisauciam hac atque hac versare et jactare voluntatem, parte adsurgente cum alia parte cadente luctantem.

tween the act and the command; the spirit commands the spirit to will, and although the same, it will not do it. Whence this unbelief? It is a disease of the spirit that prevents it from rising up; the will is split and divided; thus there are two wills in conflict with each other, one good and one evil; and I myself it was who willed and who did not will." Thus was he pulled hither and thither, accusing himself more severely than ever, and turning and rolling in his fetters, until they should be wholly broken, by which, indeed, he was no longer *wholly* bound, but only *yet*.

And when he had thus dragged up all his misery from its mysterious depth, and gathered it before the eye of his soul, a huge storm arose that discharged itself in a flood of tears.\* In such a frame of mind, he wished to be alone with his God, and withdrew from Alypius into a retired corner of the garden. Here Augustine, he knew not how, threw himself down upon the earth, under a fig-tree, and gave free vent to his tears. "Thou, my Lord," he cried, with sobbing voice; "how long yet? O Lord, how long yet wilt Thou be angry? Remember not the sins of my youth! How long? how long? To-morrow, and again to-morrow? Why not to-day? Why not now? Why not in this hour put an end to my shame?"† Thus he prayed, supplicated, sighed, wrestled,

\* Conf. viii. 12. Procella ingens, ferens ingentem imbrem lacrymarum.

† Conf. viii. 12. Et non quidem his verbis, sed in hac sententia multa dixi tibi: Et tu, Domine, usque quo? Usque quo, Domine,



and wept bitterly. They were the birth-pangs of the new life. From afar he saw the Church in the beauty of her holiness. The glorified spirits of the redeemed, who had been snatched from the abyss by the All-merciful, and transplanted into a heavenly state of being, beckoned to him. Still more powerfully the longing burned within; still more hot and rapidly beat the pulse of desire after the Saviour's embrace: as a weary hunted stag after the fresh water-brooks, so panted his heart after the living God, and a draught from the chalice of his grace.

The hour of deliverance had now come. The Lord had already stretched out his hand to tear asunder the last cords that bound his prodigal son to the world, and press him to a warm, true Father's heart. As Augustine was thus lying in the dust and ashes of repentance, and agonising with his God in prayer, he suddenly heard from a neighbouring house, as though from some celestial height, the sweet voice, whether of a boy or a maiden he knew not, calling out again and again, "Tolle lege, tolle lege!" *i. e.*, "Take and read, take and read!" It was a voice from God, that decided his heart and life. "Then I repressed," so he further relates, in the last chapter of the eighth book of his "Confessions," "the gush of tears, and raised myself up, whilst I received the word as nothing else than a Divine injunction to open *irascaris in finem? Ne memor fueris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum? Sentiebam enim eis me teneri. Jactabam voces miserabiles: Quamdiu? quamdiu? Cras et cras? Quare non modo? Quare non hac hora finis turpitudinis meae? Dicebam haec, et flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei.*

the Scriptures, and read the first chapter that would catch my eye. I had heard how Antony, once accidentally present during the reading of the Gospel in church, had felt himself admonished, as though what was read had been specially aimed at him: 'Go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Matt. 19. 21); and that by this oracle he had been immediately converted, my God, to Thee." Hastening to the place where he had left the holy Book, and where Alypius sat, he snatched it up, opened, and read, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13. 13, 14).\*

This passage of the Epistle to the Romans was exactly suited to his circumstances. It called on him to renounce his old, wild life, and begin a new life with Christ. He found still more in it, according to the ascetic spirit of the age, and resolved to renounce all the honours and pleasures of the world, even his contemplated marriage, in order to devote himself without restraint to the service

\* After the original and the Vulgate: *Et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis*; which Augustine, in his present condition, understood as a challenge to renounce completely every desire of the flesh. Luther, on the contrary, has translated it: "Wartet des Leibes, doch also, dass er nicht geil werde," which gives a different sense. But in such a case, *σῶμα* would be used in the Greek, instead of *σάρξ*, and the particle *μὴ* would stand after, and not before, *πρόνοιαν*.

of the Lord and his Church, and, if possible, to attain the highest grade of moral perfection.\* He read no further. That single word of God was sufficient to decide his whole future. The gloomy clouds of doubt and despondency rolled away; the forgiveness of his sins was sealed to him; peace and joy streamed into his bosom. With his finger on the passage read, he shut the book, and told Alypius what had happened. The latter wished to read the words, and hit upon the next-following verse (14. 1), "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye." He applied the warning to himself. Both hastened, in the first ardour of conversion, to Monica. The faithful soul must hear the glad tidings before others. She cried aloud and exulted, and her heart overflowed with thankfulness to the Lord, who, at last, after long, long delay, had answered beyond her prayers and comprehension.

This occurred in September of the year 386, in the thirty-third year of his life. We agree with the words of Augustine: "All, who worship Thee, must, when they hear this, cry out, 'Blessed be the Lord in heaven and on earth; great and wonderful is his name!'"

\* Confes. viii. 12. *Convertisti me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaerem, nec aliquam spem saeculi hujus, etc.* Antony, whose example wrought powerfully in the conversion of Augustine, had, in literal accordance with the words of Christ (Matt. 19. 21), sold all that he had, and given to the poor. According to the views of the ancient Church, which can be traced back as far as the second century, voluntary poverty, celibacy, and martyrdom, were not at all indeed a condition of salvation, but the way to a more literal following of Christ, and a higher grade of religious perfection.

## CHAPTER VII.

AUGUSTINE'S SOJOURN IN THE COUNTRY.—HIS ACTIVITY AS AN AUTHOR.—HIS RETURN TO MILAN, AND BAPTISM.

AUGUSTINE continued in office the few remaining weeks till the autumnal holidays, and then handed in his resignation, partly on account of a weakness of the breast, but chiefly because he had firmly resolved to consecrate himself henceforth wholly and entirely to the pursuit of Divine things. Along with his mother, his son, his brother Navigius, Alypius, and other friends, he now withdrew to Cassiciacum, a villa lying near Milan, which belonged to his friend Verecundus. He passed several months there in quiet meditation, preparing for the rite of holy baptism. He had asked the advice of Ambrose as to what parts of the Scripture he ought to study under his peculiar circumstances. The bishop recommended the prophecies of Isaiah ; but as Augustine could not rightly understand them, he selected the Psalms, and found there just what he desired,—the hallowed expression of his deepest religious feelings, from the low, sad wail of penitence and contrition up to the inspiring song of praise to the Divine Mercy. Half the night he spent in their study, and in pious meditation, and enjoyed

most blessed hours of intimate communion with the Lord. He now mourned over and pitied the Manichaeans for being so blind in regard to the Old Testament. "I wished only," he once thought, "they could have been in my neighbourhood without my knowing it, and could have seen my face and have heard my voice, when in that retirement I read the fourth Psalm, and how that Psalm wrought upon me."

A great part of the day he devoted to the education of two young men from his native city. His propensity for speculative meditation was so strong, that he resorted with his company, in good weather, to the shade of a large tree, and in bad, to the halls of the baths belonging to the villa, and, walking up and down in the freest manner, delivered discourses on those philosophical subjects which stood in the nearest relation to the most weighty practical interests of the heart, such as the knowledge of the truth, the idea of genuine wisdom, the life of blessedness, and the way to it. These discourses were written down, and thus the earliest works of the great theologian, mostly philosophical in their contents, took their rise. Of these the most important are, first, three books against the sceptical school of the Later Academy (*contra Academicos*), which denied the possibility of knowing the truth. In opposition, it was shown, that scepticism either abrogates itself, or, in a modified form, as a scheme of probabilities, bears witness to the existence of truth; for the probable must pre-suppose the true. Not the mere striving after truth, only the pos-

session of it, can render happy. But it is only to be found in God, since he alone is happy who is in God and God in him. And second, the tract on the Life of Blessedness (*de Beata Vita*), in which these latter thoughts are further developed. And last, his Soliloquies, or Discourses with his own Soul, concerning God, concerning the highest good, concerning his own nature, immortality, and the like. From these we will quote a single passage, to show the state of his mind at that time. "O God, Creator of the world," thus he prayed to the Lord, "grant me first of all grace to call upon Thee, in a manner well pleasing unto Thee, that I may so conduct myself, that Thou mayest hear, and then help me. Thou God, through whom all, that cannot be of itself, rises into being; who even dost not suffer to fall into destruction what would destroy itself; who never workest evil, and rulest over the power of evil; who revealest unto the few, who seek after a true existence, that evil can be overcome; God, to whom the universe, in spite of evil, is perfect; God, whom what can love, loves consciously or unconsciously; God, in whom all is, and whom yet neither the infamy of the creature can disgrace, nor his wickedness defile, nor his error lead astray; God, who hast preserved the knowledge of the truth for the pure alone; Father of truth, Father of wisdom, Father of true and perfect life, Father of blessedness, Father of the good and the beautiful, Father of our awakening and enlightening, Father of the promise by which we are encouraged to return to Thee: I invoke



Thee, O Truth, in which and from which and by which all is true that is true ; O Wisdom, in which and from which and by which all is wise that is wise ; O true and most perfect Life, in which and from which and by which all lives that lives true and perfect ; O Blessedness, in which and from which and by which all is blessed that is blessed ; O Beauty and Goodness, in which and from which and by which all is good and beautiful that is good and beautiful ; O spiritual Light, in which and from which and by which all is spiritually light that is spiritually light ; God, from whom to turn away is to fall, to whom to turn again is to rise, in whom to remain is to endure ; God, from whom to withdraw is to die, to whom to return is to live again, in whom to dwell is to live ; O God, Thou who dost sanctify and prepare us for an everlasting inheritance, bow down Thyself to me in pity ! come to my help, Thou one, eternal, true Essence, in whom there is no discord, no confusion, no change, no need, no death, but the highest unity, the highest purity, the highest durability, the highest fulness, the highest life. Hear, hear, hear me, my God, my Lord, my King, my Father, my Hope, my Desire, my Glory, my Habitation, my Home, my Salvation, my Light, my Life, hear, hear, hear me, as Thou art wont to hear thy chosen ! Already, I love Thee alone, follow Thee alone, seek Thee alone, am prepared to serve Thee only, because Thou alone rulest in righteousness. O command and order what Thou wilt, but heal and open my ears, that I may hear thy word ; heal and open my eyes, that I may see thy

nod ; drive out my delusion, that I may recognise Thee again. O gracious Father, take back again thy wanderer. Have I not been chastised enough ? Have I not long enough served thine enemies, whom Thou hast under thy feet—long enough been the sport of deception ? Receive me as thy servant ; for I fly from those who received me as a stranger, when I fled from Thee. Increase in me faith, hope, love, according to thy wonderful and inimitable goodness. I desire to come to Thee, and again implore Thee for that by which I may come. For where Thou forsakest, there is destruction ; but Thou dost not forsake, because Thou art the Highest Good, which every one who seeks aright will surely find. But he seeks it aright, to whom Thou hast given power to seek aright. Grant me power, O Father, to seek Thee aright ! Shield me from error ! Let me not, when I seek, find another in thy stead. I desire none other but Thee ; O let me yet find Thee, my Father ! But such a desire is vain, since Thou Thyself canst purify me, and fit me to behold Thee. Whatever else the welfare of my mortal body may need, I commit into thy hands, most wise and gracious Father, as long as I do not know what may be good for me, or those whom I love ; and will therefore pray, just as Thou wilt make it known at the time ; only this I beseech out of thy great mercy, that Thou wilt convert me wholly unto Thyself, and, when I obtain Thee, suffer me to be nothing else ; and grant also, that, as long as I live and bear about this body, I may be pure and magnanimous, just and wise, filled with love

and the knowledge of thy wisdom, and worthy of an entrance into thy blessed kingdom."

There are few traces of a specifically Christian and Catholic character in these writings. They exhibit rather a Platonism, full of high thoughts, ideal views, and subtle dialectics, informed and hallowed by the spirit of Christianity. Many things were retracted by him at a later period ; *e. g.*, the Platonic opinion, that the human soul has a consciousness of pre-existence ; and that the learning of a science is a restoration of it to memory, a disinterment, so to speak, of knowledge already existing, but covered over in the mind. As he had yet many steps to take theoretically, before reaching the depth and clearness of Christian knowledge which distinguish his later writings, so he had yet many practically also, although not attended by such violent internal struggles, before the new life obtained the full mastery within. After his conversion, he did indeed abandon unlawful sexual intercourse. But now, the pictures of his former sensual indulgence not seldom troubled his fancy in dreams. This he justly regarded as sin, and reproached himself bitterly. "Am I," he cried out, "am I then not dreaming what I am, O Lord, my God? Is not thy mighty hand able to purge all the weaknesses of my soul, and frighten away with more abundant grace the concupiscence of my dreams? Yea, Thou wilt grant unto me more and more thy gifts, that my soul may follow Thee, and be with Thee even in dreams full of purity, Thou who art able to do more than we can ask or understand."

In the beginning of the year 387 he returned to Milan, and along with his preparation for baptism kept up his literary activity. He wished to portray the different steps of human knowledge by which he himself had been gradually led to absolute knowledge, for the purpose of leading others to the sanctuary ; and wrote works on grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, philosophy, music, and on the immortality of the soul, of which only the last two were completed, and have come down to us.\*

Meanwhile, the wished-for hour of baptism arrived. On Easter Sabbath of this year he received, at the hands of the venerable Ambrose, this holy sacrament, in company with his friend Alypius, and his son Adeodatus, who was now fifteen years of age, and, preserved from the evil courses of his father, had surrendered to the Lord his youthful soul with all its rare endowments. This solemn act, and the succeeding festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide, in which the Church entered her spiritual spring, and basked in the warm sunlight of a Saviour risen from the dead and eternally present by his Spirit, made the deepest impression upon Augustine. The solemnity of this festival was still further heightened by two circumstances mentioned by him. The long-concealed relics of the martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius,

\* The book on grammar, and the principles of logic and rhetoric, in the first volume of the Benedictine edition of Augustine's works, is spurious, because it lacks the form of dialogue, and the higher bearing which he gave to his writings on these subjects.

discovered a short time before, were then conveyed into the Ambrosian Basilika, and wrought there an astonishing miracle in support of Nicene orthodoxy against the Arian heresy ; and just then also Ambrose had transplanted the Church-hymns of the East into his diocese, and had added to them productions of his own, conceived and executed in truly liturgical style, which reminds one of the simple grandeur and devotional sublimity of the Psalms.\*

“I could not,” says Augustine, “satisfy myself in those days with the wonderful delight of meditating on the depth of thy Divine counsel in the salvation of the human race. How have I wept amid thy hymns and chants, powerfully moved by the sweetly-sounding voice of thy Church ! Those tones poured into my ear ; the truth dropped into my heart, and kindled there the fire of devotion ; tears ran down my cheeks in the fulness of my joy !”

\* Conf. ix. 7. As is well known, Ambrose gets generally the credit as the author of the magnificent anthem, *Te Deum Laudamus*, which is worthy of a place among David's Psalms of thanksgiving. A tradition, not well supported, and nowhere alluded to, as far as I know, by Augustine himself, says, that it was composed by Ambrose and Augustine jointly, during the baptism of the latter, as by inspiration from above, each singing in response verse after verse. Comp. Knapp's *Evang. Liederschatz*, 2nd edit., p. 1303, sub “Ambrosius.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## HOMEWARD JOURNEY TO AFRICA.—MONICA'S DEATH.

SOON after his baptism, in the summer of the year 387, Augustine entered on his homeward journey to Africa, in company with his relatives and friends, in order to continue there the life of Divine contemplation already begun in Cassiciacum. Among them was Evadius of Tagestum, a cultivated man, who was baptized a short time before, and now forsook the service of the emperor to live in like manner, exclusively, for the higher world. Already had they reached Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, about a day's journey from Rome,—already had they made the necessary preparations for embarking,—when the sudden death of Monica frustrated the plan. The faithful soul had now experienced the highest joy for which she had wished to live: she had seen the Saviour in the heart of her son, and could, like Hannah and Simeon of old, depart in peace to that true home, which is more beautiful, and sweeter far than Africa.

One day Augustine sat with his mother at a garden-window in Ostia, and conversed with her about the rest of eternity and its holy pleasures, which no eye has seen and no ear heard, but which God has prepared for them that love Him. Let us listen to his own narrative. "For-



getting the past, and looking only toward the future, we asked ourselves, in the presence of the Truth, as Thou art, what the eternal life of the saints will be. And we opened longingly the mouths of our hearts to receive the celestial overflowings of thy fountain—the fountain of life that is with Thee, that, being bedewed from it according to our capacity, we might meditate carefully upon this solemn subject. When now our discourse had reached that point, that no pleasure of corporeal sense, regarded in what brilliant light soever, durst for a moment be named with the glory of that life, much less compared with it, we mounted upward in ardent longings, and wandered step by step through all the material universe, the heavens, from which sun, moon, and stars, beam down upon the earth. And we rose yet higher in inward thought, discourse, and admiration, of thy wonderful works; and, going in spirit, we rose above these also, in order to reach yon sphere of inexhaustible fulness, where Thou dost feed Israel to all eternity upon the pastures of Truth, where Life is and Truth, by which all was made that was there and will be: but it itself was not made; it is as it was and always will be; for *to have been* and *to be* are not in it, but *being* because it is eternal: for *to have been* and *to be* are not eternal. Whilst we were thus talking and desiring, we touched it gently in full rapture of heart, and left bound there the first-fruits of the Spirit, and turned again to the sound of our lips, where the word begins and ends. And what is like thy Word, our Lord, who remains unchanged in Himself,

and renews all? We spake thus: 'If the tumult of the flesh were silent, and the images of earth, sea, and air were silent, and the poles were silent, and the soul itself were silent, transcending its own thoughts; if dreams and the revelations of fancy, and every language, and every sign, and every thing represented by them were silent; if all were silent, for to him who hears, all these say, We have not made ourselves, but He who made us dwells in eternity; if, at this call, they were now silent, with ear uplifted to their Creator, and He should speak alone, not by them, but unmediated so that we heard *his own word*, not through a tongue of flesh, not through the voice of an angel, not through the war of thunder, not through the dark outlines of a similitude, but from Him Himself whom we love in them, and whom without them we heard as we now mounted, and with the rapid flight of thought touched, the eternal Truth that lies beyond them all; if this contemplation should continue, and no other foreign visions mingle with it, and if this alone should take hold of, and absorb, and wrap up its beholder in more inward joys, and such a life as that of which, now recovering our breath, we have had a momentary taste, were to last for ever;—would not then the saying, Enter into the joy of your Lord, be fulfilled?'”

In the presentiment that she would soon enter into the joy of her Lord, Monica, struck by the inspired words of her son, said, “Son, what has befallen me? Nothing has any more charms for me in this life. What I am yet to do here, and why I am here, I do not know, every

hope of this world being now consumed. Once there was a reason why I should wish to live long, that I might see you a believing Christian\* before I should die. God has now richly granted me this beyond measure, in permitting me to see you in his service, having totally abandoned the world. What yet have I to do here?"

Five or six days after this conversation and foretaste of the eternal Sabbath-rest of the saints, the pious mother was attacked by a fever, which in a short time exhausted her vital powers. Her two sons were continually at her bed-side. Augustine was now indeed more than ever bowed down with regret that he had caused her so many tears and pains, and sought by the last tender offices of love to make as much amends as possible. Monica read his heart, and assured him with tenderest affection that he had never spoken an unkind word to her. Before, it had always been her wish to die at home, and rest beside the grave of her husband. But now this natural wish was merged into loftier resignation to the will of God. "Bury my body somewhere here," said she, "and do not concern yourselves on its account; only this I beg of you, that you will be mindful of me at the altar of God, where you will be." †

\* Or, more strictly after the original, Conf. ix. 10, *Christianum Catholicum*, in distinction not merely from a *Paganus*, but also and particularly from a *Christianus haereticus* and *schismaticus*, which Augustine had formerly been.

† Conf. ix. 11. *Tantum illud vos rogo, ut ad Domini altare meminertis mei, ubi fueritis.* This thanksgiving and prayers for the

To the question, whether it would not be terrible to her to be buried so far from her fatherland, she replied, "Nothing is far from God; and there is no fear that He will not know, at the end of time, where to raise me up." Thus, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, on the ninth day of her sickness, this noble-hearted woman expired in the arms of her son, at the mouth of the Tiber, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, which separated Italy from her earthly home. Yet long after her death has she consoled and comforted thousands of anxious mothers, and encouraged them in patient waiting and perseverance in prayer. Her memory remains for ever dear and blessed to the Church. Adeodatus cried aloud: Augustine himself could scarcely restrain by force the gush of tears, and quiet the overpowering feelings of grief which were rushing into his heart. He believed it was not becoming "to honour such a corpse with the tearful wailings and groans which are usually given to those who die a miserable, yea, an eternal, death." For his mother had not died miserably; she had merely entered into the joy of her Lord. When the weeping had subsided, Evodius took up the Psalter: "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing" (Ps. 101. 1); and the whole house joined in the response. After the corpse had been buried, and the Holy Supper celebrated on the grave, according to the custom of the age, in the consciousness of a communion of saints uninterrupted by dead are likewise a decided Catholic feature, which can be traced, in its innocent form, as far back as the second century.

death, and Augustine found himself at home, alone with his God, then he gave his tears free vent, and wept sorely and long over her who had shed before God so many tears of maternal love and solicitude on his account. But he begs his readers to fulfil the last wish of his mother, and remember her at the altar of the Lord with thanksgiving and prayer. "In this transitory light let them remember my parents with pious affection, and my brothers, who, under Thee, the Father, are children in the mother, the Catholic Church, and my fellow-citizens in the heavenly Jerusalem, after which thy people sigh from the beginning to the end of their pilgrimage, so that what she asked of me in her last moments may be more abundantly fulfilled to her by the prayers and confessions of many, than by my prayers alone." \*

These words form the conclusion of the historical part of the "Confessions," in which Augustine, with the rarest candour, and in a spirit of the severest self-criticism and unfeigned humility, in presence of the whole world, acknowledges to God his sins and errors, and praises with devout gratitude the wonderful hand, which, even in his widest wanderings, guided him, took hold of him in the anxiety and prayers of his mother, in the better inclinations of his heart, in his internal conflicts, his increasing discontent, and his pining after God, and led him at last, after many storms, into the haven of faith and peace. In this, the most interesting and edifying autobiography ever written, we behold the great church-

\* Conf. ix. 13, conclusion.



doctor of all ages "lying in the dust of humility in converse with God, and basking in the sunlight of his love, —his readers only sweeping before him like shadows." He takes all his glory, all his greatness, all his culture, and lays them devoutly at the feet of free grace. His deepest feeling is, "All that is good in me is thy ordering and thy gift; all that is evil is my guilt and my judgment." No motive, drawn from anything without, prompted him to this public confession. It sprang from the innermost impulse of his soul. "I believe," says he, "and therefore I speak, as Thou, Lord, knowest. Have I not confessed my guilt before Thee, and hast Thou not forgiven the sins of my soul? Never will I excuse or justify myself before Thee, who art truth itself; no, I will not justify myself before Thee, for if Thou art strict to mark iniquity, who can stand?" Most touching is his sad complaint that he was converted to the Lord so late in life, since one single hour of communion with Him is worth more than all the joys of the world besides. "I have loved Thee late, whose beauty is as old as eternity, and yet so new. I have loved Thee late, and, lo! Thou wert within, but I was without, and sought Thee there. And amid thy beautiful creation I covered myself with loathsomeness, for Thou wert with me, and I not in Thee! The external world held me far from Thee, though it were not, if it were not in Thee. Thou didst call loud and louder, and break through my deafness. Thou didst beam down bright and brighter, and overcame my blindness. Thou didst breathe, and I recovered



breath and life again, and breathed in Thee. I would taste Thee, and hungered and thirsted. Thou didst touch me, and, burning, I longed after thy peace. If ever I may live in Thee, with all that is in me, then will pain and trouble leave me ; filled wholly with Thee, all within me will be life."

Augustine wrote his "Confessions" about the year 400, and even in his own time they were read by high and low with the greatest profit. Although not altogether suited for general use, because they contain much that can only be rightly understood and prized by the theologian and the student of history, yet we know, next to the Holy Scriptures, no better book for edification in all that belongs to elevation, depth, and unction, than Augustine's "Confessions," not even excepting the "Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis, and Arndt's "True Christianity."

## CHAPTER IX.

SHORT STAY IN ROME.—WRITINGS AGAINST THE  
MANICHAEANS.—RESIDENCE AT TAGESTUM.—AP-  
POINTMENT AS PRIEST AND BISHOP.

IN consequence of the death of his mother, Augustine changed his plan of travel, and went first of all with his company to Rome, where he remained for ten months. During this time he attacked his former friends, the Manichaeans, publicly. He was better fitted than any one of his contemporaries for confuting their errors. "I could not," says he, in his "Retractations," "bear in silence, that the Manichaeans should delude the ignorant through boasting by their false deceptive abstemiousness and moderation, and elevate themselves even above true Christians, with whom they are not worthy to be compared; and so I wrote two books, the one on 'The Morals of the Catholic Church,' the other on 'The Morals of the Manichaeans.'"

Toward autumn of the year 388, he sailed to Africa, and, after a transient stay in Carthage with his friend Innocentius, a godly man, who had just then been delivered from a dangerous sickness by prayer, he proceeded to a country-seat, near Tagestum, which, along

with other real estate, he had inherited from his father. In literal obedience to the command of Christ to the rich young man (Matt. 19. 21), and in imitation of the example of many saints of previous ages, he sold his possessions and gave the proceeds to the poor, retaining, as it appears, his dwelling, and the necessary means of subsistence. Here he lived with his friends three years in a complete community of goods, retired from the world, in prayer, study, and earnest meditation, except that he was frequently interrupted by the inhabitants of the city asking counsel about their spiritual and temporal affairs. Numerous philosophical, polemical, and theological writings are the fruits of this sojourn in the country.

In the year 391 he was called by an imperial commissioner to the Numidian sea-port, Hippo Regius, the Bona of our time.\* Having arrived there, he was forced into public office against his will. For, on one occasion, as he was listening to a sermon of the bishop, Valerius, a native of Greece, and the latter remarked that the congregation needed a priest, the people cried out for Augustine. He was amazed, and burst into tears, for he did not wish to give up his peaceful, ascetic, and literary retirement, and did not consider himself qualified for the responsible station. He followed, however, the guidance of that hand, which drew him, as it does all true reformers, into the arena of public life, against his own will. He only begged for some months to prepare for the new office, and

\* He is yet known among the natives of that place, as "the great Christian" (Rumi Kebir).

assumed its duties on Easter of the year 392. In this position he was now to unfold, during a period of thirty-eight successive years, first as priest and then as bishop, the rich treasures of his genius for the benefit of the congregation and the whole Church, in his age, and all coming centuries. He was indispensable. Difficulties of deep and universal importance were arising, with which he alone was fitted to cope.

His relation to the bishop was very pleasant. The latter acknowledged the decided intellectual superiority of Augustine, and, without envy, gave it free play for the good of the Church. For example, he allowed him to preach frequently, contrary to the usual custom of the African bishops, who granted this privilege to the priests, only during their absence. Soon after, he made him an associate, with the consent of the Bishop of Carthage. But when Augustine learned the existence of a decree of the Council of Nice, forbidding two bishops in one congregation, he had a resolution passed by a Synod at Carthage, that, in order to prevent similar irregularities, the Church-canons should be read by every clergyman before ordination.

In the year 395, Valerius died, and Augustine was now sole Bishop of Hippo, and remained so till the day of his death.

## CHAPTER X.

AUGUSTINE'S DOMESTIC LIFE, AND ADMINISTRATION  
OF HIS EPISCOPAL OFFICE.

WE will now first glance at Augustine's private life, then consider him as bishop, and lastly exhibit his public activity in the Church and the world of letters, and its influence upon succeeding generations.

His mode of living was in the highest degree simple, and bore that ascetic character which accords rather with the genius of Catholicism than of Protestantism, but it was also free from those exaggerations and elements of Pharisaical self-righteousness, which connect themselves so readily with monastic piety. He dwelt with his clergy in one house, and strove with them to copy after the first community of Christians (Acts 4. 31). All things were common; no one had more than another; even he himself was never preferred. God and his Church were enough for them. Whoever would not consent to this, was not admitted into his clerical body. He also established a kind of theological seminary, where candidates could prepare themselves, in a practical as well as a theoretical manner, for their important duties, as preachers of reconciliation. They certainly could find no better instructor. Already as a priest he had attracted to Hippo his old friends, Alypius and Evodius, and

several new ones, among whom were Possidius and Severus, for the prosecution of mutual studies; and these formed the beginning of that theological nursery, out of which about ten bishops and many inferior clergy went forth from time to time. He was extremely sparing in his diet, and lived mostly on herbs and pulse. After the custom of those countries, wine was placed before all, a certain measure to each, yet of course further indulgence was severely rebuked. Whilst they sat at table, a passage from some good book was read aloud, or they conversed freely together, but were never allowed to attack the character of any one who was absent. Augustine enforced the observance of this rule of brotherly love very strictly. His clothing and house-furniture were decent, without show or luxury. He was particularly prudent in regard to the female sex, for he permitted no woman, not even his nearest relative, to live in the episcopal house. Nor did he trust himself to enter into conversation with any, except in the presence of an ecclesiastic. Personally, he preferred, like St. Paul, the unmarried estate (1 Cor. 7. 1, 7, 8); but, unlike many of the church-fathers, he honoured marriage, and warned against its abuse.

As a bishop he was pre-eminently faithful and conscientious in the discharge of his manifold duties. He felt deeply the solemn responsibilities of the spiritual calling. "There is nothing," says he, "in this life, and especially in this age, more easy, more agreeable, and more acceptable to men, than the office of bishop, or



presbyter, or deacon, if its duties are performed at pleasure, and in a time-serving spirit; but in the eyes of God, nothing more miserable, more sad, more damnable. Likewise, there is nothing in this life, and especially in this age, more difficult, more laborious, more dangerous, than the office of bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, but also none more blessed before God, if a man conducts himself therein as a true soldier under the banner of Christ.\* To the ministry of the word he applied himself diligently, preaching often five days in succession, and on some days twice. Whenever he found time, he prepared himself for it. When out of the fulness of inspiration he spoke from the holy place, he felt that human language was insufficient to express, in a fit and lively manner, the thoughts and feelings which streamed through his soul with the speed of lightning. He set before him as the aim of spiritual oratory to preach himself and his hearers into Christ, so that all might live with him and he with all in Christ. This was his passion, his honour, his boast, his joy, his riches.

He frequently spent whole days in bringing about a

\* Ep. 21. tom. 11, ed. Bened., words well worthy of being pondered on by every candidate of theology. "Nihil est in hac vita, et maxime hoc tempore, facilius, et laetius, et hominibus acceptabilius episcopi, aut presbyteri, aut diaconi officio, si perfunctorie atque adulatorie res agatur; sed nihil apud Deum miserius, et tristius, et damnabilius. Item nihil est in hac vita, et maxime in hoc tempore, difficilium, laboriosius, periculosius episcopi, aut presbyteri, aut diaconi officio; sed apud Deum nihil beatius, si eo modo militetur, quo noster imperator jubet."

reconciliation between parties who were at variance. It was irksome to a man of his contemplative disposition, but a sense of duty rendered him superior to the disagreeable nature of the occupation. Like Ambrose, he often interceded with the authorities in behalf of the unfortunate, and procured for them either justice or mercy. He took the poor under his special care, and looked upon each clergyman as their father. Once, when he observed that but little was cast into the collection-boxes, he concluded his sermon with the words: "I am a beggar for beggars, and take pleasure in being so, in order that you may be numbered among the children of God." Like Ambrose, he even melted up the vessels of the sanctuary, in extreme cases, for the relief of the suffering and the redemption of the prisoner. Unlike many bishops of his time, he does not appear to have set his heart upon the enrichment of the Church. He would accept no legacy, where injustice would be done to the natural heirs, for "the Church desires no unrighteous inheritance"; and he therefore praised Bishop Aurelius of Carthage in a sermon, because he had restored, without solicitation, his entire property to a man who had willed it to the Church, because his wife unexpectedly bore him children. Along with his seminary for the clergy, he also established religious societies for women. Over one of these, his sister, a godly widow, presided. On one occasion he assured his congregation that he could not easily find better, but had also nowhere found worse, people than in these cloisters.

But the activity of Augustine extended beyond the limits of his own congregation, and reached the entire African, yea, the entire Western, Church. He was the leading genius in the African Synods, which were held, toward the close of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, at Carthage, in 398, 403, 411, 413, 419, and in other places, particularly against the Donatists and Pelagians. He took the liveliest interest in all the questions which were then agitated, and was unwearied in devoting his powers to the general good. The Catholic Church had at that time three great enemies, who threatened to deface and tear her in pieces at every point, and had even forced themselves into the congregation of Hippo. These were *Manichaeism*, *Donatism*, and *Pelagianism*. Augustine was their great opponent and final conqueror. The whole spiritual power of the Latin Church concentrated itself, so to speak, in him, for the overthrow of these antagonists. He left no lawful means unemployed for the expulsion of the evil. But he principally fought with the weapon of mind, and wrote a large number of works, which, although designed specially for the necessities and circumstances of the time, yet contain a store of the profounded truths for all ages.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST YEARS OF AUGUSTINE'S LIFE.—  
HIS DEATH.

IN his latter years, Augustine cast one more glance behind upon his entire literary course, and in his "Retractions" subjected it to a severe criticism. His writings against the Semi-Pelagians, in which a milder and more gentle spirit reigns, belong to this period. Like Luther and Melancthon, he was inclined to melancholy with the failure of his bodily strength. This was increased by much bitter experience, and the heavy misfortunes which befell his fatherland. The Vandal king, Genseric, with 50,000 warriors, among whom were Goths and Alani, in May of the year 428, crossed over from Spain to Africa, which was now filled with confusion and desolation. These barbarians raged more fiercely than wild beasts of prey, reduced towns and villages to ashes, spared no age or sex, were especially severe against the orthodox clergy, because they themselves were Arians, and changed that beautiful country into a desert. Augustine's opinion was, that the bishops at least should stand by their congregations in the hour of need; that the bonds, which the love of Christ had knit, should not be rent asunder; and that they should endure quietly whatever God might

send. "Whoever flies," he wrote to Bishop Quodvultdeus, "so that the Church is not deprived of the necessary ministrations, he does what God commands or permits. But whoever so flies, that the flock of Christ is left without the nourishment by which it spiritually lives, he is an hireling, who, seeing the wolf come, flies, because he has no care for the sheep."

Boniface, the commander-in-chief of the imperial forces in Africa, who was friendly to Augustine, though the occasion of much trouble to him, was beaten by the Vandals, and threw himself with the remnant of his army into the fortified city of Hippo, where Possidius and several bishops had taken refuge. Augustine was sorely oppressed by the calamities of his country, and the destruction of Divine worship, which could now be celebrated only in the strong-holds of Carthage, Cirta, and Hippo. At table, he once expressed himself to his friends in the following language: "What I pray God for is, that He will deliver this city from the enemy; or, if He has determined otherwise, that He may strengthen his servant for his sufferings; or, which I would rather, that He would call me from this world to Himself."

The last wish was granted him. In the third month of the siege he was attacked by a violent fever, and ten days before his death he withdrew into retirement, after having up till that time proclaimed the word of God to his congregation without interruption. He spent this season in reading the penitential Psalms, which were attached to the wall by his bed-side, in holy meditations, tears,

prayers, and intercessions. He once said that no one, especially no minister of the Gospel, ought to depart this life without earnest repentance; and wrote concerning himself, "I will not cease to weep, until He comes, and I appear before Him; and these tears are to me pleasant nutriment. The thirst which consumes me, and incessantly draws me toward yon fountain of my life, this thirst is always more burning when I see my salvation delayed. This inextinguishable desire carries me away to those streams, as well amid the joys as amid the sorrows of this world. Yea, if I stand well with the world, I am wretched in myself, until I appear before God."

On the 28th of August, 430, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, the great man peacefully departed into a blissful eternity, in the full possession of his faculties, and in the presence of his friends. He left no will, for, having embraced voluntary poverty, he had nothing to dispose of, except his books and manuscripts, which he bequeathed to the Church.\*

Soon after, Hippo was taken. Henceforth Africa was lost to the Romans, and vanished from the arena of Church-history. The culminating point of the spiritual greatness of the African Church was also that of her ruin. But her ripest fruit, the spirit and the theology of Augustine, could not perish. It fell on the soil of Europe, where it

\* His friend and biographer, Possidius, says, *Vit. Aug.* c. 31: Testamentum nullum fecit, quia unde faceret, pauper Dei non habuit. Ecclesiae bibliothecam omnesque codices diligenter posteris custodiendos semper jubebat.



has produced new glorious flowers and fruits, and to this day exerts a blessed influence in the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### AUGUSTINE'S WRITINGS.

AUGUSTINE is the most fruitful author among the Latin church-fathers. His writings are almost too numerous. Possidius reckons them, including sermons and letters, at 1030. He has here deposited his views in every department of theology, the rare treasures of his mind and heart, and a true expression of the deepest religious and ecclesiastical movements of his age, and at the same time secured an immeasurable influence upon all succeeding generations. He wrote out of the abundance of his heart, not to acquire literary fame, but moved by the love of God and man. In point of learning he stands behind Origen and Jerome; but in originality, depth, and fulness of soul and spirit, he surpasses all the Greek and Latin fathers. He has been blamed, and not unjustly, for verbosity and frequent repetitions; his style is sometimes very negligent, but with design, for he says, "I would rather be censured

by the grammarians than not understood by the people"; and yet he had the language wholly at command, and knew especially how to wield the antithetic power of the Latin in a masterly manner. His writings are full of the most ingenious puns, and rise not seldom to strains of true eloquence and a rare poetic beauty. Since his productive period as an author extends over four decades of years, from his conversion till the evening of his life, and since he unfolded himself before the eyes of the public, contradictions on many minor points were unavoidable; wherefore, in old age, he subjected his literary career to an unprejudiced revision in his "Retractations," and, in a spirit of genuine Christian humility, recalled much that he had maintained before from honest conviction.

His *philosophical* writings, which were composed soon after his conversion, and which are yet full of Platonism, we have already mentioned. His *theological* works may be divided into five classes.

1. The *Exegetical*. Here we may name his expositions of the Sermon on the Mount (393), of the Epistle to the Romans (394), of the Psalms (415), of John (416,) and his "Harmony of the Gospels" (400). His strength lies not by any means in thorough knowledge of the original languages, and historical and grammatical exegesis, in which he was excelled by Jerome among the Latins, and Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact, among the Greeks, but in the development of theological and religious thoughts. He shows here an uncommon acquaintance and the most inward sympathy with the Holy

Scriptures, and often penetrates their deepest meaning with independent spirit. He is almost always ingenious and edifying, even where he evidently misses the natural meaning, and loses himself in allegorical fancies. As is well known, he exercised also a considerable influence on the final settlement of the canon of Holy Scripture, whose limit was so firmly fixed at the Synods of Hippo, in the year 393, and of Carthage, in 397, that even now it is universally received in the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, with the exception of the difference of the two confessions in regard to the value of the Old Testament Apocrypha.

2. *The Apologetical.* To these belong pre-eminently his twenty-two books on the City of God (*De Civitate Dei*), begun in 413, and finished in 426, in the seventy-second year of his life. They form a most noble and genial defence of Christianity and the Church, in the face of the approaching downfall of the old Roman empire and classic civilisation, in the face of the irruption of the wild, northern barbarians into Southern Europe and Africa, and in view of the innumerable misfortunes and calamities by which the human race was scourged during that transition-period, and which were attributed by the heathen to the decay of the ancient faith in the gods, and laid to the charge of Christianity. Here Augustine shows that all these events are the result of a process of internal purification long since begun, a judgment to the heathen and a powerful call on them to awake and repent, and at the same time a healthful trial

to Christians, and the birth-throes of a new spiritual creation. Then he turns from the view of a perishing, natural world, and her representative, the city of Rome, conquered and laid waste by Alaric, the King of the Goths, in the year 410, to the contemplation of a higher, supernatural world, to the "City of God," founded by Christ upon a rock, and shows that this can never be destroyed, but, out of all the changes and revolutions of time, must rise, phoenix-like, with new power and energy, and, after the fulfilment of her earthly mission, shall be separated even from external communion with the wicked world, and enter into the Sabbath of eternal rest and spiritual repose.

3. *The Dogmatical and Polemical.* These are the most numerous and important; for our church-father was peculiarly endowed as a speculative theologian and an acute controversialist. Among his dogmatic works, we mention the fifteen books on the Holy Trinity (against the Arians), the hand-book (Enchiridion) on Faith, Hope, and Love, and the four books on Christian Doctrine (De Doctrina Christiana, a hermeneutic dogmatic compendium for religious teachers, and instruction in the development of Christian doctrine, from the Holy Scripture and its clear exposition). His most important polemic and dogmatic books and treatises may again be divided into three classes.

a) *Anti-Manichæan* writings: "On the Morals of the Manichæans," "On the Morals of the Catholic Church," "On Free Will," "On the Two Souls," "Against

Faustus," and others. They are the chief sources of our knowledge of the Manichaean errors and their refutation.

b) *Anti-Donatistic* writings: "On Baptism, against the Donatists," "Against the Epistle of Parmenianus," "Against Petilianus," "Extract from the Transactions of the Religious Conference with the Donatists," and others. They are the chief sources of our knowledge of the remarkable Donatistic Church-schism in Africa, which, begun long before Augustine's time, was overcome principally by his intellectual ability.\* They treat chiefly of the essence and the attributes of the Church, and her relation to the world, of the evil of schism and separation. In general their ruling tendency is exclusively churchly, and wholly anti-Protestant; for the development of the Catholic idea of the Church, her unity and universality, begun already by Ignatius and Irenaeus, and carried on by Cyprian, they bring to a final completion.

c) *Anti-Pelagian* writings of the years 411-420, to which are to be added the anti-Semi-Pelagian writings of the last years of his life. We mention here the books "On Nature and Grace," "On Merit and Forgiveness,"

\* Unfortunately, he approved also of violent measures of state for the suppression of the separatistic movement, and thus, to a certain extent, paved the way for those cruel persecutions of heretics which deform so many pages of later Church-history, from which it is certain his own Christian feelings, if he could have foreseen them, would have shrunk back in horror. Thus great and good men, even, without intending it, have, through mistaken zeal, occasioned much mischief.

“On Grace and Free Will,” “On the Spirit and the Letter,” “On Original Sin,” “On the Predestination of the Saints,” “On the Gift of Perseverance” (*De Dono Perseverantiae*), “Against Pelagius and Caelestius,” “Against Julian” (a bishop of Eclanum in Apulia infected with Pelagianism). In these treatises, Augustine develops his profound doctrines of original sin and guilt, the loss of spiritual freedom, the natural inability of man for good, of the grace and merit of Christ, of faith, of election, and perseverance to the end, in opposition to the shallow and superficial errors of the contemporaneous monks, Pelagius and Caelestius, who denied natural depravity, and just so far overthrew the existence of Divine grace in Christ. They belong to his most meritorious labours, and are decidedly evangelical, and have therefore exerted a greater influence on the Reformers of the sixteenth century, especially on Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, than any of his own, or of all other human productions, besides.\*

4. *The Ascetic and Edifying.* Among these we number the “Soliloquies,” “Meditations,” “On the Christian Conflict,” “On the Excellence of Marriage,” and a great mass of sermons and homilies, part of which were written out by himself, and part taken down by his hearers. Of these there are about 400; but very recently,

\* I furnished a detailed representation of the *Pelagian controversy*, and Augustine’s views in connection with it, for the *Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review of Andover*, for the year 1848, vol. v. p. 205—243.



that indefatigable editor of unpublished manuscripts, Cardinal Angelo Mai, has given to the press several more, lately discovered among the treasures of the Vatican Library.

5. *Auto-biographical*, or writings which concern his own life and personal relations. Here belong the invaluable "Confessions," already known to us, his exhibition of himself in the beginning, and the "Retractations," his revision and self-correcting retrospect at the close, of his splendid career in the Church and the fields of literature; lastly, a collection of 270 letters, in which he exhibits a true picture of his external and internal life. "Here may be seen what labours he undertook for the honour of God and the salvation of his brethren; how, like St. Paul, he was careful to become all things to all men. One can almost believe he sees the hen, of which the Gospel speaks, as she gathers her chickens under her wings."

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND INFLUENCE OF AUGUSTINE  
ON HIS OWN AND SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS.

FROM this comprehensive mass of writings it is easy to determine the significance and influence of Augustine. In the sphere of theology, as well as in all other departments of literature, it is not the quantity but the quality of the intellectual product which renders it most effective. The Apostles have written but little, and yet the Gospel of St. John, for example, or the Epistle to the Romans, exert more influence than whole libraries of excellent books, yea, than the literatures of whole nations. Tertullian's "*Apologeticus*," Cyprian's short treatise "On the Unity of the Church," Anselm's "*Cur Deus Homo*," and "*Monologium*," Bernhard's tracts on "Despising the World," and "On the Love of God," the anonymous little book of "German Theology," and similar productions, which may be contained on a couple of sheets, have moved and given powerful impulse to more minds than the numerous abstruse folio volumes of many scholastics of the Middle Ages, and old Protestant times. Augustine's "Confessions," the simple little book of the humble, secluded monk, Thomas à Kempis, "On the Imitation of Christ," Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Arndt's "True Christianity," and Gerhart's "Hymns on the Passion,"

have each converted, edified, strengthened, and consoled, more persons than whole ship-loads of indifferent religious books and commentaries.

But Augustine was very far from being a windy babler and a mechanical book-manufacturer. The great mass of his writings, with all the faults and repetitions of isolated parts, are a spontaneous out-flow from the marvellous treasures of his active and highly-gifted mind, and his truly pious heart. Although master of one of the smaller bishoprics, he was yet in fact the head and leading spirit of the African Church, around whom Aurelius of Carthage, the primate of Africa, Evodius of Uzala, Fortunatus of Cirta, Possidius of Calama, Alypius of Tagestum, and many other bishops, willingly and gladly ranged themselves. Yea, in him the whole Western Church of Antiquity reached its highest spiritual vigour and bloom. His appearance in the history of dogmas forms a distinct epoch, especially as it regards *anthropological* and *soteriological* doctrines, which he advanced considerably further, and brought to a greater clearness and precision, than they had ever had before, in the consciousness of the Church. For this was needed such rare union of the speculative talent of the Greek, and of the practical spirit of the Latin, Church, as he alone possessed. As in the doctrines of sin and grace, of the fall of Adam and the redemption of Christ, the two cardinal points of practical Christianity, he went far beyond the theology of the Oriental Church, which devoted its chief energies to the development of the dogmas

of the Holy Trinity and the person of Christ, so at the same time he opened up new paths for the progress of Western theology.

Not only over his own age, but over all succeeding generations also, he has exercised an immeasurable influence, and does still, as far as the Christian Church and theological science reach, with the exception, perhaps, of the Greek Church, which has grown stiff on the standpoint of antiquity, and for a while, at least, seems shut up against every theological movement. It may be doubted if ever any uninspired theologian has had and still has so large a number of admirers and disciples as the Bishop of Hippo. Whilst most of the great men in the history of the Church are claimed either by the Catholic or the Protestant Confession, and their influence is therefore confined to one or the other, our church-father enjoys from both a respect equally profound.

On the one hand, he is among the chief creators of the *Catholic* theology. Through the whole of the Middle Ages, from Gregory the Great down to the Fathers of Trent, he was the highest theological authority; and Thomas Aquinas alone could, in a later era, contest this rank with him. By his fondness for deeper speculation and more rational comprehension and defence of the doctrines of Scripture and the Church, as well as by his dialectic subtlety, he became the father of Mediaeval *Scholasticism*; and, at the same time, by his mystic fervour, and spirit glowing with love, the author of Mediaeval *Mysticism*. Thence we find that the most

distinguished representatives of orthodox Scholasticism, as Anselm, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and the representatives of Mysticism, as Bernhard of Clairvaux, Hugo of St. Victor, and Tauler, have collectively appealed to his authority, been nourished on his writings, and saturated with his spirit. But at this day, after the Catholic Church has in the Council of Trent declared herself exclusively Romish, as opposed to Evangelical, and condemned as heresies many of the doctrines of Augustine, especially that of predestination, not, it is true, under his own, but under other names, as *Protestant* and *Jansenist*, and for the most part in exaggerated and excrescent forms, yet she always counts him among her greatest saints and most illustrious church-doctors. And although Jesuitism, according to its ruling tendency, is anti-Augustinian, because anti-Evangelical and practically Pelagian, since it lays such stress on external human action and blind legal obedience, yet because Catholicism, as a Church, can never surrender her boasted infallibility, and, as a consequence flowing from it, reverence for her canonised teachers, she will not be able to prevent his writings from exercising a powerful influence over her theologians, and producing from time to time movements like that of Jansenism in the seventeenth century.

But, on the other hand, this same Augustine has also an *Evangelical-Protestant* significance. Next to the Apostle Paul, he was the chief teacher of the whole body of the Reformers of the sixteenth century; and his exegetical and anti-Pelagian writings were the main sources

from which they derived their views on the deep depravity of human nature, and the excellence of the forgiving, regenerating, and sanctifying grace of God in Christ, and opposed the dead formalism, self-righteous Pelagianism, and spiritless mechanism, of the prevailing scholastic theology and monkish piety. As is well known, they followed him, at least in the beginning, even to the dizzy abyss of the doctrine of Predestination, which Luther, in his work, "De Servo Arbitrio," Melancthon, in his "Commentary on the Romans," and still more Calvin, pushed into the terrible logical consequences of supralapsarianism, in order to root out Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, and with them all human boasting. Of Augustine they always speak with high esteem and love, which is the more remarkable, because they are otherwise very free, not only with the schoolmen, but with the church-fathers themselves, and sometimes, even, in the passionate heat of their opposition to slavish reverence, treat them with great neglect, and unjust depreciation of their merits.\*

\* In this, as everywhere, Luther is especially plain, bold, and characteristic. His contempt for Scholasticism, which he derives from "the accursed heathen, Aristotle," is well known. Even Thomas Aquinas, for whom the Lutheran theologians of the seventeenth century had great respect, he once calls "the dregs of all heresies, error, and destruction of the Gospel." Neither did he spare the church-fathers, and appears, more than the other Reformers, to have been conscious of the difference between Protestant and Patristic theology. "All the fathers," he once says with reckless boldness, "have erred in faith, and, if not converted before death, are eternally damned." "*St. Gregory* is the useless fountain-head and author of the fables of purgatory and masses for souls.



With good reason Böhringer remarks: "Luther cannot be understood without Augustine, nor the Reformation without Augustinianism. The most important contents

He was very ill acquainted with Christ and his Gospel;—he is entirely too superstitious; the devil has corrupted him." On *Jerome*, whose "Vulgata" was yet absolutely indispensable in his translation of the Bible into German, and rendered him the most valuable service, he was particularly severe, on account of his monastic tendencies, and exaggerated estimation of human works. He calls him a "heretic, who has written much profanity. He has deserved hell more than heaven. I know no one of the fathers to whom I am so hostile as to him. He writes only about fasting, virginity, and such things." For the same reason he condemns *St. Basil*, one of the chief promoters of Monachism: "He is good for nothing; is only a monk; I would not give a straw for him." Of *Chrysostom*, the greatest expounder of the Scriptures and pulpit- orator of the Greek Church, but of whom certainly he had only the most superficial knowledge, he says, "He is worth nothing to me; he is a babbler, wrote many books which make a great show, but are only huge, wild, tangled heaps, and crowds, and bags full of words, for there is nothing in them, and little wool sticks." Now-a-days, not a solitary Lutheran theologian of any learning will agree with him in this view. The Reformer was at times dissatisfied with *Augustine* himself, because, amid all his congeniality of mind, he could not just find in him his "*sola fide*:" "Augustine has often erred: he is not to be trusted. Although good and holy, he was yet lacking in true faith, as well as the other fathers." But over against this casual expression stand a number of eulogies on Augustine. Luther's words especially must not be weighed too nicely, else any and every thing can be proven by him; and the most irreconcilable contradictions shown in his writings. We must always judge him according to the moment in which, and that against which, he spoke, and duly remember also his bluntness and his stormy, warlike nature. Thus, the above disparaging sentences upon some of the greatest and most meritorious theologians of all ages, will be partly annulled by Luther's otherwise evident churchly and historical feeling, and by many expressions like that in a letter to Albert of

of Augustinianism are, we think anthropological (grace and freedom); and these contents, comprehended not in its external authority, but in its innermost substance, are first fairly brought to life and light in the Reformation, and develope and complete themselves in the Evangelical Church." And, therefore, since the Reformation, our church-father has been praised and honoured among all believing evangelical theologians as one of the brightest lights and most beautiful ornaments of the Church of Christ. Protestantism cannot justly be reproached with defect in its estimation of true tradition and church-antiquity, as long as it proves its Christian feeling and good taste, by prizing, above all others, those of the fathers and

Prussia (A. D. 1532), where he declares the importance of tradition in matters of faith, as strongly even as any Catholic.

In reference to the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, he says: "Moreover, this article has been unanimously believed and held from the beginning of the Christian Church to the present hour, as may be shown from the books and writings of the dear fathers, both in the Greek and Latin languages,—which testimony of the entire holy Christian Church ought to be sufficient for us, even if we had nothing more. *For it is dangerous and dreadful to hear or believe anything against the unanimous testimony, faith, and doctrine of the entire holy Christian Church, as it has been held unanimously in all the world up to this year 1500.* Whoever now doubts of this, he does just as much as though he believed in no Christian Church, and condemns not only the entire holy Christian Church as a damnable heresy, but Christ Himself, and all the Apostles and Prophets, who founded this article, when we say, 'I believe in a holy Christian Church,' to which Christ bears powerful testimony in Matt. 28. 20: 'Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world,' and Paul in 1 Tim. 3. 15: 'The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth.'"

later Catholic divines who are the most profound and pious, as, for example, an Augustine, an Athanasius, a Chrysostom, an Anselm, and a Bernhard. It may be able, from the higher and freer stand-point which it occupies, not only to understand itself, but also the steps which have led to it, and estimate impartially the great lights of Catholicism,\* whilst the latter has not yet learned to do justice to the Reformers and their successors. There are two Protestant theologians, whom, with genuine admiration and warm enthusiasm, we have to thank for the latest and most complete treatises on the life and doctrine of the great African church-father, namely, Frederick Böhringer, reformed preacher in the canton of Zurich,† and Charles Bindemann, professor of evangelical theology in the university at Greifswald.‡

\* This is true at least of the late evangelical theology of Germany, which, in a truly liberal and Catholic spirit, investigates Church-history in all its departments, and has reproduced, from the sources, monographs of the most important church-fathers.

† *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen oder die Kirchengeschichte in Biographien*, Band 1, Abth. 3, S. 99-774. Zürich, 1845.

‡ *Der heilige Augustinus*, Erster Band, Berlin, 1844. This volume, dedicated to the sainted Neander, only comes down to the baptism of the church-father; and the continuation of this very thorough work, which must comprise at least three volumes, has not yet appeared. In an excellent manner, and wholly agreeing with what we have before said in detail, Bindemann, in his preface, sketches the significance of his hero in the following words: "St. Augustine is one of the most extraordinary lights in the Church. In importance, he takes rank behind no teacher who has laboured in her since the days of the Apostles. It may well be said that the first place among the church-fathers is due to him; and at the time of the Reformation, only a Luther, by reason of the fulness and

If it be the task of the present and future age to reproduce, in a free spirit, the ecclesiastical past, and to combine its conflicting tendencies into a higher unity, we may fairly suppose that the deep and comprehensive mind of Augustine (in whom the Reformation, the Middle Ages, and Antiquity, have taken an equal interest, and from whom they have received the same powerful impulse, although in different directions) has not yet completed its great and noble mission. Such a genius, which embraces, as it were, the three grand phases of the historical development of the Church, and which is still held in equal esteem by the Catholic and Evangelical confession, appears to us a welcome witness and guarantee of the consoling thought, that the difference or antagonism of these two main branches of the Christian world, however deep and far-reaching, is, after all, not absolute and irreconcilable, and that we may hopefully and prayerfully look, after a long and violent conflict, to a new age, where all injustice and bitterness of strife shall be forgiven and forgotten, and all discords of the past be dissolved in the sweet harmonies of infinite love and peace.

depth of his spirit, and his nobleness of character, was worthy to stand at his side. He is the highest point of the development of the Western Church before the Middle Ages. From him the Mysticism no less than the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages has drawn its life; he forms the mightiest pillar of Roman Catholicism; and the leaders of the Reformation derived from his writings, next to the study of the Holy Scriptures, especially the Paulinian Epistles, those principles which gave birth to a new era."

What Augustine says so beautifully of the individual man, may with equal propriety be applied to the course and destiny of Church-history as a whole : “ *Thou, O Lord, hast created us for Thee, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee !*”

FINIS.