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THE LIFE
OF
ST. AUGUSTINE

BISHOP, CONFESSOR AND DOCTOR

OF
THE CHURCH.

By P. E. MORIARTY, D. D.

Ex-Assistant General O. S. A.



Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te—
AUG. CONFESS. i. 1.

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ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. MONICA.

*"Son, I have no further delight in this life. One thing I desired to
be done for me, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died."*



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P R E F A C E .

§ T. AUGUSTINE, Bishop of Hippo, is universally esteemed as one of the most eminent of those “just men whose memory shall be held in eternal benediction.” The remarkable vicissitudes of his life, the surprising developments of character, and the wonderful transitions which finally moulded him into a noble member of the Christian body, present a charming subject of intellectual entertainment and cordial edification. His eulogists have not hesitated to apply to him the motto of sacred Scripture: “Like the sun he shone in his days;” and truly this was the case. The dawning of childhood ominated a fervent aspiration for piety and truth; then the ascendant and expanding glow of adolescence was overcast with cloudy

aberrations, hiding the latent flame of divine love ; at length, in the fervid noon of maturity, the light of justice beamed into a brilliancy that blended the irradiation of time with immortal glory. This meets our view when we read the history of St. Augustine, and makes his biography immeasurably interesting to every thoughtful Christian. The seed—the Holy Name Jesus—though implanted only by the mortal breath of maternal culture, did not decay in the soul of Augustine; fertilized by “water and the Spirit,” it grew into sacred vigor, and bloomed forever with the fruits of divine grace. Most truly he said, “Thou, O Lord, hast created us for Thee, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.” When we unfold the details of his life we behold the effects of that “rest.” That which his genius and piety produced in scientific disquisition, in pastoral instruction for the support of virtue and the correction of vice, and in luminous dissolution of error, we know by the vital energy he has transmitted through the life of the Church, which has survived with unimpaired vigor the

demise of so many generations. The substance of his sermons is now preached in the languages of every Christian people; the canonical regulations of religion are still framed according to his wise provisions for ecclesiastical polity, and the audacious speculations of infidelity are daily overawed by the truthful prowess wherewith he prostrated the numerous hosts of unbelievers who troubled the household of faith in ages long past. The remorse of the convicted penitent is assuaged by the sweetness of holy contrition through his "Confessions," and to those who seek union with the Lord in the entertainment of heavenly prospects, his meditations open out vistas through which the orb of heavenly light is seen, and his soliloquies transfuse an unction of heavenly comfort through all the sensibilities of the soul. The most fertile in genius, the most toilsome in learned labor, have been astonished at the sight of the numerous folios into which the pen of St. Augustine crowded disquisitions in every department of science and literature. Wherever we look throughout the domain

of the Church, we cannot fail to perceive vestiges of his apostolic labors. He has inscribed his fame in the numerous charitable and religious foundations which owe their existence to his model for the regular observance of Christian life. Innumerable are the churches, fanes of learning, and palaces of the poor, which arise under the auspices of St. Augustine, and are seen in every circle of civilization, monuments of his sanctity.

We offer the biography of this favorite of heaven and friend of man, as an humble contribution to the reverence which the Lord has ordained for His faithful servants, and an aid to the performance of the pious duty of praising God in His saints.

May the efficacy of the Holy Name whereof we are reminded by the pious sentiments of St. Augustine be diffused through the souls of all our readers; and may love and adoration of Jesus increase now and for ever.

THRENODY OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Thou, O Lord, hast created us for Thee, and our heart is restless,
until it rests in Thee!*—ST. AUGUSTINE CONFESS.

My heart ran wide o'er sea and earth,
I longed for rest and quiet peace,
I gave the reins to boundless thought;
I searched for it in noisy mirth,
I looked for rest in sensual ease,
I sought for it and found it not.

Soon as the airy phantom rose,
It melted from my gaze away;
It left me sad and troubled more:
Unseemly joy gave place to woes,
My sunshine grew a misty ray,
My brightest hopes were clouded o'er.

The deeper that I clung to earth,
The more I felt disquiet reign,
More gloom girt round my choicest glee:
For I the while was nursing dearth,
And hugging fast my iron chain,
Away, my God, from peace and Thee.

The more I fled from Thee, my all,
More sunk the iron in my breast;
Thou wert my peace, and still I fled,
Deaf to the music of thy call,
Senseless to thine appeals of rest,
In seeming life as I were dead.

Still thou didst press me, and didst give
A penance to upbraid and chafe,
Till I should melt before thy grace,
Till I should turn to Thee and live,
And find in Thee a harbor safe,
A refuge sure, and resting-place.

These didst thou give, my heart increase
Of will and power, of love and light;
That like a mighty river flows,
Then did my heart recover peace;
And turning from a world's despise,
In Thee, my God, found calm repose.

P. E. M.



LIFE OF ST. AUGUSTINE, B. C. D.

CHAPTER I.

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S BIRTH—PARENTAGE—ADVANTAGE ARISING FROM THE CHRISTIAN CARE OF HIS SAINTLY MOTHER, MONICA—ALARMING APPEARANCE OF EVIL DISPOSITIONS—REVELATION OF GENIUS—COMBAT OF RELIGIOUS AND WORLDLY IMPRESSIONS.

ST. AUGUSTINE holds eminent and glorious distinction amongst those who live in the blessed memory of the Church. Although fourteen hundred years have elapsed since his mortal covering was laid in the darkness and silence of the grave, his name, his virtues, and the fruits of his sacred labors flourish with undiminished splendor. The edifying influences of his example, and the instructive illumination of his wisdom are coextensive with the expansion of the Chris-

tian fold. From year to year, from generation to generation, his eulogy is proclaimed throughout the universe of faith, in the words of his friend Possidius, who said: "He was like unto the angels in fervor, like unto the prophets in the knowledge of mysteries, like unto the apostles in the preaching of the gospel." What motive may we expect to find in the contemplation of his life, for those elevated sentiments and noble utterances? Will our thoughts be directed no farther than the man, tenant of this wilderness of human life; one naturally fashioned unto honor out of the same family clay, exposed to the sad vicissitudes of sin and sickness, and receiving the only final and summary tribute to all the merit and toil of mortal grandeur, in the pithy and compassionate reward: "*De mortuis nihil nisi bonum.*" No: Divine Grace vanquished rebellious nature. That is the history of the Saint. Looking at Augustine, we are impelled to ask, what is the great heart, lofty genius, and all human eminence, without the grace of God? In the character of Augustine, we can, very pro-

perly, group together the highest qualities of an excellent disposition; magnanimity, grandeur of thought, and sublimity of genius; all that forms the hero, and elevates the admiration of mankind to the loftiest eminence, yet all would terminate in a dismal phantom, without the crown of heavenly grace. We could not feel else than pity and regret, if we had nothing more to inspect than the comprehensive genius which qualified Augustine to be an instructor to his masters in the days of his pupilage; or the fascination of manners which endeared him to all his associates. In that case we would find him, as he humbly expressed it, in all his thoughts and actions, "as man, like man himself, naught but vanity and sin." But the name of Augustine is illustrious, the Church preserves his memorial in benediction, and the household of faith is informed and edified through him, because through the grace of God, he who once flickered within the shadows of sin and death with a meteoric glowing of earthly vanity and pleasure, became distinguished as most saintly

amongst the learned, and amongst saints the most learned. Hence he was privileged to exclaim in the words of St Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace in me hath not been void. I have labored more abundantly, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

Tagestum, an obscure town of Numidia, on the northern shore of Africa, obtained an everlasting name in history by the birth, on the 13th of November, 353, of AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, SAINT, CONFESSOR, and DOCTOR. He was peculiarly fated by having a heathen father, and his mother a saint; hence the various and opposite influences affecting the aspects of his life. Patricius, the father, was a man of the world, vain, sensual, and remarkably irritable. He had not learned the simple truth which transcends all secular science and philosophy, viz: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul." The ignorance or oblivion of that principle, mainly cause the degeneracy of individuals and of nations, and such was the case for a time through the parental

interference of Patricius. His sole desire and design was to make his son a fondling of the world, wealthy and honored, receiving and bestowing homage among men, serenely indifferent about eternity, and untrammelled by any allegiance to heaven. Readily and quickly Augustine coincided with those paternal yearnings; he had all the qualities to insure success for his father's purpose. After long years of experience he described with the fervid feeling of a wounded heart the consequences of that sad success.

In the marvellous book of his "Confessions," the lamentation of Augustine for the deficiency of religious guidance in his early education, must convince us that more happiness arises to the individual and to society from Christian disposition than from great parts and brilliant accomplishments. When they are all united in the same person, they greatly enhance each other's value; but if they are separated, it is certain that goodness of heart, rectitude of intention, meekness, innocence and simplicity, are infinitely more desirable than wit, eloquence, and erudi-

tion. Those who are nourished with the divine word will seldom fall into fatal or irretrievable mistakes by the defects of their understandings, or of their acquired knowledge. It is the obliquity of the heart which causes the most frequent and most destructive instances of immorality and irreligion. "It is a people that do err in their heart," says the sacred text—"and they have not known my ways;" a plain intimation, that an ignorance of the ways of God, of truth and virtue, is productive of restless misery, making the heart like a troubled sea. It foams, it is violently agitated with every blast, it is dashed against the rocks, it casteth up mire and dirt. Fortunately, the mother of Augustine was a pious and a virtuous Christian, who instructed him in the faith of Jesus Christ, and thus elevated herself the future Saint Monica, to rank among the most noble and holy women who adorn the temple of religion, and prepared the richest gem in the triumphal crown of the Church, which is the Spouse of Jesus Christ. Speaking of his tenderest years, Augustine says: "I then

already believed, and my mother and the whole household, except my father; yet did not he prevail over the power of my mother's piety in me, that as he did not yet believe, so neither should I. The dearest wish of Monica's heart was to see her much beloved son secure in the bosom of the Church. Her very life was breathed in prayer for this end, and the strongest human influence Augustine experienced was the religion of his devoted mother.

What a public blessing, what an instrument of the most exalted good is a virtuous Christian mother! Very justly St. Paul reminded his disciple Timothy, of the faith of his grandmother Lois, and the devotion of his mother, Eunice. How many in every clime and generation owe to it all the virtue and piety that adorns them; or recollect at this moment some saint in heaven that brought them into light, to labor for their happiness, temporal and eternal! No one can be ignorant of the irresistible influence which such a mother possesses in forming the hearts of her children at a season when nature takes

in lesson and example at every pore. Confined by duty and inclination within the walls of her own house, every hour of her life becomes an hour of instruction, every feature of her conduct a transplanted virtue. We may behold her encircled by her beloved charge, like a being more than human, to which every mind is bent, and every eye directed; the eager simplicity of infancy inhaling from her lips the sacred truths of religion, in adapted phrase and familiar story; the whole rule of their moral and religious duties simplified for easier infusion. The countenance of this fond and anxious parent all beaming with delight and love, and her eye raised occasionally to heaven in fervent supplication for a blessing on her work,—O what a glorious part does such a woman act on the great theatre of humanity, and how much is the mortal to be pitied, who is not struck with the image of such excellence! When we look to its consequences direct and remote, as in the instance of Monica, we see the plants she has raised and cultivated spreading through the community with the

richest increase of fruit ; we see her diffusing happiness and virtue through a great portion of the human race. We can fancy generations yet unborn rising to prove and to hail her worth, and we adore that God who can destine a single human creature to be the stem of such extended and incalculable benefit to the world. All the treasures of a noble mind and generous heart, refined by Christian culture, Monica dedicated to the glory of God and the benefit of her son and of her husband. In the character of wife, we find this illustrious pattern of Christian virtue existing for the happiest purposes. Marriage is often a state in which neither of the parties is much the better for coming together. When all consideration of their worth is put out of question in the motives that bring on the connection, the result must generally be, and naturally is, both unfavorable to their felicity and their manners. What a miserable business it is that terminates at best, after a short period, in a compromise to detest each other, with ceremony and politeness, and pursue their respective way of folly or de-

pravity, according to their fancy; a case where terms of endearment are used that the heart disavows, and a mask of union and affection put on, in the vain hope of blindfolding the world. Yet such is the fate of many, many a pair; and must ever be so, where the only inducement to the state is passion, interest, or the pride of alliance.

Nothing, however, is more true than what the apostle has asserted, that a Christian wife is the salvation of her husband. For surely if any thing can have power to wean a man from evil, it is the living image of all that is perfect, constantly before his eyes, in the person whom, next to God, he is forced to reverence and respect, and who, next to God, he must be assured, has his present and future felicity most at heart; who joins to the influence of her example, the most assiduous attention to please; who knows from the experience of every hour, where his errors and vices may be assailed with any prospect of success; who is instructed, by the close study of his disposition, when to speak and when to be silent; who watches

and distinguishes that gleam of reflection which no eye can perceive but her own; who can fascinate by the mildness and humility of her manner, at the moment she expostulates and reproveth; who receives him with smiles and kindness, even when conscience smites him the most with a sense of his neglect and unworthiness; who has always a resource at hand in his difficulties, and tender apologies to relieve him from himself; and a gracious presentiment ever on her lips, that the day will come, when he will know how to value the advantages of good conduct, and the unruffled serenity of virtue. The ministry of such a woman is daily found to work the reformation of men, when all other resources fail; when neither misfortune, nor shame, nor the counsels of friendship, nor the considerations of hell or heaven have any more effect than the whistling of the wind. Monica was in the fullest perfection such a character. 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 ashamed, which, had it been done sooner, would only have fed the unhallowed fire. His conjugal infidelity she bore with patience and forgiving charity. Her highest aim was to win him over to the faith, not so much by words, as by a truly humble and pious conversation, and the most conscientious discharge of her household duties. In this she was the successful instrument of divine goodness; for, a year before his death Patricius enrolled himself among the catechumens and was baptized. Her daily life was spent in strict conformity with the rule of the apostle, "Whatever she performed was for the glory and honor of God." Accordingly it was her delight "to meditate day and night on the divine law," and every morning and evening to attend church, to assist at the most holy sacrifice, and to hear the preaching of the gospel. She esteemed it a precious privilege to make a daily offertory at the altar, where in rapture she heard the definite and triumphant exclamation of catholic, apostolic faith: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of

the BLOOD of CHRIST, and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the BODY of the LORD." (Cor. II. ch. v.) With Christian liberality she extended her hand to the poor, whom she designated "her brethern in Jesus;" not, as in modern barbarian phraseology, "the persons"—"the poor things." Strangers found a home in her hospitality, not the poisoned civility of pity. Above all, she labored for the righteous culture of her children; and, as Augustine declares, "bare her children spiritually with greater pains than she brought them forth naturally into the world."

Such were the parents of Augustine. From his father he inherited those evil propensities which tainted his early conduct, and produced the bitter anguish he afterwards so often, and so pathetically described. But from his mother he received the good dispositions which, though sadly alloyed for some time, in the season of divine mercy, became instrumental for the prodigious operations of the grace of God. He says, that, "with his mother's milk his heart sucked in the name of Jesus," and it was always

dear to him even amidst his most grievous disorders. Wisely, his mother had the Holy Name on her tongue, in order that her son might learn to pronounce it betimes, and to invoke it in his little wants with the lisping accents of infancy. It became so deeply imprinted in his heart, that in after years he could not relish the lectures of heathen philosophers and orators, because they did not contain the name of Jesus, which he found so frequently in the epistles of St Paul.

The notice of this edifying fact must make every thoughtful Christian quake with horror, when it is remembered how much this divine token of salvation is desecrated and profaned. We cannot pass by the occasion for wishing from the inmost soul, that men would imitate the sagacity of Monica, and the honor of Augustine, giving unto our dear Lord the reverence which is his portion, even with those infernal powers who believe and tremble, and bow the knee at the name of Jesus. Well may we exhort men to acquire the emolument of the name, which wrought, without other agent, the cure of a

long standing infirmity, and is now no less availing as a remedy for the crippling and palsy of the soul, for the tepidity which blights its energies, for the self-love which dries up all the springs of spiritual health.

Since that sacred Name was once formidable to devils, and scared them away from the strongholds of their fury, and the lurking places of their craft, they cannot be more tolerant of it now than of old; since Christ and Belial are at war, and will be at war to the end. Well does St. Bernard say: "Falls there any one into a transgression, and rushes into despair and death? Let him rather invoke the Name of life, and will he not straightway recover his health and live? When did hardness of heart ever encounter with success the saving Name, or the torpor of sloth, or the bitterness of the mind, or the languor of spiritual listlessness? When did not the invocation of the Name unlock the fountain of tears, and bid them gush freely and flow sweetly? Who hath not gained courage from that Name, that hath called on it with heart beating, at the approach of

danger? Here is the accomplishment of the promise: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Nought so restrains the violence of anger, assuages the swelling of pride, extinguishes the fire of concupiscence, moderates the thirst of avarice and curbs the impetuosity of inordinate affection. For truly, when I utter the name of Jesus, I set before the eyes of my soul ONE meek and humble, bland, temperate, chaste, merciful; a pattern, in fine, of all that is holy and of good repute, and the same Almighty Lord who is able both to heal me by His example and to fortify me by His aid. All these things sound in my ear with the sound of the name of Jesus." The affection which St. Augustine had for the Holy Name is one of the most brilliant points in his biography, and affords us the most useful lesson when portraying his character. Hence we insist upon attention. St. Bernard calls the Holy Name "melody in the ear;" and it is profitable to remember that music grows upon us by repetition. Who would not purchase

at any cost, the joy of recognizing the Sacred Name, when breathed into the ear by the Priest during the passage of the soul to judgment. The requisite for gaining that happiness is not impracticable. Let us take refuge in that most sweet Name, on each recurring occasion of trial; in temptation, in sadness, in perplexity, let us use that Holy Name, so as to use it almost by instinct, and find in it a happy treasure. And then in the last agony, that Name will come with the power of music to the ear; as a prelude to the canticle which is sung before the throne of God, by those who carry hence, written on their foreheads, the Name which they have loved best on all earth. We dare to think that few are lost who habitually utter the name of Jesus, either mentally or orally.

The faith of the son of Monica was neither sufficiently earnest nor sufficiently enlightened to withstand the whirlwind of the passions; nor could it resist the poisonous action of a hostile or even indifferent school of teaching. 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.” In a Christian point of view, Monica was right. Although ignorant sciolists, such as are in our day the principal impediment to progress, pretend that science and virtue must be distinct and independent, there is between them the most intimate harmony. Varying in their objects, means, and purposes, they have a reciprocal influence in the order of religion and civilization. Noble sentiments generally spring from bright intelligence; and those adorn the vivid enlightenment of the mind. Guided by virtue, science will avoid many fatal dangers, whilst the enrichment of science will give to virtue many attractions for homage. Hence the wise man in sacred Scripture received in knowledge a gift glorious beyond all the riches of the earth. (Wisdom, vii.) The Church, the divinely authorized minister of public instruction, does not dislike nor dis

courage intellectual cultivation; but detests and condemns the godless education which opened its first school under a very beautiful tree in woe-stricken Eden.





CHAPTER II.

COMMENCEMENT OF AUGUSTINE'S EDUCATION—BRILLIANT TALENTS
—MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL ABERRATIONS—PAINFUL UNREST
IN THE CONFLICT OF VICE AND VIRTUE—ARDENT ZEAL OF
MONICA FOR THE WELFARE OF HER SON.

AT that very early period of life Augustine plunged into the vortex of pleasure, and allowed many a billow of passion to immerse his soul. Of faults so sincerely acknowledged by himself in his book of "Confessions," and so gloriously repaired by his services to religion, nothing is to be remembered but the penitence of the saint and the forgiveness of the merciful Redeemer. When most astray in the wilderness of secular pursuits, and distracted by the clamor of sensuality, he was affected by the guardian genius of the devoted mother, he heard, like an echo from a shell on the shores of time, the religious impressions con-

veyed with the name of Jesus; his soul thrilled with emotions like weavelets from the heaving love in the Sacred Heart, and thence the fervid desire after God expressed in the opening of his Confessions: "Thou, God, hast created us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

Ambition greatly distinguished Augustine; and the same ardor that inspired the humanitarian toils of his youth, afterwards, sanctified by grace, vivified the nobler Christian aspirations of his maturity. In that passionate element, the desire for God always glimmered, so that in the dreariest hour of cloud and tempest, like the covenanted sign in the skies, even though with prismatic light, it spanned his soul with an arch of pacifying hope. Although he manifested wonderful talent in his earliest time, elementary instruction was for him quite a drudgery; mathematics he detested as a dry nuisance, and his buoyant spirit made frequent and large exceptions to the rather martial law of the school; and very hard words from the pupil, responded

to the hard blows of the pedagogue. "Extremes wont meet," says the proverb, antagonism must be; and if in those olden times the masters came *down* on the youngsters, now when the world pretends to grow young again, the juveniles rouse *up* the old fogies.

His first school was in his native town, thence he passed to the grammar-school at the neighboring city of Madaura. Then the early dislike for learning passed away, and the assiduity and success of studious application developed talents which elicited universal surprise and admiration. He excelled in the cultivation of Latin literature, the language being much to his taste, and familiar, through the conversation of the associates of childhood. But Greek he almost hated, the perplexing rules of its grammar being too much a restraint to the vivid and soaring genius which painters and poets, in after ages, commemorated by the type of the eagle. The beauties of Homer he never relished, and the riches of Grecian classics were forfeited. He was charmed by the Ausonian muse; he feasted on the keen wit, terse language and

polished satire of Horace; and Virgil, the immortal Bard of Mantua, fairly enraptured and inflamed him with fervid enthusiasm. With romantic diligence he followed Æneas in his wanderings, and shed tears over the fatality of Dido, who committed suicide for love; "yet wept not—as he tells us—for his own death, caused by not loving the Lord." The wooden horse full of armed warriors, the burning of Troy, and the shade of Creusa, satiated his imagination. Poetry not only improved his knowledge of language, expanded his mental faculties, and facilitated invention, but also created an elevation of thought and grace of expression, conducive to sublime eloquence. Pursuing a course of studies perfectly congenial with his rare intellect, he surpassed all competition in the literary career. At a later period, when the saint had the proper criterion for science, he thanked God for the many good endowments of his childhood, and for his success in learning, bearing fruits which he could offer to God, and earnestly begged that he might be enabled to refer them purely to His service.

His successful display of eminent talents, especially his brilliant oratory, excited the fondest hopes in his father, who had already destined him for the respectable and lucrative profession of a rhetorician, or public teacher of oratory.

In his sixteenth year he returned to Tages-tum by order of his father, who designed to send him to the University of Carthage. He remained a year at home, that time being required to enable Patricius, who was not rich, to mature his project in as cheap a manner as possible. The leisure of that interval was exceedingly detrimental to the youth, who gave full vent to unruly passions, rushed boldly on the path of folly, and solaced himself with poisoned enjoyment. The unconverted father heeded only the carnal emolument to be gained at all cost; but the ever faithful Monica labored in prayer and tears to bring around the wild plant a wholesome atmosphere, and sedulously admonished and exhorted him to lead a virtuous life. He himself confesses that he was ashamed to heed the exhortations of a woman; and even pre-

tended frequently to crimes which he had never committed, so as not to seem to fall behind his comrades. "I was not able," he says, "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." He was not at rest, but cast to and fro by seductions of error and conflicts with passion; sometimes swayed by remorse of conscience and the attractions of virtue, he was elevated to the heavens by the ardor of his aspirations, then precipitated to depths of darkness by abject propensities; almost in the same breath promising every thing good, and retracting his condemnations of iniquity, neither able to bear the burden of guilt nor the yoke of repentance, all his spiritual nature might be compared to a sea heaving waves of pang and anguish. The desire for God, so long rooted in his soul, moved again and again, not in soothing calm, but like the fire rushing through the whirling eruptions of a volcano. According to his own idea, 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."





CHAPTER III.

AUGUSTINE AT CARTHAGE—ENTERS THE UNIVERSITY—TRIUMPH OF GENIUS—FAILURE OF RELIGION—EVIL TEMPTATIONS IN A DEPRAVED CITY—STARTLING CRISIS OF THE PASSIONS—FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF BAD COMPANY—FAITH WAVERS IN THE SHOCK OF MORALS—INDOMITABLE PURSUIT OF LEARNING AMIDST THE DISTURBANCES OF AN UNEASY CONSCIENCE.

TOWARDS the end of 370 Augustine went to Carthage, the metropolis of Northern Africa. In that year Patricius died, having been baptized, and gained a prize for religion and heaven by the blessed interference of the exemplary Monica. Augustine was supported by his mother and the richest citizen of Tagestum, Romanianus, who was a distant relative. It was a sad trial for such a mother to part with her son, then in his seventeenth year, and to commit him to the temptations of a city in a condition of *progress* and modern civilization which jargon

signified in that age the same realities of degeneracy and seething corruption that are characteristic of the present retrograde time.

Carthage, reconstructed at the most brilliant period of Roman civilization, was in luxury and riches one of the foremost cities of the empire, the equal of Antioch and Alexandria. More modern than those cities, it had an appearance of newness which, though not quite pleasing to the elite of artistic taste, is sure to attract popular admiration. The grand harbor lately constructed by Augustus, with wide quays, and streets stretching far away in straight lines, well paved, sprinkled by fountains, and crowded with people, formed beautiful vistas. A street named "Celestial," was ornamented with many temples; another, that of the Bankers, glittered with gold and marble. On extensive avenues were seen large manufactories of rich stuffs, markets abundantly supplied with the choicest food, stores of every kind of merchandise, and all the industrial and commercial activity of the old Carthaginian spirit. Literature, and the cultivation of liberal arts

and science were not neglected. The numerous schools of grammar, philosophy, and eloquence were crowded by the youths of Africa, who were talented, but frivolous and dissolute; on one day applauding the professor, and on another rioting in mockery, insult and violence.

To the taste for literature, Carthage added artistic entertainment. The theatres afforded the master-pieces of Grecian art, and the finest specimens of the Roman drama. She was not confined to the representations of Sophocles and Euripides, of Terence and Plautus. The sports of the circus, and the combats of beasts and gladiators were in vogue, and so great was the avidity of the people for those scenes, and the excitement of gamblers, that they generally ended with outrages and tumult. We can imagine what kind of manners prevailed in such a city. It sufficeth to say, that in those respects Carthage rivalled Rome itself. Such was the city entered by a young man in his seventeenth year, gifted with a lively imagination, ardent in passions, who as yet had only

dreamed of the enchanted cup in which one imagines, at that age, to find every delight, and decides to drain it quickly and completely. The perils of Madaura were naught compared with those of Carthage, and if the innocent Augustine succumbed so easily at Madaura, what could be expected for the culpable Augustine, in the deeper dangers of Carthage.

He studied the sciences and humanities with a power and ardor of genius that won extraordinary approbation, and increased his ambition and self-conceit. It occurred with him as it invariably does when the best faculties are cultivated for the sordid motives of carnal and worldly interest. His soul was already a prey to sensual passions, and the associations of his collegiate life were not calculated to recall him to the austere performance of duty. He thought only of enjoyment; he knew no other pleasures than the gross and revolting indulgences of sense. "For within was a famine of that inward food, Thyself, my God; yet through that famine I was not hungered, but was without

all longing for incorruptible sustenance, not because filled therewith, but the more empty, the more I loathed it. For this cause my soul was sickly and full of sores; it miserably cast itself forth, desiring to be relieved by the touch of objects of sense." Truly, "there is nothing new under the sun," and much of the biography of the young student of Carthage would fit multitudes in our day, when so called "*modern thought—the advanced spirit of the age,*" &c., are exact repetitions of the immoral sophistries of former centuries. Secret societies, popular leagues, clubs, and various unsocial and irreligious recruiting depots for the antichristian war of the indefatigable strategist, Satan, were not novelties in Augustine's erratic period. Quite naturally, in the course he pursued, he was ensnared by associates, and became a member of a society called "Eversores—Destructives." The object of this organization was to embarrass religion, to discredit morality, and to calumniate, deride, and insult all pious and virtuous persons. Those men were showy in talents, most in vogue with the

masses, very garrulous about the rights of humanity; self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and insufficient on the score of liberty, fraternity, equality; exceedingly alert and expert in guarding independence, and affording defence against statecraft and priestcraft, by building fortresses and castles—in the air; and they were very witty.

It would be well with Augustine, as it may be with many persons in our present generation, if he had the good fortune to recollect the words of the royal prophet, "I hate the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the impious." That point, that raillery, which spares neither sacred nor profane, is too amusing, has too many charms to be excluded from the intercourse of infidel and immoral bandits; nay, it is more than probable that, did the Spirit of Darkness appear at this day, in rostrum or on platform, in the shape of a man of eloquence and of wit, his sallies against the heaven he forfeited would be heard without abhorrence—nay, with applause and admiration. Many a Christian, while admiring the brilliancy of the weapons

which impiety employs, has sustained without perceiving it, an incurable wound; like the deluded mariner, who, as fable reports, becoming all ear to the song of the syren, unhappily overlooked the gulph into which it was intended to allure him. Firm principles of religion may defy the rude and direct assault of such men, as the noble and majestic oak defies the fury of the storm, but like it, too easily yields to the deep and insidious mine. Against the evil that stands confessed in all its native deformity, we are naturally on our guard, and collect all our strength; but all the grace and inspirations of heaven would scarcely be sufficient to guard against the art that steals us insensibly on to the precipice. What can be the resource of youth, urged on as it is by love of independence, and all the passions in their vigor, when thus exposed to such contempt of principles that have scarcely taken root? The result is ruin. Religion is renounced in its dawn, and the school of darkness is recruited from the very bosom of innocence and virtue.

Although Augustine's aspirations were perverted, and his morals corrupted by his associates, enough of the refinement effected by early maternal tuition remained to make him despise the meanness and vulgarity of those heathens and publicans. According to the testimony of friends and foes, he always loved decency and good manners even in his irregularities. At the beginning of his residence at Carthage, he contracted a criminal intimacy with a woman, which lasted fourteen years. She bore him a son, named Adeodatus, whose promising gifts were much admired, but he died at an early age, after receiving baptism along with his father.

"The first vengeance on the guilty," said a heathen poet, "is that which is inflicted on his bosom by his own conscience." Notwithstanding the pains taken by Augustine to deaden sensibility, he could not divest himself of it; the more violent the ebullition of animal spirits, the more was the evaporation of tranquillity. It pleased the Lord of Life, with whom the ever vigilant Monica interceded, to render the bad passions painful to

the bosom which harbored them; evidently with a design to stimulate the patient to divest himself of their influence, by suggesting the most powerful motives—those of self-interest and self-satisfaction. In vain the distracted youth sought for rest. In speculation or in action; in boldest resolution, or in the collapse of hope, he experienced that a fabric may be raised, beautiful to the eye, but it will want a firm foundation; storms will shake it, and every blast will find its way to the poor shivering inhabitant. It is not substantial; it is like the glittering edifices built for ornament, of ice, or frostwork, which, as soon as the sun shines upon them, dissolve, melt away, and leave not a vestige of their transient beauty.

The disorders of Augustine did not interfere with his progress in study; his quick intelligence triumphed over every obstacle in the field of science. “Those studies,” he says, “which were accounted commendable, had a view to excelling in the courts of litigation; the more bepraised, the craftier. Such is men’s blindness, glorying even in

their blindness. And now I was the chief in the school of rhetoric, whereof I joyed proudly."

The brilliant student soon became professor of rhetoric in the metropolis of Africa, and was no less successful as a master than he had been as a scholar. But continually his heart yearned for rest in God, and liberation from the debasing enslavement of the senses. This was especially evinced when in his collegiate course he applied himself enthusiastically to study the "Hortensius" of Cicero, which work professed to give directions for aiming at truth only, and securing its advantages in preference to every other interest. "This book," he says, "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 fervor of spirit, after the immortality of wisdom; I began to raise myself, that I might return to Thee! and I knew not what Thou hadst designed with me; for with Thee is wisdom: and these writings excited me to-

ward 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 he soon was disappointed by Cicero and other philosophers, because with them he did not find the name of Christ, so indelibly fixed in his mind by his first education. The ingenuous mind, as well as the noble and generous heart of Augustine, could not be satisfied with any thing transitory and merely speculative. He required truth—not mathematical, but sacred, life-giving truth—which being, as he says, "above the human understanding, can be found only where God is found." Not finding Jesus Christ, he did not find truth, for the Apostle says, "The Spirit beareth witness that Christ is Truth;" and of himself Christ declared, "I am the Way and the Truth." As this heavenly Truth is, of its nature, infinitely above the human understanding, it teaches men sublime things, into which their weak powers

never can penetrate. Hence it brings with it grace, which pours a holy light upon our minds, as we are taught by these words, "Grace and truth are through Jesus Christ." This grace, which illumines the soul and teaches it to bow down its reason before incomprehensible truths, is faith. Where is the fountain-spring whence it flows upon the world? "From Sion shall the law go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." "Sion is the city of our strength—a just nation shall enter therein, a people that keepeth truth." (Isa.) "Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth." (Zac.) But Jerusalem was only the foreshadowing of Holy Church, which has been extolled by St. Paul as "the pillar and the ground of truth;" for Jesus—the Life and the Truth—is its cornerstone, the rock upon which it is built. That, therefore, is the truth which faith teaches, which the Church proposes to our belief. Elsewhere Augustine's thirst for truth could not be satisfied. Alas! his religious belief was blighted in the midst of the whirlwind of pleasure and of the vain plaudits of the

world. The faith of childhood died out; he no longer believed the teaching of Christianity. His soul, it is true, preserved an affectionate respect for the name of Jesus Christ, but this fruit of his early education found no support in his understanding, and subsisted only as a vague, unexplained sentiment. With virtue and innocence, every Christian idea faded from his mind, so that instead of receiving the much-desired truth from the Church, he entertained the most incredible prejudices against its creed. He even attributed the most extravagant doctrines to Christians. It was at this time he imagined that Christianity taught that God was a material being, with a body like man. He fared no better when he tried to allay his thirst for truth in the Sacred Scripture. He had not the guidance of the teaching which proceeds from the Paraclete, and which alone, according to divine appointment, can inform us of "all the things which Christ commanded to be observed;" therefore the Bible was for him nothing but folly and scandal.

The Saviour has solemnly declared that

those who will not hear the Church are in the condition of the Heathen and the Publican, and consequently find nothing but foolishness and perdition in the same Scripture, which is profitable to the man of God, in his capacity of instructor or disciple abiding within the Church, where the Spirit of Truth teaches all truth. Augustine had recourse to the Bible, the *whole* Bible, and *nothing* but the Bible, according to the fundamental principle of antichristians. And then he was chagrined to find merely a book, the *whole* book, made up of printed pages, pasteboard and leather covering, and *nothing* else but the material forming a book. For him there was no rhetorical excellence, no brilliancy to warm the animal desires, nothing for presumptuous reason to pass judgment on; nothing but a disjointed concourse of poetry, prose, fable and story, commencing with dark chaos, and ending with misty apocalypse; therefore the truth so much desired did not appear. He was in the predicament of the noble Ethiopian mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; he could not understand

when he had no man to show him, and he contemptuously rejected the Scriptures honored by the explanation of the Divine Word, on the road to Emmaus, and which have always been a flaming truth, when the lamp and material oil are touched by the torch ignited in the teaching of the morning of Pentecost. In later years he solved the problem, saying: "Believe, that you may understand."





CHAPTER IV.

AUGUSTINE FALLS INTO MATERIALISM AND MANICHEISM—SURPRISING OVERSHADOWING OF A NOBLE SOUL—INTENSE GRIEF OF ST. MONICA—RELIEVED BY A HEAVENLY VISION AND INSPIRED PREDICTION—AUGUSTINE EMBRACES THE PROFESSION OF RHETOR—GRAND SUCCESS—PROVIDENTIALLY MARRED BY ADVERSITY—WHOLESOME WAILING OF A DISTRESSED SPIRIT—THE BRILLIANT INTELLECT BECOMES DISAPPOINTED AND DISGUSTED WITH THE CONCEITED ABSURDITY OF HERESY.

IN the surprising career of the man destined to be the especial champion of divine grace, it was signally permitted that the poor slave of the flesh should also be the victim of a perverted intellect. He who was to extol the truth with singular success, experienced more than others the helplessness of human nature. Not being in earnest about his spiritual welfare, he did not sincerely inquire for the purification from sin: on the contrary, whilst youth and health lasted, he was determined to favor ambition,

and seek the palpable advantages of material enjoyment. Accordingly, he admired the pleasant persuasions of his own fancy; found the logic of his private judgment irresistible; despised the Catholic Church because it spoke so much of faith, and exercised an authority interfering too much with man's natural rights. Thus Augustine descended to the lowest grade of intellectual misery. He had fallen into materialism, and into a doubly absurd form of materialism: into Manicheism. Manes was the founder of the antichristian Society called after him Manicheans; he adopted this name on account of assuming the title of the Paraclete, and to conceal the lowliness of his condition, since he was originally a slave in Persia. It is noteworthy that a change of name is fashionable with rebels against the Church, who become heathens and publicans. The eminent leaders of impiety and impurity, Arouet, Luder, and Cauvin, changed their names to Voltaire, Luther, and Calvin. Like the generality of founders of heresies, Manes was a thorough-going scoundrel, remarkable for

impudence that cost him dearly. To acquire a name for himself he undertook to cure the son of the King of Persia; the child died in his hands, and in payment for the performance, the paraclete of imposture was flayed alive. A similar accident befell Mr. Cauvin, alias Calvin, who, being annoyed by the taunt of Erasmus, that the apostles performed many miracles—healing the sick, &c., whilst the impostor reformers could not cure a lame horse, undertook to raise the dead to life. The operation was planned to the satisfaction of Cauvin, (Calvin); a man feigned death, and, prostrated stiff and silent, awaited the signal for a lively movement. However, a different kind of summons occurred; the poor wretch was raised up a corpse, and thus testified to the apostleship of destruction. Cauvin did not suffer quite so respectably as his brother impostor, Manes; he was flayed alive by the vermin that devoured his putrid skin.

The Manicheans taught a plurality of gods, alleging that there are two coeternal principles, one of good and the other of evil, wholly

independent and essentially opposed to one another. They pretended that man has two souls—one bad, which the evil principle created, together with the body; and another good, which was coeternal, and of the same nature with God. All the good actions which man performs they attributed to the good soul; and all the evil ones to the bad soul. Man has not a free will, but is always carried irresistibly forward by a force which he cannot resist. Those infidels denied the necessity and utility of baptism, detested the flesh, as being a creation of the evil principle, denied the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and of course, like all the agents of the founder of protestation against the Divine Word, they railed bitterly and blasphemously against the immutable and immaculate spouse of the Redeemer—the ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC Church. They were consistent and coincident with the herd of Protestants since the first reformation discourse was delivered by Satan at Eden, who, though different as cancers, sores, and ulcers on the social body, or, as it is poetically said, form-

ing "different denominations," are "all what each is, and each what all are," in their animosity towards the Church. Manes professed to be the Paraclete promised by Christ, to restore the true Church, sadly contaminated by superstitious elements. The satanized adherents of this impostor reproached Catholics for believing blindly, on mere authority, and for not elevating themselves to the stand-point of knowledge. They pretended themselves to be in possession of perfect knowledge of Truth in her pure, unveiled form; although they professed the most shameless extravagances, and were addicted to every sort of impurity. It was at Carthage that Augustine fell in with these strange masters, who spoke much of truth and science, and set forth their pretensions to unveil all mysteries; and this noble genius, "whose wings had been cut," as Plato speaks, by sensuality, allowed himself to be caught in their vulgar toils.

"I fell among men," says he, "proudly dotting, exceeding carnal and prating, in whose mouths were the snares of the devil. They

cried out exceedingly, Truth, Truth, and spake much thereof to me, but truth was not in them; but they spake falsehood, not of Thee only, O my God, who truly art Truth, but even of those elements of this world, the work of thy hands." "Alas!" cries Augustine, after having recalled some of the errors of Manicheism, "by what steps was I brought down to the depths of hell? Ah, my God! I descended thither because I sought Thee, not according to the understanding of the mind, wherein thou willedst that I should excel the beasts, but according to the sense of the flesh." We necessarily feel surprised that such a man as Augustine, endowed with elevation of mind and generosity of heart, should for a moment even notice the errors and unheard-of absurdities into which Manicheism had led him, and become so stultified as to consult astrologers, and believe all the follies of judicial astrology. Pascal says, "None so credulous as unbelievers," and nothing is more true. The whole history of Protestantism, viewed collectively, or in the diversity of its various denominations, for

eighteen hundred years, confirms this assertion. People protest against the Church, become heathens and publicans by not hearing it; in the name of reason reject the Catholic Creed, reasonable though it be; and they receive the most atrocious absurdities without proof and against reason, at the dictation, and by the guidance of men and women notoriously and avowedly impious and immoral, for example: drunken Luther, lecherous Calvin, and harlot Elizabeth. We may be shocked, but after due consideration we cannot be surprised, by any event on the score of infidelity, when we advert to the fact, that in our own day there are men of wealth, talent, and respectability, who profess being Christians by means of their association with a thing severally called "Anglican establishment," "Church by law established," "Protestant episcopal church;" having many aliases, like all notorious felons; but which is truthfully defined by the historian Macaulay: "A political institution which was commenced by Henry, the murderer of his wives; it was advanced by Somerset, the

murderer of his brother; and it was completed by Elizabeth, the murderer of her cousin and guest."

Pride was the occasion of Augustine's ruin. "I sought with pride," says he, "what only humility could make me find. Fool that I was; I left the nest, imagining myself able to fly, and I fell to the ground." His vanity was flattered by the Manichees, who pretended to test every thing by reason only, banishing all mystery, and denouncing faith as weakness, credulity, and ignorance. "They said that, setting aside *dreadful* authority, they would lead men to God, and free them by reason alone." Writing to his friend Honoratus, who was still detained in those errors, to which he himself had persuaded him, Augustine states this to have been the source of his ruin, that relying too much on the strength of his own reason, he despised the teaching and authority of the Catholic Church. "You know, Honoratus," he says, "that upon no other ground we adhered to these men. What else made me, rejecting for almost nine years together the religion

which was instilled into me in my childhood, a follower and diligent hearer of these men, only their saying that we are overawed by superstition, and that faith is obtruded on us without reason being given." In his other works Augustine frequently remarks that this is the general method of heretics, and the usual occasion of failure in faith. "It is," he says, "as it were, a rule amongst all heretics, that they endeavor to overbear with the name and promise of reason, the most steady authority of the Church, which is firmly founded; and this they are forced to do, because they perceive themselves to be contemptibly worsted, if their authority should once come to be compared with that of the Catholic Church." "All heretics generally deceive by the ostentatious promise of science, and reprehend the simplicity of believers."

Augustine had now become a thorough materialist. He admitted the existence of God, but a God who was corporeal and extended; he could not conceive the existence of beings purely spiritual. He says:

“When I wished to think on my God, I knew not what to think of but a mass of bodies, (for what was not such did not seem to me to be any thing.) This was the greatest and almost only cause of my inevitable error. For hence I believed evil also to be some such kind of substance, and to have its own soul and hideous bulk. . . . And because a piety such as it was, constrained me to believe that the good God never created any evil nature, I conceived two masses contrary to one another, both unbounded; but the evil narrower, the good more expansive; and from this pestilent beginning the other sacrilegious conceits followed. I knew not God to be a spirit, and that consequently he had neither a body composed of different members, nor one who hath parts extended in length and breadth, or whose being was bulk.”

Thus was this magnificent intellect stifled, as it were, in the folds of sensual passion; it could no longer conceive any reality in the world of intelligence; it could only recognize data apparent to the senses, and phantasms of the imagination which corresponded to them.

The spectacle of such a fall recalls the pages of Plato, in which that profound observer points out that sensuality is the usual source of those shameful excesses into which the most highly gifted minds fall. "Take," says this eminent philosopher, "take these same souls from childhood, cut away and retrench all that the passion of lust deposits therein; free them from the heavy masses attached to the pleasures of the table and such like enjoyments; take away the weight which depresses the vision of the soul to inferior things. Then, if freed from such obstacles, the same gaze in the same men is turned toward the things that are true, it will behold them with the same penetration with which it now sees the objects to which it is turned." (*Republ.*) Never did any man justify, in the same degree as Augustine, these words of the great disciple of Socrates.

His mother's grief for his strange and disgusting aberration was intense; she would not sit at the same table, hoping by this abhorrence of his heresy, to excite him to a proper consideration of his fall; and she

unceasingly wept and prayed for his conversion. Consolation came to her in a vision, 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 vision as implying the speedy conversion of his mother to his side. "No, no," answered St. Monica; "it was not said to me, where he is, there shalt thou be also; but, where thou art, there shall he be also." This is an instructive example of the truthful simplicity of the saints that confounds the conceit of the worldly wise. Augustine confesses that this prompt reply made a greater impression on him than the vision itself. The devoted mother, despairing of her own efforts to reclaim the wayward youth, besought a bishop to convince him of his error. The sagacious prelate stated that disputation would be useless so long as he was charmed by the novelty of the heresy, and influenced by the conceited notion of being guided by his own reason. "Pray for him," said he, "and your son will at length discover his error and impiety." St. Monica continued to implore

him, with many tears, to discourse with her son concerning his fatal condition. However, he dismissed her, saying: "Go in peace; God bless you; be assured that a child of those tears shall not perish." Monica received these words as an oracle from heaven.

For nine years, up to the twenty-eighth of his life, Augustine remained in connection with those heretics, led astray and leading others astray. The usual heretical platitude of the discovery of seeming contradictions in the doctrines of the Church, their objections 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 in a flattering manner to his presumptuous understanding, whilst their symbolical interpretations of the varied aspects of nature amused his conceited imagination. Nevertheless, the fragile fiction of Manicheism could not bear the test of unprejudiced genius; the more he examined the less he was satisfied; he soon found weak points and important omissions; his soul was beset with doubts, and tortured

by the struggle after unity, and the longing for truth.

Having completed his academic course, Augustine now embraced the profession of "Rhetor," or public speaker, and teacher of the arts of speech. He established his school in his native city of Tagestum. Being well qualified by brilliant talents and rare acquirements for the honorable and lucrative occupation, he surpassed all competitors, and attracted the support and admiration of crowded audiences. The day of triumph was not of uninterrupted duration. Augustine was providentially subjected to the school of adversity, wherein the lessons of virtue are often taught most securely, though severely. The plaudits of the arena suddenly echoed within the chamber of death; a dear friend, a companion of boyhood, bound to him by affinity of tastes and pursuits, by early association, and all that nourishes friendship, was struck by death. When the young man was prostrated by sickness, he was converted to Christ, and regenerated in the bosom of the Catholic Church by the holy sacrament of

baptism. He had been led into the delusions of Manicheism by Augustine, who now tried to make sport of the conversion. But the unseemly interference was repelled with true Christian liberty. The empty shadow of a Christ, the sun, the moon, the air, and whatever else was pointed out by crazy Manicheism to the soul thirsting after salvation, could now yield him no comfort, but the simple, childlike faith of the Catholic Church alone. When he relapsed into the fever, he died the death of the just. The loss seemed too grievous to be borne with patience; the separation rent the heart-strings of the woe-stricken Augustine; the fountain of tears burst in torrents. His soul was covered with a dark pall of grief; death haunted every point; all places and things were so many torments, because the friend was no more to be seen. "Every thing I looked upon," he says, "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 every thing because he was not there. I became a great enigma to myself."

"When, after he had risen," as St. Paul speaks, "with Christ, and understood the things that are above," he condemned those earthy emotions. "O the folly," he exclaims, "of not knowing 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, 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."

How different the encounter with death and its losses, when, enlightened by the teaching of the Church, Augustine became acquainted with "the resurrection and the life." Then religion, that lovely matron, that kind nursing mother, stepped in with friendly aspect, raised the mourner from the ground, and bid him look up to God, who can call the forms which moulder in the earth from the

dark chambers of death, from a state of corruption to a state of glory; who, after a short separation, can cause those who were united in love during life, to meet in love again after death, never more to be torn asunder, and wrenched from the rivets of affection. The uncontrollable anguish which burst from the perverted soul of Augustine, revealed an affection of the inmost spirit, that, when refined by divine grace, would turn him, like his prototype St. Paul, into a bright luminary for the service of Christianity. Another important lesson is imparted by the exhibition, through this severe suffering, of the weakness of infidelity and of mere human wisdom. It has no consolation for the dark hours of trouble; whatever it may promise is falsified at the brink of the grave. The voice of the Church only repeats intelligibly the promise of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die." Hence the hope to assuage the bitterest grief, as Augustine experienced when he breathed its elements in the prayer offered at the altar, by the request of his

pious mother. Sweet hope! unknown to the unrighteous, to the disputer of this world, the vain, the conceited caviller, into whose callous bosom the beams of grace never penetrated; sweet hope! and more to be desired than all the treasure tithed out of the sweating laborer in payment for being taught that not one crumb of comfort from the banquet of religion falls on the bed of sickness, or drops into the grave. To meet those who were dear to us as our own souls, in a purified and exalted state, lovelier and more estimable than they ever appeared on earth! Delightful expectation! and blessed is he who cherishes it, and praised be the Saviour who has in his revelation given wretched human nature reason to embrace it with confidence.

In consequence of the sad bereavement which made life so dismal in his native city; actuated also by the ambition of displaying his abilities on a more favorable theatre, he removed to Carthage. He opened a school of rhetoric, was enthusiastically applauded at the public disputations; carried away the chief prizes for poetry and oratory; and was

crowned by proconsular hands. But when the glare of vanity was scattered by the steady light of truth in the time of his conversion, he discovered that he had been blinded and seduced by pride of science, and degraded by the idiotic mimicry of religion. The pursuit of popular favor; the racking contest for crowns of weeds; the quest of purification from sin by carrying food to the self-named saints, which was to be moulded in their stomachs into angels and gods, stupefied even the brilliant Augustine. Considering his folly, he cries out to God in feeling and humble acknowledgment of his weakness: "What am I to myself without Thee, but my own guide, falling headlong down a precipice."

Manicheism could not long satisfy this erring genius. He soon found therein weak points and important omissions, and his mind was beset with doubts. Consideration being excited, he could not fail to perceive the foul imposture of the boasted sanctity of the class called the *elect*; and the grossness of their vices tore down the hypocritical mask

of peculiar, puritanical virtues. One moment of serious, attentive observation sufficed to expose the contradictions and absurdities of the Manichean denomination of Protestantism. The notion of evil as a substance co-eternal with God, could not satisfy his spirit in its struggle after truth; no more than the honest inquirer, now, can be satisfied with the assertion of modern denominations of the same pestilence, viz: that foul superstition coexists with the spotless subsistence of the Church, the Spouse of Jesus Christ. The shameless heretics being confounded when "a reason was asked for the hope," they pretended every thing, tried to beguile him. They promised that every thing would be explained satisfactorily by an apostate bishop named Faustus, whom they extolled as a wonderful man, perfectly skilled in all manner of science. And it is very probable that the doctrinal prowess of the great oracle was enhanced by an assurance that he was in keeping with the *progress of the age*, and thoroughly informed by the *modern thought* of that period. Augustine was flattered with

the expectation that Faustus would readily clear away his difficulties. But how he was disappointed! He saw this incomparable doctor, and found him to be only a brilliant talker; he had no solution for those grave questions with which the anxious soul was tormented. Augustine compares him to a cup-bearer, who with graceful politeness presents a costly goblet without any thing 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 importance to the truth of the Manichean system; which exhibition of inability and ignorance did not correspond with the presumption and conceited audacity of the heresy. This disappointment of his expectations destroyed whatever regard and confidence Augustine had for the imposture; yet his prejudices against the Catholic faith kept him away from the pillar and ground of truth, and doomed him to the protracted agony of uncertainty, without a formal renunciation of his enslavement in error. Many edifying considerations are suggested by a view of Augustine appearing like the alarmed disciples on the tempest-tossed sea of Galilee, and then afterwards borne along securely on the same waves, calmed by divine influence, to zealous action in the work of the Lord’s service. The 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 this by no means renders wickedness excusable. To the question—"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" the Apostle Paul answers with horror, "God forbid"! The extravagant life of Augustine prepared him to look, afterwards, in the light of grace, far down into the abyss of sin, into the corruption and ingratitude of the human heart. The bare thought of it deeply humbled him; but the humility that can say with St. 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.

It is a peculiar distinction of Augustine, that in regard to deep, unfeigned humility, he bears signal resemblance to the great apostle. He manifests, in all his writings, a noble renunciation of self in the presence of the Most Holy, and his spirit goes forth in thank-

fulness to the superabounding grace which, in spite of his unworthiness, had drawn him out 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 to the Church. Further, his theoretical aberration into Manicheism fitted him to overthrow that foul and dangerous heresy, 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 interpretations and legal righteousness of his Judaistic opponents."





CHAPTER V.

AUGUSTINE PROCEEDS TO ROME—HIS DEPARTURE A MELANCHOLY SCENE, MOST SADDENING TO THE TENDER HEART OF ST. MONICA—MAGNIFICENT DISPLAY OF MATERNAL PIETY—CONDITION OF ROME—AUGUSTINE'S SCEPTICISM—HONORED AND APPLAUDED HE IS PROMOTED TO A DISTINGUISHED OFFICE IN THE IMPERIAL CITY OF MILAN.

IN the year 383, the young professor left Carthage and repaired to Rome. He had grown weary of the turbulence and dissoluteness of the students at Carthage; he was told that the youth of the Roman school were more modest and docile; moreover, the grandeur implied by the very name of the eternal city, flattered him that he would obtain fortune and honor more rapidly in that renowned centre of power and glory. Also the irrepressible desire for truth, and the fearful dreariness of scepticism, inclined him to seek in new associations and new scenes

the means for quieting his troubled soul. The circumstances attending this journey form one of the most affecting passages in the life of this man of marvellous genius, and saint of celestial election. We are again reminded of the resemblance of Augustine and Paul of Tarsus; whilst we reverently bow in admiration of the unsearchable judgments of the Most High, we do not dare to find out, but we adore the ways of His wisdom. Behold the fiery zealot rushing towards Damascus proceeds as if on a marked out path to meet the flame which, like the counter-shock of lightning in the storm-cloud, breaks up the darkness of error, and ignites the blaze of truth in the purified element of right reason. Augustine, inflamed by ambition, approached nigher to the occasion for his aspirations to be refined by the ardor of divine love, when from beneath the shadows of sin, the natural qualities of his passionate soul kindled up into a holy brightness that illumined every field of thought, and mingling with the expansive gospel teaching, shed its radiance through the universe of

faith. The devoted St. Monica was alarmed, and grieved by this new and seemingly dangerous adventure of the son in whose spiritual welfare all her affections were centred. Earnestly she tried either to divert him from his purpose, or to be admitted to companionship in his voyage.

Augustine would not agree with her proposals, and to rid himself of the loving importunity of his mother, adopted a stratagem very discordant with his usual character of candor and freedom from meanness. One evening he proceeded to the beach, to embark near the place where two chapels had been dedicated to the memory of the illustrious martyr, St. Cyprian. He did not escape from the vigilance of St. Monica, and he pretended that he was about to board the ship to bid a long farewell to a departing friend. The mind of the anxious mother, bright with the wisdom of her Christian zeal, detected the duplicity of this statement; and as she pleaded the inconvenience of returning alone to a forsaken home, he adroitly persuaded her to pass the night in the church of the

holy martyr, awaiting his return to accompany her with filial regard at the dawn of day. There, leaning on the martyr's tomb, Monica spent the long hours of the night, a night darkened by the most dismal gloom, the sadness of a fond mother's aching heart. Her tears moistened the soil where martyrs' blood germinated blooming flowers of Christianity, and so those tears vegetated the fairest palm for the coronal of gospel triumph. "The son of those tears would not perish." O! ever be praised the divine word, which says, "Blessed they who weep," and forever more be admired the miraculous production of that bliss! Poor blinded men exclaim, "There is no miracle;" they do not see one of the greatest miracles, namely, "the turning of sorrow into joy," effected by the Word made flesh, through the instrumentality of His sacramental grace. What is the natural order of grief—to what purpose flow the tears shed in accordance with the "laws and forces," about which philosophers prate? Aridity, desolation, weeds of woe, thorns of pain for the "exiled sons of Eve, sighing

and weeping in this valley of tears." Behold a miracle in those same tears!

The tears of Magdalen, dropped on the feet of Jesus, sparkled in the eyes of penitent love, with the earliest ray of the arisen sun, breaking over the horizon of death, in the resurrection of the crucified Redeemer. The tears of Peter falling into the track of the Saviour's footsteps at the threshold of Pilate's court, were fused, by loving faith, into diamonds to form the triple crown of a principality, of eternally confirmed faith, growing out of the royalty of a threefold profession of love. The tears of Monica moistened the adamantine scepticism of Augustine, and from the deep fissures of sensuality and vanity, the flames of love issued miraculously, like the transmutation of the muddy water bursting in fire from the bottom of the well in the land of Judah, when it was touched by the pure air of heaven.

Whilst the wounded feelings of the disappointed mother heaved like the disturbance of a tempest, and she tried to steady her soul with a hope that the Lord would pre-

vent the suspected voyage, Augustine's bark impelled by a favorable wind was cleaving the dark blue waves of the Mediterranean. We can imagine Monica, when on the next morning she went to the sea-shore, and looked out upon the waste of waters from which the truant son had disappeared. Solitary she stood; too much paralyzed with grief to swoon, the moaning of the ebbing tide at her feet seemed to give the note for murmuring and reproach. But no; she would not abandon her precious vocation of bringing forth a child for divine grace even by the fecundity of her tears; and so she not only wept and prayed, but desired to give her all, her life itself, to be able to lift from that sea one pearl of great price, Augustine, purified, sanctified, and fitted for the service of God. "Father, thy will be done," was her daily prayer, and fortified by the refreshment of that resignation, she returned to her home, to await the fulfilment of the long remembered prediction, that "the son of those tears could not perish." Although her expectation was prolonged, she

hoped for the best in the season of the Lord's wise and merciful appointment. "Therefore," says Augustine, "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 reached the imperial city; he lodged with a Manichean, and still frequented the meetings of the heretics. He was convinced the truth was not to be found with them, but he despaired of finding it elsewhere.

Rome was still in the height of its renown, the ravages of barbarism had not reached it, and time had only touched the marble of its monuments with the bronzed and golden coloring which is esteemed a mark of beauty. The gorgeous edifices formed in the purest horizon, the aqueducts, the temples, the triumphal arches, testimonies of human prowess; the wide spread plain crowded with ruins and tombs, magnificent evidence of mortal vanity, impressed the tender and sensitive soul of the refined scholar. And as

it is certain that deep sadness makes that land, paved with the cinders of the human race, more pleasing, Augustine must have been considerably charmed. The year he spent there, was for him a year of sorrow. The small amount of his belief hastened to disappear. He perceived it falling piece by piece from his soul, like the deadened leaves in autumn, and strewing every step he made in the eternal city.

If Augustine had then steadily looked at the Church, and asked there for truth, he probably would have abridged the painful ordeal through which he passed before he reached the enjoyment of religious repose. The Church at Rome shone in the full brilliancy of the glory allotted to her by the Lord for the seasons of her transfiguration and resurrection. The illustrious St. Damasus then governed the bark of St. Peter. In the year preceding the arrival of Augustine, the Pope had convoked a general council at Rome for the solution of various questions. Thither flocked the most illustrious bishops of Christendom; St. Ambrose of Milan, Epi-

phanus of Cyprus, Valerian of Aquila, Paulinus of Aquila, and a host of venerable prelates renowned for virtue and learning. Arriving at Rome, Augustine beheld one of those splendid proofs of the unity, catholicity and indefectibility which the Lord has given to his Church eighteen times since the first model for councils was held in Jerusalem.

In another point of view, the Church at Rome presented an aspect most likely to touch the heart of Augustine. Virginity and charity, twin sisters, born on the same day at the foot of Calvary, united in the fond embrace of faith and hope, traversed the world, scattering on their way lilies and roses from the garden of Sion. At Rome, one could see the descendants of Scipio, of Gracchus, of Camillus, of Marcellus, &c., working in hospitals, and their lovely young daughters serving the sick, dressing their wounds, washing their feet, with their own noble maiden hands performing the disagreeable offices of the infirmarian, and obliging an astonished world to read the Truth set in the bright type of Charity.

As saintly souls transported far away from this miserable world by the ardor of faith and piety, aspire continually after guidance to enable them to rise higher in the atmosphere of holiness, those admirable spirits, Paula, Fabiola, Eustachia, and Marcella, were to be seen grouping around the wonderful oracle of sacred science, St. Jerome, who explained to them the divine Scriptures, opened on their minds a flood of light, and transformed their hearts into altars for the sacrifices of devotion and piety. If Augustine had looked wisely on such scenes, he would have been enchanted. Soon after his arrival in Rome he fell sick of a violent fever, and seemed at the point of death and of perishing forever. "For whither had I gone," says he, "if I had then died, but into those flames and torments, which I deserved?" The prayers of Monica, although absent, streamed incessantly to the throne of grace, and obtained restoration of health for the useful life which would cultivate the fruit of her tears. "Thou, O God," exclaimed the grateful convert, "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 couldest bestow a better and more secure restoration."

Again restored to health, he endeavored to recall from Manicheism some friends whom he had perverted; but he could not lead them nor himself to truth, being still more than usually averse to the teaching of the gospel. The incarnation was to him a "scandal and a folly," as it is to all Jews and Gentiles. He would not hear the Church—he could not be enlightened by the murky gloom of scepticism, and hence he was "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," as naturally happens to those who will not receive the sound form of words from those whom Jesus Christ has appointed pastors and teachers, to teach all truth.

"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 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." The weary spirit began to think that truth cannot be comprehended by man, and that possibly the Academics were the wisest of philosophers, for "they doubt all things, and abstain from affirming any thing." A more ridiculous remedy for sickening distraction could not be devised, than recourse to this miserable scepticism. However, it served to convince Augustine of the inutility of hoping to find truth elsewhere than at the natural fountain springing out of the rock of faith. Other troubles checked the grand success of his Roman enterprise; and the brilliant dreams of the admired professor quickly vanished.

Students of rhetoric were not wanting to Augustine; the disorders which reigned at Carthage did not show themselves in the

Roman schools, but in them turbulence was replaced by meanness. It often happened that the scholars plotted together, and to avoid paying their master's stipend, deserted his lessons in a body, in the midst of his course, without paying their dues, and went to another, to repeat the same shabby trick when convenient. Augustine felt profound contempt for such conduct; disgust soon followed contempt, and he determined to seek a more agreeable situation. The city of Milan, at that time the residence of the emperor, had requested Symmachus, prefect of Rome, to send thither an able professor of rhetoric. Augustine solicited the appointment; his honorable character; his widespread fame; and still more, his trial speech, obtained for him the honorable and lucrative post. Symmachus, prefect of Rome, was at the same time pontiff and augur, an eloquent advocate of declining Heathenism, and was the same who shortly afterwards begged of the emperors the restoration of the statue and altar of Victory. This defender of the old Roman divinities little thought that the

young professor of rhetoric was destined to strike the last blow against the gods, to close the sepulchre of the old pagan world, and to plant over its immense tomb the Cross of Christ, the prophetic symbol of a glorious futurity. It was at Milan that Divine Providence awaited Augustine. There the pure light of truth was to open his weary, aching eyes, and restore to them that clear strong vision which they had lost through contact with passion and sophistry; there the warmth of Christianity was to dissolve the fetters which bound him in the captivity of cold, selfish infidelity, setting him free in the liberty of the sons of God; there he was to be elevated from the lowly servitude of stupid human opinion and ignorant human judgment, and he was to enjoy the knowledge given to the domestics of the household of faith in the kingdom of the Lord—the ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, and APOSTOLIC CHURCH.





CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVAL AT MILAN—ST. AMBROSE'S CHARACTER DESTINED TO RESTORE THE WANDERER TO THE HOME OF RELIGION—THE CHURCH AT THAT PERIOD—AUGUSTINE IS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY ST. AMBROSE—ADVANCE AND HESITATION ON THE WAY OF TRUTH—ST. MONICA'S ARRIVAL—REJOICES AT THE GOOD PROSPECT OF THE FRUIT OF HER TEARS AND PRAYERS—AUGUSTINE'S STUDY OF PLATO AND ST. PAUL—IMPROVED READING OF SACRED SCRIPTURE—COMBAT BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

AUGUSTINE, accompanied by his faithful and accomplished friend Alypius, arrived at Milan toward the end of the year 384. He was then thirty years of age. He was received with distinguished courtesy by the most respectable citizens, who were soon convinced that he deserved the esteem and applause which greeted him. The name of the Bishop of Milan was not unknown to him, for the fame of Ambrose "filled the whole world." The holy prelate holds the most elevated rank amongst the fathers, as

being one of the four Doctors of the Church, represented as upholding, in conjunction with Saints Augustine, Gregory and Jerome, the primatial chair of St. Peter. He earned everlasting esteem by theological attainments, by cultivation in arts and sciences; and was most honorably distinguished by the apostolical exercise of episcopal jurisdiction. He 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 provinces of the Western Roman empire. Many extraordinary events signalized the life of this illustrious prelate, which are not doubted by persons who usually discredit, and jibe at the marvellous characteristics of the saints. When yet a child, 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."

After the death of the prefect, his pious widow moved to Rome with her three children, and gave them a careful education. After the completion of his studies Ambrose embraced the profession of law, and gained so much applause by his learned skill and eloquence, that Probus, the governor of Italy, appointed him his counsellor. Soon after, he conveyed to him the vicegerency of the provinces of Liguria and Emilia, with the remarkable words, which subsequent events caused to be interpreted as a prophecy: "Go, and act, not as judge, but bishop." The Church was then disturbed by the turbulent followers of arch-heretic Arius, who denied the divinity of our adorable Saviour. Auxentius, an apostate, effected the exile of the Catholic bishop Dionysius, and usurped the episcopal chair, but he died in the year 374. At the election of a new bishop, the rage of contending parties was so great, that it was feared the disturbance would end in bloodshed. Ambrose thought it his duty as governor, to enter the church and quell the commotion. He was suddenly interrupted

by the exclamation of a child, "Ambrose! Be bishop!" This expression was instantly repeated by the people, who unanimously insisted on having him alone for pastor. Ambrose was awfully surprised. He was then only in the class of the catechumens, consequently not baptized, and had such a sense of the sacredness and responsibility of the office of a bishop, that he considered himself totally unfit for the position. He in vain endeavored by flight, and various stratagems, to escape the burden; the call for his services was imperative and universal, so that he conscientiously submitted to the pressure of circumstances, which he conceived to be expressive of a vocation from heaven.

After being baptized, and having rapidly received the minor and sacred orders, he was consecrated on the eighth day. The election and elevation of the illustrious prelate were indeed extraordinary events, which by the very fact of their unusual occurrence, manifested precisely the interposition of Holy Ghost placing bishops to rule the Church. This was the judgment of the cotempora-

ries of St. Ambrose, especially of his friend, St. Basil of Cæsarea, who rejoiced on the occasion. "We praise God," 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 splendor 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!"

The Church had come forth from the catacombs, kings and princes had become her protectors, the cross shone brightly on the imperial capitol, and with the heroic courage matured on the battle-field of martyrdom, the ministers of Jesus Christ "went forth into every land," to evangelize and civilize

the world. The testimony of St. Paul might be repeated more forcibly than ever, when he said to the Romans: "Your faith is heard throughout the world." Tertullian had defiantly and truthfully told the heathens: "We are all what each is, and each what all are." "We are everywhere, in your courts, your armies, your marts, your senates; we have left you nothing but the ruins of your dirty temples." Prince, peasant, philosopher, senator and slave, bowed in baptism before the altar where "the chalice of benediction we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread we break is a partaking of the body of the Lord." There were no longer vices which might not be cured by Christian grace: a republic of just men was no longer a myth, as was evidenced through wantons sanctified by penance, publicans clothed in honesty, persecutors turned into apostles, and thousands of virgins perfuming the sanctuary with their fragrant vows of purity and holiness. Many who were rich coveted the emoluments of poverty, and the poor were solicitous to enjoy the

luxury of the wonderful beatitude: "Blessed are the poor." Wolves became lambs when the Cæsars became Christians; humility was established in haughty Rome, chastity flourished in Cypria, and faith prevailed in sceptical Athens.

Scythia, which hardly used civility towards friends, lovingly embraced enemies; and sensual Asia bowed at the name of Jesus, and crucified itself for his honor. Not a long time before, you might have traversed the whole of the Roman empire, then comprising the whole of the known world, without meeting an asylum for the sick and distressed; the Church, in its onward march to preach the gospel of love, was a friend, a protector, a parent to the needy, the widow and the orphan; and to all the poor, that divine legacy bequeathed to her by the Saviour. Whilst her main object was to lead men to heaven, she scattered blessings on earth as she moved along the highway of religion. From every cross topping the spires of her temples and oratories a golden light was shed on a school, an hospital, and an orphan-

age. Waste places were turned into fertile demesnes, not for sport or gain, but for the promotion of Christian industry, and to supply the wants of those reclaimed from nomad indigence. The mountains and the valleys echoed with the hymns of the perpetual adoration in the offering of "the clean oblation from the rising to the setting of the sun;" pilgrims on the plains, cœnobites in the woods and forest kept the round of nocturn, matin, and vesper prayer for a world forgetting to pray for itself. Conceited heathenism dwindled down to the small dimensions of the Paga or village, and had to take the name of Paganism in its expiring hour. Christianity arose in the centre of the world, and taking the orb on which man lives for the measurement of its everlasting extension, was hailed in every clime and language with the magnificent name of Catholicity. All this was effected by the preachers who, starting from a cradle at Bethlehem filled with divine and human life, and from a grave at Calvary emptied of death, proclaimed that—"God, who at sundry times and divers manners

spoke in times past to the Fathers, in these last days has spoken to us by His Son Jesus Christ, whom He has constituted heir of all things.”

Thus men believed and understood that the religion Abraham hoped in, that David chanted, that Peter taught, was the same that Ambrose preached to the catechumens in Milan. And knowing that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,” the catholic travelling from the Tiber to the Ganges, from Britain to Carthage, would be known by the same sign of the cross, and could converse intelligibly in the same catechism language. That age had no idea of a ruin of God’s kingdom, which was to destroy all other kingdoms, itself never to be destroyed, as Isaias predicted; that the “light of the world” would be obscured; that the breathing of the Paraclete would become fetid; the stream of truth be muddied; the work of wisdom shaken. No: such frenzied yellings are the property of the blaspheming denominations spewed out by Protestantism in modern times. The

Church being the Spouse of Jesus Christ is one with Him, and like Him, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; consequently has not a primitive, a middle, or a later age, as idiots sometimes pretend. It is the divine spouse preserved without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, consequently it is immaculate, immortal throughout all time and space.

Augustine presented himself to the holy Bishop, who received him with the kindness of a father. "Thenceforth I began to love him," he says, "at first indeed not as a teacher of truth (which I utterly despaired of in the Church) but as a person kind towards myself." How marvellous, that a young man whose infancy had been cradled on the knees of a saintly Christian mother, should not even suspect that truth might be found in the Church of Jesus! So strong were the prejudices with which heresy had inspired him against Christianity! When he went to hear St. Ambrose explain the doctrines of religion to the people, it was from pure literary curiosity, and to enjoy the charms of his eloquence. "I listened diligently to him

preaching to the people, not with the intent I ought, but, as it were trying his eloquence, whether it answered to the fame thereof. And I hung on his words attentively, but of the matter I was as a careless and scornful looker on." "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 Manichean errors, the former taught salvation in the surest way. From sinners, like I was then, salvation is indeed far off; yet I was 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."

However, Augustine, having exclusively taken up the outward form, could not long forbear acknowledging that the sermons of St. Ambrose covered serious and solid foundation. By degrees his senseless prejudices against the Christian religion gave way; he comprehended that Catholic belief was not so absurd as he had imagined, that it could be defended, and that the objections of the Manichees were not unanswerable. But there he stopped. The Catholic faith was not indeed conquered, but neither did it appear to him victorious. It appears incredible that he could be still held back by the impossibility of conceiving a purely spiritual substance. Yet on this point he was still swayed by Manicheism, which clothed the spiritual idea of God in the garb of man. However his understanding definitely abandoned Manicheism, he judged that the tenets of most of the philosophers with regard to material objects were much more probable than the doctrine of the heretics. Therefore he re-

solved to leave that association. The school of the Academics, who doubt of every thing, appeared alone in harmony with the state of his mind. But as "the saving name of Christ was wanting to them," from which he could never imagine the knowledge of the truth separated, he resolved amidst this universal doubt, to remain in the class of catechumens, in which he had been enrolled, when a boy, till something certain might dawn upon his soul.

But this darkened intelligence had a long road to traverse before it could reach the full light of the gospel. The idea of a Being, sovereignly perfect, shone in the inmost depth of his soul, and seized hold of his conscience; but his understanding, accustomed to the wild imaginations of materialism, could not conceive any substance without material form. Augustine was still the slave of his senses and imagination. At this time certain books of the Platonic philosophers came under his observation. He read them eagerly, and their perusal worked the most salutary revolution in his mind. In them he

saw that the sensible world, which he thought the only reality, is but the kingdom of shadows; that true realities are purely intellectual, and that God, who occupies the summit of the world of intelligence, is a pure Spirit, inaccessible to the senses and imagination. It was quite a revelation to this noble genius, so long enslaved by matter. Quitting at length the world of phantoms to enter into that inward sanctuary where God shows himself, (as Plato speaks,) his soul found itself in finding God; it beheld itself by the aid of an intelligible light superior to itself, a light unchangeable, identical with Truth. Here was the end of materialism. The mind of Augustine, restored to itself, was replaced on the true path of Christian spiritualism.

It has been said that Plato's philosophy is the human preface to the Gospel. Doubtless it is an incorrect and very imperfect preface, but it is a fact, that Platonism was the vestibule of Christianity to Augustine, as well as to other great intellects of the early centuries.

The books of the Platonists had revealed

the invisible world to Augustine; but unfortunately they had increased in him the pride of intellect without freeing him from the pride of the flesh, and this twofold pride is the principal obstacle to the light of faith. The new disciple of Plato was proud of his wisdom; he did not feel that his necessities were infinite, he did not think of praying to God to supply them. Humility is the gate of Faith; prayer, which is the acknowledgment of a poverty which expects every thing from God, is the most beautiful expression of humility. God wills that man, who is a mere creature, and moreover a fallen creature, should confess his own insufficiency and implore aid from on high. This is the usual condition of the effusion of the supernatural light of Faith. Augustine was acquainted with the teaching of the Church on the Incarnation of the Word, and after he had read the neoplatonists he willingly believed in the Word; but the Incarnation, that mystery of the love, justice and mercy of God, offended his egotism and his pride. In his eyes, Jesus Christ was the

wisest of men, but he was not the "Word made Flesh."

Augustine was taught two things from the study of St. Paul's Epistles, which he had not found in the books of the Platonists; the lost state of man, and the need of the grace of God to know and practise the truth. He comprehended the mystery of that twofold law, the law of the flesh and the law of the spirit, by the painful conflict with which his soul was torn. He possessed the key to those wonderful contradictions of which our nature is continually the theatre, and from which the Manichees drew an argument in favor of the absurd doctrine of two eternal principles—one good and the other evil—the respective causes of the good and evil which appear in us. Once convinced of the fall of man, and contemplating in himself the deadly traces of that catastrophe, Augustine began to comprehend the benefit of the Incarnation; the sentiment of his moral and intellectual failings inspired him with humility; the humiliation of the Word in the mystery of the Incarnation no longer appeared to

him unworthy of the majesty of God. Jesus Christ revealed himself to his soul as the true and necessary restorer of fallen humanity.

Augustine relates that, whilst reading the Epistles of St. Paul, he experienced sentiments of humility and compunction, leading him to shed tears, and to confess his faults. He insists on this point, that humility is the source of true light, and repeats these words of Jesus Christ to his Father: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." On the contrary, an abhorrence of humility is the cause of darkness; it was the origin of Protestantism when Satan protested against the sovereignty of God; it was the theme of the first Protestant discourse, when Satan undertook to reform the first members of the Church in Eden, by protesting against the authoritative teaching of heaven; and has always been the propagator and fundamental principle of all the denominations of Protestantism, from Simon Magus unto Joe Smith.

Formerly, when a student at Carthage, Augustine had desired to read the Holy Scriptures; but the simplicity of the sacred books offended the literary pride of a young man accustomed to the majestic style of Cicero, and incapable of penetrating the mysterious depths of revealed doctrine; consequently the study of these sublime pages was distasteful to him. Since then the Scriptures had not changed, but Augustine was no longer the same man; his understanding had ripened, his prejudices against the Catholic religion had vanished; the sermons and example of Ambrose, the prayers and tears of Monica, had opened his eyes, and where he had formerly perceived only clouds and darkness, he now discovered an admirable light. 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 carnal imagination." The Bible had been to him a sealed volume; and such it is now, and ever will

be to those who wilfully take it away from the teaching ministry appointed by our 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.

Monica had crossed the sea and joined her son at Milan. While at sea, a storm arose which made the oldest tremble. But she, strengthened by trust in Divine protection, encouraged them all, and confidently predicted a happy termination to the voyage, as she had been promised in a vision. She rejoiced to learn that Augustine had renounced Manicheism. What tears and prayers had this holy mother poured forth before the Lord, that the soul of her child might be enlightened, and that he might see clearly the monstrous and immoral errors of protestation against the Church, affectionately preserved in Divine love without spot or wrinkle, or blemish. Now that God had heard her prayers on that point, she waited patiently

for Him to complete His work. She was convinced that she should not die till she had seen her son safe in the fold of the Good Shepherd.

The moral and intellectual transformation of Augustine daily advanced. He was no longer tempted by the dreams of his youth, fortune and glory; but the flesh still held him captive, though the fire of passion was allayed. In conjunction with Alypius and other friends, who had 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. There could not be much hope for this imaginary substitute for the vital benefits of faith and virtue, attainable only in the household of Christianity. "Diverse thoughts," says Augustine, "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 ærial construction vanished, according to the inevitable fate of all phantastic imitations of the moral and religious institutions in the Catholic family of which Christ is the head. We are moved to a melancholic smile, when by this incident in the fluttering life of Augustine we are reminded of the ridiculous and profane attempts of pseudo bishops, and heretical pietists, to quiz the public by such farces as "the protestant deaconesses," "the protestant sisters of mercy," "the protestant ritualists," "the protestant sisters of charity," and various other mountebank exhibitions in the theatres of heathens and publicans.

Augustine, being sagaciously guided by St. Ambrose, frequently recurred to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and the more

clearly he apprehended their admonitions, the more sincerely he desired salvation through Jesus Christ. With great eagerness he read the epistles of St. Paul. Here he found the testimonies of the Scriptures so admirably set forth as to produce the harmony which is one of the chiefest evidences of the divine truth of the volume. Here he was made to understand that which he had long felt, that he had "a law in his members warring against the law in his mind, and that nothing could deliver him from his body of death but the grace of Jesus Christ." He perceived an infinite difference between the doctrine of him who styled himself the last of the Apostles, and that of the proud philosophers who esteemed themselves the wisest of men. "On their pages," he says, "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.' (Psalm lxii.) There no one hears the invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matt. xi.) They (the philosophers) 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 the 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, and considered thy works, and saw the depths of sin."

The improved study of the sacred writings, and his frequent attendance at the preaching of St. Ambrose, theoretically convinced Augustine of the truths of the Holy Catholic Church, but practically he had yet to undergo in bitter experience the judgment of St. Paul—"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." In his usual pathetic language he describes this harassing conflict. "The world 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 the flesh. I had found the beautiful pearl; I should have sold all I possessed to buy it, and yet I hesitated." At this juncture he sought a venerable priest, Simplician, the spiritual father of Ambrose. This holy man, very advanced in years, served God with great piety from his youth, had been sent by pope Damasus from Rome, to be instructor and director of St. Ambrose. To him Augustine opened his mind, related his wanderings and errors; and mentioned particularly his reading the writings of Platonic philoso-

phers, translated by Victorinus, who had been formerly a distinguished professor of rhetoric in Rome. Simplician spoke approvingly of those books; then related to him the conversion of Victorinus, who taught many of the Roman senators; had been honored by the erection of his statue in the Forum; passed from the Platonic philosophy to the instructions of the Church, and through his own ministry had embraced the faith of Christ. Victorinus, fearing the abandonment of influential friends, and apprehensive of malicious annoyances, deferred his baptism, flattering himself with the notion that he could be a Christian without joining the Church. When Simplicianus told him, "I will not count you a Christian before I see you in the Church," Victorinus asked with a smile, "Do the walls, then, make Christians?" He soon was convinced, that he who does not "confess Christ before men, will not be confessed by Him before the Father who is in heaven;" and therefore he cast aside every worldly obstacle and was baptized. When Julian the apostate forbade Christians to teach the sciences,

Victorinus joyously quitted his eminent and lucrative employment, feeling honored and enriched by his faith in Christ. Augustine was greatly affected by this edifying example: he admired the bravery, and still much more esteemed the happiness of Victorinus; but had not yet the resolution to win the same advantages. "I was bound," he says, "not with another's irons, but by my own iron will. My will the enemy held, and thence had made a chain for me, and bound me. For of a forward will was a lust made; and a lust served became custom; and custom not resisted became necessity." Augustine has depicted in the liveliest colors this grievous combat, in which his salvation was at stake. He compares his condition to a man overpowered by sleep, who wishes to rise, but when he makes the effort, the drowsiness so pleases him that he yields to the laziness and falls back into the oppressive slumber. To the warning voice of reason, "Wake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"—he could only reply—"Presently, by and by; let me alone

a little while." But this "presently" did not come quickly, procrastination took its place. In vain the 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. The conflict grew more intense; it raged wildly between nature and grace, between the flesh and false reason, against conscience, and pleadings of the Divine Spirit leading him to better things.





CHAPTER VII.

AUGUSTINE'S STRUGGLES—VISITATIONS OF GRACE—CONVERSION—
AFFECTING NARRATIVE.

AUGUSTINE'S health was so impaired by this mental disturbance, and aching of the heart, that his spirit drooped in melancholy and despondency. As he sat one day in a downcast mood, with his dear and ever-faithful friend Alypius, their friend and countryman, Pontianus, an officer of the imperial court, and a very religious man, came to visit them. Finding the epistles of St. Paul lying on the table, he availed himself of the favorable occasion to speak of St. Antony, the Egyptian hermit, who, in literal pursuance of the Saviour's advice, had given up all his property to the poor, in order to live to the Lord, unrestrained and undisturbed in solitude, and there to work out the salvation of his soul. They were astonished to

hear of such wonderful things in the Catholic Church, and were equally surprised by the information that at the moment there was a monastery near the city where they lived, under the care of the Archbishop, where all the precepts and counsels of the gospel were practised with heroic virtue, by a numerous family of servants of the Divine Master. Some of the malignants, who are heedless about anachorisms and paradoxes, when Catholicity is being reviled, would be inclined to swear that Pontianus was a Jesuit in disguise, because, finding his erring friends interested by his narrative, "he improved the occasion," which means "jesuitical" in English dictionaries. Accordingly, he related that when he was with the court at Treves, two of his companions, during an evening walk visited the dwelling of some religious persons, there found the life of the holy man Antony, written by St. Athanasius, and one of them commenced reading the book. Whilst reading, he became moved with love and zeal for the cultivation of gospel perfection, and said to his companion:

“Tell me, with all our painstaking, what doth our ambition aspire to? what is it we seek? Can we hope for more in the court than to gain the favor of the emperor? Yet when this is obtained, what is there in it that is not brittle, dangerous, and transient? But behold! if I please, I may at this moment become the friend of God, and remain such forever.” As he continued to read, his soul was moved by the throes of a new life, his heart turned from worldly attachments; he sighed with every word he read; his soul was entirely affected by divine grace, and at length he firmly resolved to pursue the course of perfect religion. “I have now,” he said to his friend, “bid adieu to our former hope, and I am firmly resolved on pursuing only the service of God. I begin at this very hour, and from this very place. If you will not follow my retreat, do not obstruct my resolution.” The friend answered, that he would be ever united with his companion in such a noble enterprise, and for so great a reward. They resigned their commissions in the army, took leave of the world, conse-

crated themselves to God; the young ladies to whom they were engaged did likewise, binding themselves by the vows of the religious state. The example was exactly calculated to excite the grand spirit, and naturally generous disposition of Augustine. His conscience reproached him for mean imbecility, and many moral deformities which debased and dishonored him. With keen remorse he reflected that those young men 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 rebelled; he was never ready to renounce the world wholly, but desired to retain at least some of its pleasures.

When Pontitianus left the house, the tempest raged more violently in the sorrow-stricken soul of Augustine, and like the foaming on the waves of a stormy sea, his agitation was exhibited in words and gestures,

and every feature of his countenance. To Alypius he turned, exclaiming: "What are we doing who thus suffer the unlearned to start up and seize heaven by force, whilst we, with all our knowledge, remain behind cowardly and heartless, wallowing in the mire? Shall we be ashamed to follow them, because they have gone before, and not ashamed not to follow them at all?"

Augustine has left us a picture of the last crisis through which his soul passed before breaking its chains. It is a marvellously touching scene. After addressing his friend with such an unusual tone, and with such an altered countenance, he snatched the Epistles of St. Paul and rushed into the garden, to seek silent and solitary communion with God, for now "it was" as he said, "despair or salvation, death or life." Alypius, from whom he had no secrets, followed him. "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 wagon, 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 enraged at himself on account of the fickleness of his will, and the incompleteness of the detestation of evil. "I would, and I would not; I was, as it were, divided between myself and myself; I shook my chain with which I was fettered, but could not be released from it. Thou, O Lord, continuedst to press sore upon me in my interior, with a severe mercy, redoubling the stripes of fear and shame, lest I should leave off struggling, and my chain should grow again, and bind me faster than ever. I said within myself, 'Come, let it now be; let it be done this moment.' Neither yet did I do it quite, demurring still awhile, to die unto death, and live unto life. Trifles of trifles, and vanities, my old mistresses, hung about me, and pulling me by the garment of the

flesh, softly whispered to me, 'Wilt thou then forsake us? From this moment shall we be no more with thee forever? Wilt thou never hereafter taste those delights?' But the chaste dignity of continency enticed me to come forward, and to encourage me to fear nothing, stretched forth to embrace me, her loving arms full of crowds of good examples. There were great numbers of boys and girls, young men and maidens, grave widows, and old women, virgins, persons of all ages, and in all these continency was the fruitful mother of chaste delights from Thee, O Lord, her heavenly bridegroom. And she laughed at me, with a kind of derision, by way of drawing me on, as if she had said, 'And art not thou able to do what these men and these maidens do? or are these able in themselves, and not in the Lord their God? He gave me to them. Why standest thou upon thyself, and therefore dost not stand? Throw thyself upon him, and fear nothing. He will receive and will heal thee.'"

When deep consideration had gathered all his misery before his view, a darkling storm

lowered over his spirit, and he felt the need of tears. Unwilling to disturb Alypius, he withdrew to a distance, and there prostrate on the ground, beneath a fig tree, he shed tears like unto the drops from a tempest-riven cloud. At the same moment the convulsion of his troubled soul gave vent in wailing supplications, in groaning and sighs. He exclaimed: "How long? how long? To-morrow, to-morrow! Why not now? Why not in this hour put an end to my shame?" Thus he prayed, struggled, sobbing like the moaning of an exhausted storm; when a voice floated through the air, like the voice of a young boy or girl chanting, and often repeating these Latin words: "*Tolle lege; Tolle lege!*" *i. e.*, "Take and read, take and read!" Instantly Augustine became quite an altered man. "I checked the torrent of tears; I arose, interpreting it to be no other than a command of God to open the Book and read the first chapter I would find. For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was read had been

spoken to him: "Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." Eagerly he returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, there lay the volume of St. Paul's epistles. He seized it, opened, and read the sentence which first met his eyes: "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 in its concupiscence." Instantly a serene light beamed through his soul, the gloom of perplexity and despondency passed away like the fringe of night-shades melting from the horizon under the dawn of day. He marked the passage he had read, closed the volume, and with calm countenance informed his friend what had happened. Alypius read the passage indicated, and proceeded to read what followed: "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye," which he applied to himself as a warning.

By this admonition the true and constant friend was strengthened in good resolutions

corresponding to his amiable character, and he joined his esteemed associate. Then they hastened to communicate the happy tidings to St. Monica. Well might this holy mother triumph and rejoice; her tears and supplications were accepted by her beloved, adorable Saviour, all her desire was accomplished. She rejoiced, she cried aloud with exultation, she poured out like a flame the gratitude of her heart, in thanksgiving for the fulfilment of the prophecy, "the child of her tears would not perish." Vigorous souls do nothing by halves. From the moment that Augustine, yielding to the attraction of grace, had said, "I believe," he gave himself wholly to truth; the most austere practices of the Christian religion alone appeared to satisfy the ardor of his generous will. This man, who but yesterday could not comprehend the possibility of living if deprived of carnal pleasures, now determined to sacrifice even lawful indulgence, and to live in perpetual chastity. He poured forth his heart in humble thanksgiving and holy joy before God, who had mercifully broken the chains

of his slavery. "How sweet," he exclaimed on a sudden, "was it to be without the charm of those toys! and what I was before so much afraid to lose, I now cast from me with joy. For thou hast expelled them from me, who art the true and sovereign sweetness: thou expelledst them, and camest in thyself instead of them, sweeter than any pleasure whatever, but not to flesh and blood; brighter than any light whatever, but more interior than secret; higher than any dignity whatever, but not to those that are high in their own conceit. Now, was my mind free from the gnawing cares of the ambition of honor, of the acquisition of riches and of weltering in pleasures. And my infant tongue began to lisp to thee, my Lord God, my true honor, my riches, and my salvation."

In the admiration of this wonderful conversion he properly said: "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!" He is risen from the dead. Light breaks in upon his darkness. His heart, which was lately

dull and heavy within him, now glows with the fervor of devotion. Impenetrable to a religious sentiment as the clod, before his reanimation, he now trembles with the sensibility of affectionate and reverential piety. His soul rises from its slumber, feels new life, new powers, new spirit, and on the wings of faith soars to the bosom of Divinity. Heaven rejoices over the returned prodigal, and sheds its all-enlivening influence in showers of grace, to encourage his progress in the path that leads to happiness and glory.

In the process of the Good Shepherd's quest for this wanderer from the fold, we must adore the power of Divine grace, and trust in Him "who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation." The victory indeed over evil habits is not obtained without much sorrow, pain and contradiction to corrupt nature; yet the sinner may be courageous, for "the sorrow of those who believe in Jesus will be turned into joy."

The conversion of Augustine occurred in September of the year 386, the thirty-second

of his age. At the same time he determined to resign his office, and to quit his professional pursuits; but deferred the execution of his resolution till the autumnal vacation. He vowed to consecrate himself wholly to the Divine service, in obedience not only to the commandments of the law, but according to the counsel of Christ, "Go and sell all your goods, and follow me." He would not allow any delay. He retired to a country house at Cassiacum, near Milan, which belonged to a friend, Vereeundus, then a heathen, but afterwards baptized. He was accompanied in his retreat by his mother St. Monica, his brother Navigius, his son Adeodatus, Alypius his chief confidant, Trigetius and Licentius, two of his scholars, and his cousins Lastidianus and Rusticus. He passed several months in this abode of piety and social friendship, preparing for the holy sacrament of baptism. Here he labored, by "prayer and fasting," to cast out the evil lurking in natural passions, and to purify his affections from any alloy that might check the free and abundant stream of Divine love.

He wept over the miseries of his soul, not as in the days of his infidelity, in the alarm of despondency, but in the reverential trembling of filial awe, and so often he implored the succor of the sweet Redeemer. "My whole hope is in nothing else but in thy exceeding great mercy, O Lord, my God. Thou commandest me continency; give me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt. I know that no man can be continent unless God give it." The deep earnestness of his desire to repair the damages of past wanderings from the way of virtue is expressed in fervid addresses to heaven. "Too late have I loved Thee. Thou wast with me, and I was not with Thee. Thou hast called, Thou hast cried out, and hast pierced my deafness. Thou hast touched me, and I am all inflamed with the desire of thy embraces. O, love which always burnest, and art never extinguished, set me all on fire."

If in the foaming eddies of sinning, unregenerated nature, the proper motto for his condition was: "My heart is uneasy until

it rests in Thee, O Lord," after his conversion the flaming heart pierced with an arrow became, in Christian art, the fitting emblem for the great soul which being once penetrated by Divine grace ever after burned with the love of God. He had asked the advice of St. Ambrose as to what parts of the Scripture he ought to study in his peculiar circumstances. The bishop recommended the prophecies of Isaiah; but as Augustine could not then properly appreciate them, he selected the Psalms, and found there just what he desired. His literary taste was charmed by the chaste poetry of the inspired bard. It is, as Augustine wished to find it, purely devoted to God. It strips away the curtains of the skies, and approaches boldly, but meekly, into the presence of Him who dwells in boundless and inaccessible majesty. It there lays down its tribute. It carries up constant offerings, selected from the hills and vales of Palestine, the land of vineyards and olive gardens, of springs and fountains. Over all is cast a sedate and subdued reverence, that awes the mind into

adoration, or melts it down to the tenderness of prayer. The sacred volume was now to Augustine "an open Bible," as it is only for those who have it opened by the Paraclete in the Church; therefore he would no longer listen to the harps of Mantua warbling about gods, and battles, and nature. He had now a holier music, which flowed fast by the oracle of God, when blessed men touched the harp, and unseen angels enwreathed their fingers, to make melody on its strings. During long hours of the night he meditated on the sacred verses, drawing thence a kind of concerted music, in lowly wailings of penitence, or exultant praises and benedictions. He censured and mourned over the blind and miserable Manichees, who deprived themselves of the advantages of those holy hymns. "I wished only," he once thought, "they could have been in my neighborhood 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."

He resorted with his companions, in good

weather, to the shade of a large tree, at other times to the halls of the baths belonging to the villa, and, walking up and down, 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 Doctor, mostly philosophical in their contents, took their rise. Of these the most important are, first, three books against the sceptical school of the Academies, 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 presuppose the true. Not the mere striving after truth, only the possession 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 treatise on the "Life of

Blessedness," in which these latter thoughts are further developed. At last, his Soliloquies or Discourses with his own soul, concerning God, concerning the highest good, concerning his own nature, immortality and the like. A quotation from these, showing the state of his mind at that time, is deeply interesting.

"O God, Creator of the world," thus he prayed to the Lord, "grant me first all grace to call upon Thee, in a manner well pleasing to 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 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 wise that is wise; O true and most perfect Life, in which and from which and by which all is blessed that is blessed; O Beauty and Goodness, in which and by which all 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 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 recognize 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, 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 to Thyself, and when I obtain Thee, suffer me to be nothing else;

and grant also 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.”

In his conferences with his friends, the main design was to raise their thoughts in all their studies from sensible to spiritual things. In a literary disputation, Trigetius advanced something that did him no honor, and he desired that it might not be committed to writing. Licentius, his antagonist, insisted on having it recorded, so that it might appear as a monument of his victory. Augustine shed tears, seeing them still enslaved by the petty passion of vanity, and reproved them for their fault, praying that God would heal this wound of their hearts. The two youths entreated that the whole contest should be recorded, each desiring this for his own confusion.





CHAPTER VIII.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM—LITERARY ACTIVITY—CHRISTIANITY
MAKES AUGUSTINE SUPERIOR TO PLATO—HIS BAPTISM—THE
GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY OF THE NEW LIFE—HOMEWARD
JOURNEY TO AFRICA—ST. MONICA'S DEATH—CHARMING AND
EDIFYING SCENES.

THE time being come when his name should be entered among the "*Competentes*," in order to prepare himself for baptism, he came to Milan in the beginning of Lent 387. He was all through his eventful life greatly distinguished by literary activity; along with his preparation for baptism, he was employed in writing several admirable volumes. He portrayed 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. It would be rash to say what the genius of Augustine might have become had it not bent before the authority of the Church; none can dare maintain that the Catholic Faith was an obstacle to the development of this powerful intellect. It is true, it is incontestable that faith was at once a marvellous light and a wonderful moral power to this great mind. Faith opened to him horizons absolutely new, suffered him freely to use his wings and to traverse with incomparable ease and security those regions in which human reason is naturally called to exercise itself. To understand how far Faith restores, enlarges, elevates reason, we may open the works of Plato and of Augustine.

Whilst we glance over the writings of these two immortal minds, we will be struck by the eminent doctrinal superiority of the Christian Doctor over the Prince of Grecian Philosophers. First, all the truths which are in Plato are to be found in Augustine, but with a purity, a clearness, a firmness, a plentitude, which we vainly seek in the Athenian philosopher. Plato's view is frequently ob-

scured, even on the ground of natural religion, in matters which are within the province of reason; he sees but a part of the truth, he mixes error with it, and almost always is deficient in solidity, even on those points which he seems best to understand. And yet every one is agreed that mere human reason never had a more intelligent, more luminous, more complete interpreter than the disciple of Socrates. Plato is indisputably the noblest and most exalted representative of reason devoid of the light of Faith. But reason, how high soever it may soar, is full of obscurity and subject to a thousand weaknesses, even in that part of the moral and religious domain which naturally falls to it. Reason has lost its uprightness, and needs the renovating grace of Faith in order to regain it and exercise its full power. To Faith, Augustine owes his incomparable superiority to the master of the Academy on all great questions of the rational and strictly philosophical order.

The long desired and happy hour of regeneration arrived. Augustine was baptized

by the illustrious St. Ambrose on Easter-eve in the year 387, in company with his friend Alypius, and his son Adeodatus, who was now fifteen years of age, and being preserved from the contamination of iniquity, had surrendered to the Lord his youthful soul with all its rare endowments. Augustine may now be congratulated by the saintly Monica, and all his faithful friends. He is risen from the dead. Light is broken in upon his darkness. Faith grows up in his mind. The veil is withdrawn from his heart, and that which was lately dull and heavy within him, now glows with the fervor of devotion. The darkness and shadows that long hung over his spirit pass away, and the soil into which the seed of a new life had been cast, and had been so abundantly watered by the tears of repentance, now warmed by the Sun of Righteousness, shoots forth an abundant crop of virtue. His winter is passed, and in the spring-time of spiritual life, his soul rises from its slumber, feels new life, new powers, and on wings of hope and charity soars to the cœlestial domain.

Heaven rejoices over the repenting sinner, and sheds its all-enlivening influence in showers of grace, to encourage his progress in the path that leads to happiness and glory. A soul is saved; angels rejoice, and ministering spirits around the throne sing in their sweetest strain their hymns of praise unto "Him who wisheth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live."

He was much moved by the holy sacramental 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 always present in a "bread which is His flesh, which is meat indeed, which He gives for the life of the world," excited his soul with extraordinary and delicious emotions. It would appear that circumstances providentially coöperated to enliven the new raptures of his soul; just at the time of his baptism the relics of the martyred saints Gervasius and Protasius were discovered, and when conveyed into the

Cathedral of Milan, wrought there an astonishing miracle in support of the holy catholic faith.

The soul of Augustine was affected with tender devotion by this actual fulfilment of the design of the Founder of the Church, that "signs should follow the preaching of the gospel." He also joyously contemplated this event as a palpable exhibition of the character of sanctity illustrating the Church. The adversaries of religion generally entertain a theory about the dull dreariness which is supposed to depress the pious and obedient family of the faith. But Augustine practically experienced the truth of the scripture which says, "*Beati qui habitant in domo Domini,*" whenever he attended the services of the sanctuary. Then his soul was really by "music lifted to heaven" through the Church hymns which St. Ambrose had introduced into his diocese. Like the inspired bard of Sion, the truths of religion in the waves of melody gave him a foretaste of the cheerful life when "sorrow and mourning and death shall be no more." "I could not," says Au-

gustine, "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. This peculiar rapture and elevation of the grand genius of Augustine seems to corroborate the tradition which says that the magnificent anthem, *Te Deum Laudamus*, which is worthy of a place among David's Psalms of thanksgiving, 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.

Soon after his baptism Augustine resolved to return to Africa, in order to devote himself to a life of divine contemplation and religious exercise, in retirement and prayer. Accordingly he entered on his homeward journey in the summer of 387, together with

his mother and several of his friends, among whom was Evadius of Tagestum, a cultivated man, who was baptized a short time before, and now forsook the imperial court to live in like manner, exclusively for the service and the rewards of the heavenly kingdom. From Milan they travelled to Rome, thence to Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, a day's journey from Rome, where they prepared to embark. The time of visitation from Jesus, whom Monica loved so well, arrived,—the hymn which angels sung at the conversion of Augustine turned into the jubilant canticle, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant :—" the eyes that fondly gazed on the beauteous flower of Christian odor which maternal tears had nourished, were raised confidently to Him who repays an hundred-fold ; and out of the Sacred Heart flashed the fire which dissolved the earthly tenement of Monica, changing the clothing of mortality into a garment of immortality.

The death of the just is so truly precious, that it brings to view a scene really fascinating for devout meditation. Such was the

case when St. Monica died at Ostia Tiberina. On the eve of the intended embarkation, Augustine sat with his mother at a window which overlooked the sea; the rays of the setting sun were touching from the horizon the home so dear to them through memories most affecting, and they conversed about the pleasant and happy mansion, which no eye has seen, no ear heard, but which our Father in heaven has prepared for them that love Him. The most fitting narrative we hear from Augustine.

“Forgetting the past, and looking only toward the future, we asked ourselves, in the presence of 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 overflowing 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 corporal 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 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 pasture 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 everything 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 forever, would not then the saying, Enter into the joy of your Lord, be fulfilled?"

The inspired words of her son intimated to Monica that she would soon receive the call of the adorable Redeemer; she had seen the Saviour in the heart of her child, and like Anne and Simeon of old, she reverently asked to be dismissed in peace, and she exclaimed, "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 Christian Catholic, 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?" A few days after this conversation, the tender-hearted mother was attacked by a fever, which soon exhausted her vital

powers. Day and night her sons were at the bedside.

Augustine now grieved in earnest that he had caused her so many tears and pains, and endeavored by the last offices of filial affection to make as much amends as possible. St. Monica, always alive to the sweet sensibilities of holy love, perceived the trouble of his generous heart, and affectionately assured him that he had never spoken an unkind word to her. Before, it had always been her wish to die at home, and to be interred in the grave of her husband. But now her only desire was to comply with the divine will. "Bury my body somewhere," she said, "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." To the question, Whether it would not be disagreeable to be buried in a foreign land, so far from her native soil? 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 closed the earthly career of one who can be men-

tioned most properly in the language of Holy Scripture: "Strength and beauty were her clothing, and she rejoiced in the latter day. She opened her mouth in wisdom, and the law of clemency was on her tongue. Her children rose up and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised her. (Prov. xxxi.) St. Monica expired in the arms of her son, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, at the mouth of the Tiber, on the shore of the Mediterranean sea, which separated Italy from her earthly home.

The event naturally so distressing to weak, trembling humanity, rent the heartstrings of the forlorn family; tears like a torrent burst from Augustine and Adeodatus; and wailing filled the dwelling where a moment before sweetly sounded the words of heavenly meaning from the lips of one of the noblest matrons of the Christian household. The sanctified magnanimity of Augustine relieved him; he believed in the "resurrection and the life," and would not pretend to honor such a corpse with the tearful lamentations 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 of judgment; unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing;" and the whole house joined in the response. Then after the interment of the corpse, the Most Adorable Sacrifice was offered on the tomb. We cannot pass over the pleasant memory, that on that same tomb we performed our first sacerdotal function on the 11th of February 1828.





CHAPTER IX.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S AFFECTIONS AND SENTIMENTS AT HIS MOTHER'S
DEATH—ARRIVES AT HOME—MONASTIC LIFE AT TAGESTUM—
ORDAINED PRIEST—MARVELLOUS SUCCESS OF HIS MINISTRY

AUGUSTINE found himself at home, alone with God! Gone the tender mother, at whose breast he lay in infancy, on whose knees he smiled and lisped the name "Jesus!" Deaf the ear that listened to the voice of love; cold the heart that throbbed in sympathy; closed the eye that sparkled with joy at every meeting; the pulse which so often fluttered with maternal care beats no more. Awful separation! who can bear it? Not the unbeliever, who has no hope; dismal, dreary—he sees nothing but a long vista, terminating in darkness, shadows, frightful phantoms, baleful regions, where a ray of the "resurrection and the life" never enters. Augustine could bear it—he had life in the

communion of saints—he had the magnificent faith which commands us to hope, and points through the avenue of time to the immortal home where we shall meet again. He was now incorporated with Christ in the glorious Church where there is an altar at which “the chalice of benediction we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ; and the bread we break is a partaking of the body of Christ;” and where alone it can be truthfully said, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Thus felt Augustine; he concludes addressing his brethren: “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.”

The death of St. Monica induced Augus-

tine to return to Rome, where he sojourned till the following year. In the meantime he employed himself in confuting the errors of the Manicheans. The sad experience of former associations qualified him for the exposure of the frauds of those miserable infidels. "I could not," says he, "bear in silence, that the Manicheans 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 Manicheans.'"

He sailed for Africa in September 388, and on his arrival at Carthage was the guest of a much respected friend named Innocentius. He was again fortunate enough to have his religious sensibilities cheered by witnessing one of those miracles which divine power operates occasionally, to confound still more the stupid infidel, and console his servants amidst the calumnies and mockeries of a

God-forgetting world. Innocentius was a virtuous and edifying Christian; being in a hopeless condition from a dangerous and apparently incurable malady, he prayed fervently, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," and several friends, ecclesiastics and laymen, united their entreaties for the interposition of the Saviour "healing the sick." St. Augustine was present, and relates how the physicians coming to perform a desperate operation, removed the bandages, and found the sore entirely healed. The sage boobies of our day have arrived rather late in the age of the Church, otherwise with the gas light of modern science (?) they would have presumed to show how they keep Omnipotence under drill according to *laws, forces, &c.*, making it apparent to the edified St. Augustine that the tenets and facts regarding the Light illumining those "who sit in the shades of death" are all moonshine. St. Augustine soon left Carthage for his rural home near Tagestum, in company with his pious and devoted friends. In literal obedience to the counsel of Christ, and according to the usual

conduct of many catholics in every age and clime, he gave up all he possessed to religion and charity, reserving the *use only* of his house, and of the means necessary for himself and religious associates. There he lived three years, entirely disengaged from all mere temporal concerns, serving God in fasting, prayer, good works, meditating upon his law day and night, and instructing others by his discourses and books. All things were in common in the house, and were distributed according to every person's necessities, no one having the least thing at his disposal as a proprietorian. This mode of life was copied from the communities which Augustine had seen in Italy, the system having been imported from the East. During the saint's retirement, his son Adeodatus passed away from this life, in the beauty and holiness of his baptismal regeneration.

St. Augustine had enjoyed his solitude with great circumspection, avoiding every risk of being forced into high office, and to change his habitation; but it happened providentially that a magistrate of the neighboring maritime

city—Hippo Regis—solicited his advice, and the character of this good Christian moved the charity of the holy hermit to make the requisite visit. One day, as he was listening to the Bishop, Valerius, preaching, the congregation were informed by the Prelate that a priest should be ordained for the service of the church, and instantly and unanimately Augustine was named. A thunderbolt could not be more startling to the calm, happy soul, so long entranced by literary labor and religious leisure. He burst into tears, he shuddered at the view of the dangers occurring in such a charge, he was overwhelmed with the anticipated weight of its responsibilities, and frenzied by a ferment of holy fear and humility, he apprehended it as a destiny of destruction. “O, my Father Valerius,” he said, “do you command me to perish? Where is your charity? Do you love me? Do you love your church? I am sure you love me and your church.” However, the expediency of his tender conscience was overruled by the just demands of a divine vocation, and the Bishop determined

on his duty of giving a priest to the altar. Then Augustine begged a respite, in order to prepare himself in "many things," as he said, "wanting to me for the discharge of this employment, which are not to be attained, but as our Lord directs us, by asking, seeking, and knocking; that is, by praying, reading, and weeping." The prudent request was complied with, and at the termination of his retreat, St. Augustine was ordained about Easter time of the year 392.

Never, since the evangelical fiat, "Go and teach," had been expressed on the shore of Galilee, was a grander area opened; never since Pentecost, was a more fiery zeal inflamed; and never since the apostolic voice reached every land, was there such an echo to the divine word as happened when Augustine assumed his office to baptize, preach and sacrifice. St. Augustine continued his monastic manner of living, in a house erected for himself and his brethren by the citizens, in the gardens of the Bishop, contiguous to the church. Valerius found the newly ordained priest a valuable assistant, and on account

of his own defects in language and speech, as well as the superior genius of Augustine, he appointed him to preach even when the Bishop was present, contrary to the custom of the Church in the West.

St. Augustine was convinced, like St. Paul, that the instruction of the flock is a principal duty of the pastoral charge, making it obligatory to preach "in season and out of season," and, "woful not to preach;" he preached constantly until the day of his death, sometimes every day, and sometimes twice on the same day. He did not desist even when his voice was impaired by weakness; he seemed to gain strength in the course of a sermon, the ardor for the salvation of souls made him forget the pains of sickness. Whenever he went into other diocesses, he was invariably requested to give the people the refreshment of the divine word, and was always heard with great attention and delight, followed by exclamations and applause, according to the custom of the age. He perfectly understood all the rules of eloquence, and was in his generation the

most admired and successful master of others, yet in the pulpit his efforts were directed only by a desire to instruct the mind and move the heart. Whenever he used the power of a rhetorician, or conformed to the prevailing literary taste of the age, he did so that he might insinuate the truths of religion into the understanding of the people, by engaging them to hear the gospel instruction; accordingly his sermons, though popular, were always sublime.

Fenelon mentions two instances to show the wonderful influence which his pathetic eloquence had upon the minds of the people, more wonderful than Cicero's victory over the determined resolution of the indignant Cæsar, and more effective than the most admired stream of flowery eloquence. The first example is related by St. Augustine in a letter to Alypius. The custom of celebrating the Agapœ, or love feasts, in the cemeteries, or upon the graves of the martyrs, was an abuse which he exhorted Aurelius, Archbishop of Carthage, to extirpate by an order of council. The people of Hippo would not be

restrained from the rioting and intemperance prevalent at those festivals, pretending to be justified by the authority of their ancestors. St. Augustine read before them the vehement threats and reproaches of the prophets; then earnestly besought his congregation by the ignominies and sorrows, by the cross and blood of Jesus Christ, not to destroy themselves, not to dishonor religion in its holy places; to have pity on himself, who so deeply felt for their interest, and to show due regard for their venerable bishop, who out of tenderness for them had commanded him to instruct them in the truth.

“I did not make them weep,” he says, “by first weeping over them; but while I preached, their tears prevented mine. I own that then I could not restrain myself. After we had wept together, I began to entertain great hopes of their amendment.” He had the satisfaction of seeing the people reformed from that day. The other example referred to, is still more remarkable. It was a barbarous custom at Cæsarea in Mauritania, for fathers, sons, brothers and other relations to

array in two parties, at a certain time of the year, and to fight publicly by throwing stones, for several days. The populace were so exceedingly delighted with the spectacle, that it was considered a hopeless enterprise to withdraw them from the savage entertainment. "According to the utmost of my abilities," says Augustine, "I used the most pathetic expressions to extirpate such a cruel, inveterate practice. I thought I had done nothing, while I only heard their acclamations, and raised their delight and admiration. They were not persuaded so long as they could amuse themselves with giving applause to the discourse which they heard. But their tears gave me some hopes, and declared that their minds were changed; when I saw them weep, I believed this horrible custom would be abolished. It is now eight years ago, and upwards, and by the grace of God they have been restrained from attempting any such practice." Possidius mentions, among many instances of extraordinary conversions, that on an occasion of the holy Doctor speaking against the Manichean

heresy, Firmus, an eminent, rich and zealous patron of the infidels, entered the church, a sudden digression from the main subject, gained him immediately to Christ. After the sermon, Firmus cast himself at the feet of St. Augustine, with tears confessed his errors, and was afterwards advanced to the priesthood. There is no doubt that he could have preached with an ostentation of learning, and in a style adapted to the taste of refined hearers; but he was superior to the arts of seeking human applause, and as circumstances required, nobly relinquished all claim to elegance, for the sake of meeting the understandings of his audience. "*Melius est ut nos reprehendant grammatici, quam ut non intelligent populi.*"

His sermons were eloquent because persuasive, and they were persuasive, for his character gave them the stamp of truth, the greatest charm in the composition of sermons. It reflected honor on the ancient rhetoricians, that, as a primary qualification for successful oratory, they required the orator to be a good man. They knew that

an esteem of the orator has more weight in the mind of a thinking hearer, than ingenuity of argument, which a hypocrite is often as well able to invent and utter, as an honest man. They knew that the best arguments would avail little from the tongue of him who was known to have no principle, and consequently, who was ready to defend or recommend any thing which the exigency of the moment required, in opposition to truth and to his own conviction. They therefore laid peculiar stress on the moral qualification of unaffected goodness in the accomplished orator. A poor composition, with this quality in the orator, would tend more to produce conviction, than the finest words and sentiments which were ever combined without it; and it is to the goodness of St. Augustine's life that his discourses were principally indebted for their wonderful power over the hearer. His piety, charity, diligence, and vigilance, were truly apostolic. If one were desired to exhibit to sceptics or infidels a specimen of human excellence produced by the influence of

Christianity, a most finished model is found in St. Augustine, in the midst of his flock at Hippo. His earnest study of the Epistles of St. Paul convinced him that nothing can possibly assist the ministers of reconciliation in furthering the progress of religion and virtue, than to support zeal by personal righteousness. This it was that finally converted even the most furious persecutors of Christianity; and without this, all the gifts which the Apostle enumerates—miracles, tongues, philosophy, knowledge, wisdom—would be useless.





CHAPTER X.

ST. AUGUSTINE CONSECRATED BISHOP—PUBLIC AND PRIVATE—
ADMINISTRATION OF HIS EPISCOPAL OFFICE—HIS EXCELLENCE
IN CHARITY

VALERIUS, finding himself sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, and fearing lest the diocese should be deprived of St. Augustine, through the demand of some other city for his services, procured the consent of St. Aurelius, Archbishop of Carthage, and the approbation of his own people, and the neighboring prelates of the province of Numidia, to make him his coadjutor. The consternation and grief of St. Augustine became excessive, and he strenuously opposed the project. All the ardor which an ambitious person applies in pursuit of eminence, St. Augustine employed to escape it. He entreated, he argued, he appealed; he related the errors of his past life,

accused his present conduct; he offered evidence of his unworthiness and incapacity. All his efforts were vain; "the stars may be obscured," says the prophet, "but humility cannot hide virtue." His very resistance betrays the modest priest, who, with the benedictions of the Church, the salutations of the clergy, and the acclamations of the people, is placed on the episcopal chair, which he honors by his marvellous learning, the activity of his zeal, the success of his instructions, and the sanctity of his whole conduct. At his consecration he received the plenitude of the sacerdotal ministry, and he united to it the plenitude of the mental and moral endowments of his noble nature. We may bring up to view Augustine only as formed by nature, with warm, loving soul, its vivacity and generosity the cause of many damages; a noble and elevated being who never felt resentment, nor the torments of jealousy, nor the anxiety of duplicity; unreserved in friendship, disinterested in benevolence; the tender son of the tender Monica, the affectionate com-

panion of Alypius, the inconsolable mourner of Nebridius. This sensitive soul, being devoted to a sacred state of life, turns all his affections to God; his moral virtues are ennobled by faith, his great heart expands in the fire of charity, and all his estimable qualities being sanctified by grace, become enhanced with a spiritual and celestial value. His amiability became sweeter, his compassion more sensitive, his natural generosity more active; hence, having experienced the weakness of humanity, he treats sinners with tenderness, receives the excuses of compunction with indulgence, and with heroism devotes himself to his neighbor.

The Church "bears record that he had the zeal of God." Zeal characterized by the divine word as the source of all elevation in heaven and earth, the crown and consummation of righteousness, the purest emanation of charity! Zeal, that raises man above himself; strips him of all fear; endues him with all courage; burns in his expressions, and sparkles in his life; bears him to his end with irresistible impetuosity; the scourge of

impiety and disorder, the inflexible pillar of religion and virtue, it formed the character of the young Bishop of Hippo, the man chosen by God to waft his name throughout the universe of faith. Powerful in word and works, the living model of all Christian virtues, becoming all to all in order to gain all, full of bounty and tenderness to the weak, severe to those whom no remonstrance could reclaim, without elevation in his intercourse with the simple and lowly, dignified and majestic before the great, capable of enduring everything for the faith, producing by bold and unslackened efforts the most astonishing revolutions in the minds and hearts of men, fulminating error even when it was sustained by the subtleties of philosophy, the powers of eloquence, the charms of poetry, the force of prejudice and passion, all the might of authority.

St. Augustine, on account of his episcopal duties, was obliged to live in the cathedral residence. He engaged all the clergy to live with himself in community, and to renounce all property according to the rule he

established, and strove with them to copy after the first community of Christians. (Acts iv. 31.) Herein he was imitated by several other bishops, and this was the original of the regular canons at a latter date organized for the service of cathedral and collegiate churches. God and his Church being enough for those who vow that their only desire is to work in the vineyard of the Lord, whoever would not consent to this mode of life, was not admitted into the clerical body at Hippo. In this religious domicile, candidates were prepared for the important duties of "ministers of the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and "preachers of reconciliation." No better instructor could be found than St. Augustine. 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. Possidius tells us that the saint's

clothes and furniture were plain; decent, not slovenly. No silver was used in the house, except spoons. The dishes were of wood, or earthen ware. The diet was frugal, being mostly herbs and pulse, though flesh was served for strangers and the sick; nor was wine wanting, a regulated measure being placed before all, which no one was allowed to exceed. At table, reading and literary conference were preferred to secular conversation, and to warn his guests to shun detraction, the following distich was placed over the table:

This board allows no vile detractor place,
Whose tongue will charge the absent with disgrace.

If any persons transgressed in that way, he reproached them, and to show his dislike for such offences he withdrew to his closet, as Possidius had frequently witnessed. He carried out the Apostolic rule and practice with the utmost simplicity and exactness, having nothing to do with the world and temporal things except "through necessity," and then, "without solicitude." Accordingly, to avoid interference with his pastoral duties

he entrusted to competent persons the building of churches, hospitals, and other religious and charitable institutions which he caused to be erected. He appointed some of his clergy to manage the temporalities, and received from them an exact account at the end of the year.

St. Augustine felt the episcopal office, as St. Paul designates it "*bonum opus*," therefore its grand but awful responsibilities excited conscientious attention, and quickened energetic zeal. "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 a bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, but also none more blessed by God, if a man conducts himself therein as a true soldier under the banners of Christ."

In an age of marvellous charity, St. Augustine was signalized by the ardor and activity of holy love. Truly it was a period of prodigies of Christian love. The earth became the image of heaven, the plaintive tone of indigence no longer heard, the felicity of every individual inseparable from the felicity of the whole; and by this admirable concert of parts, an august body formed, in which all men, however unequal in rank, were rendered equal by their moderation, great by their disinterestedness, and happy by their beneficence.

Wonderful are the accounts transmitted to us in history on this subject. For several years the benevolence of Christians rose so far above the level of ordinary conception, that the Pagans attribute it to some secret spell or charm that had the power of inspiring violent and irresistible attachment. "It is inconceivable," says one writer, "what unremitting diligence those Christians use to succor one another, since they have abandoned true religion and adore a crucified man; their teachers have acquired the won-

derful art of persuading them that they are all brothers, insomuch that the whole of their possessions are given up for the general welfare." We have likewise the testimony of the greatest enemy the Christian faith ever had, and certainly the most subtile and dangerous; for he did not, like his predecessors on the throne, carry fire and sword among its abettors, since experience had proved that such attempts were fruitless, and only served to give new vigor and increase to the cause; but as the love and charity of the Christians went evidently to beget and diffuse veneration for the principles that could inspire them, he strove, if possible, to clothe heathenism in the same fascinating exterior, and thus oppose Christianity with its own weapons. "Since nothing," says Julian the Apostate, in a letter to a Pagan priest, "has contributed more to the progress of the Christian superstition, than their attention to the poor and friendless, let us even exceed them in this way; let us immediately establish hospitals and other asylums for indigence and infirmity in every city; for certainly it

is no small ground of reproach, that we should be so glaringly deficient in these things, whilst those impious Galileans cherish and relieve, not only the wretched of their own communion, but likewise of ours."

In addition to this striking testimony of primitive benevolence, it is recorded, that in a single town, namely, Alexandria, there were annually five hundred individuals chosen out of the body of Christians to superintend the relief of the diseased poor only; and so excessive was the zeal of benevolence in this way, that Eusebius, the first Christian historian, in describing a plague that laid waste the interior of Egypt, has these remarkable words: "Multitudes of our brethren, without distinction of rank, sacrificing life to the principle that inspired them, supported the loathsome and infected bodies of the expiring in their arms; and, after closing their eyes, carried them on their shoulders to the grave, only living to receive, in the course of a few succeeding moments, the same prompt, generous, and intrepid office of mercy from others." To poor prisoners and captives

the relief was also never-failing and extraordinary; witness only what is related of a bishop, who, together with the entire clergy of his diocese, sacrificed all they possessed at the moment, and were to derive from the revenue of their respective benefices for one or more years, to alleviate the sufferings of many Christians then languishing in the prisons of Rome, under the united pressure of cruelty and famine. There was no possible calamity to which the indefatigable eye and burning heart of benevolence was not directed. It appears from a commentary of one of the Fathers on the gospel of St. Matthew, that, not reckoning widows and orphans, destitute children, and strangers, and lepers, and those whose distress was only discovered by investigation, or, if we may so call it, the sacred curiosity of charity; besides those various cases, there were four thousand poor of other descriptions, supported by the Christian benefactions of one small quarter of the city of Constantinople. Even a studied and dignified ostentation in the display of this virtue was deemed justifiable, as we find from

a singular example with respect to the emperor Decius. The tyrant demanded the fancied treasures of the Church; a deputation replied on the part of the body, and requested but a day to satisfy the order; in the interim they assembled the lame, the blind, the diseased, friendless infancy, and helpless decrepitude, an interesting and motley group of all wretchedness, and producing them, exclaimed, "Behold the treasures of the Church; this is the only wealth and inheritance which Jesus Christ has bequeathed to his disciples."

St. Augustine excelled even when charity was so universal and eminent that the heroic exercise of that virtue could hardly distinguish particular individuals. When any want moved his heart, his hand opened for the lavish donation of benefits. His only visits beyond the sanctuary and the cloister were made to the isolated, forlorn, and distressed. The poor of every grade were considered as his family, without reference to number or variety of necessities; he held himself, and each clergyman, as the father of orphans.

No obstacle checked the hand of relief; he despoiled himself of everything in seasons of exhausting need, and even melted up the vessels of the sanctuary in extreme cases, for the support of the suffering, and the redemption of the prisoner. Once, when he observed that but little was cast into the collection boxes, he concluded his sermon with these 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." He was indefatigable in reclaiming those who strayed from the ways of rectitude, and recalling wearied wanderers to the security and peace of the Christian fold. The heart-broken sinner was a most acceptable guest, and for them he wept frequently in public and private. In the reconciliation of enemies, and the rescue of criminals from the severity of justice, he displayed his greatest talent. If he could not pardon the guilty, he lightened their chains; if he could not obtain full remission of judgment, he was sure to win the privilege of blending clemency with inevitable legal rigor. On this

account the saintly Bishop was equally respected for the goodness of his heart and the elevation of his genius. The eagle of Hippo freely descended from the high heaven of delightful, enrapturing thoughts, into the nauseous details of the murky region of human woe, and exhibited the grandest aspects in a prism of intelligence, kindness, and compassion.

The inexhaustible charity of the saint was remarkably distinguished in regard to some of the denominations of infidelity, alias, Protestantism, which troubled the world in his time. He manœvered to bend their pride; with holy artifices he coaxed them towards the fold of the Good Shepherd; at the same moment he labored by prayer and fasting to drive out the devil of incredulity which possessed them. In this holy pursuit he at one time induced three hundred bishops to agree to share the honors of the episcopacy with those adversaries who would sincerely return to the bond of unity. "Although," he said, "you do not will it, you are my brethren; good or bad, you are my

brethren. Have we not wounded enough—have we not disputed enough? Children of the same father, let us be friends in the same charity. And why not? There is no question about dividing the inheritance; it is a common property, to be enjoyed by all in common.” This language is remarkable indeed, and so much more, when we consider the circumstances of this touching and generous appeal. At a time of his greatest success, that might elate a very humble man; when haughty opponents, who had insolently defied him, were publicly confounded; when, as the friend of Cæsar, he might have crushed them by the weight of his credit, as well as by the power of his genius, he is thus condescending to the ferocious Circoncelliones, who often attempted to assassinate him; who had burned churches, massacred priests; insane fanatics, who were as ready to die themselves as to murder others, and who invariably answered chastisements by fury, and kindness by audacity. And the temper of the age was unfavorable to indulgence and moderation. It was the reign of Theo-

dosius and Honorius, who looked upon the extirpation of heresies as a duty of piety and an affair of policy. Then it was that St. Augustine threw himself between the refractories and the sword of the law; then he pleaded for the conservation of their fortunes, refused to profit by their spoliation, entreated the proconsul of Africa to detest their errors, but to have a care for their persons; and dismissed the soldiers of Honorius, who desired to enforce by violence that which he was determined to obtain by kindness. Truly magnificent the religion which inspires such sentiments, and honorable beyond comparison the hero who, moved by its spirit, and armed only with its virtue, gained the "victory of faith."

Having won every heart by charity, St. Augustine subdued every mind by eloquence, and immortalized his episcopate by his marvellous instructions. As bishop, he applied himself with extraordinary assiduity to the ministry of the divine word; he prepared himself by prayer and retreat; like Moses, he hid himself in the cloud, where in the

depths of his soul he heard the invisible Legislator whose commandments he was about to publish, and like the "eagle of Libanus," spoken of by the prophet, "which fed upon the marrow of the cedar," he nourished himself with the substance of the sacred Scriptures. He penetrated the "hard things" of holy writ alluded to by St. Peter, and "devouring," according to the expression of the Apocalypse, "the sacred volume."





CHAPTER XI.

MAGNIFICENCE AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE LABORS OF ST AUGUSTINE—HE APPEARS UNEQUALLED AS APOSTLE, LIGHT OF DOCTORS, AND DEFENDER OF THE FAITH.

SO far we have touched only the prelude to the apostolical labors of the illustrious Bishop of Hippo; his mental vision glanced over the expanse of Christendom, and he felt that the whole universe of religion did not exceed the extent of his zeal; “he stood and measured the earth.”

Erasmus, having considered the immense labors and indefatigable zeal of St. Augustine for the salvation of souls, justly says of him: “In the epistles and other writings of this holy man, how manifestly do his piety, charity, meekness, gentleness, kindness, love of concord, and zeal for the house of God, appear? What doth he not endeavor? How doth he labor? How doth he turn and

change himself into all shapes? If there appear the least hopes of drawing one pagan to Christ, or one heretic to the Church, how doth he condescend, how doth he, as St. Paul saith, 'change his voice'? How anxiously doth he intercede for those wicked Circumcelliones, who deserved more than one death? Who ever solicited more for his friends than he doth for his enemies? With what pangs doth he bring forth all to Christ? How diligently doth he endeavor to lose all and lose none? How grievously is he afflicted when any scandal ariseth? Methinks I see the hen in the gospel, solicitous and anxious to gather and cherish her chickens under her wings. In him alone, as in a mirror, may be seen a perfect bishop, such a one as St. Paul describeth." Being aware that as a bishop he had not ceased to be a citizen, he labored equally for his country and religion, so that nothing which concerned the welfare of the commonwealth was indifferent to him. He was ready to oppose the tyranny of authority and to control the anarchy of subjection; to solicit the diminution of govern-

ment tributes, and to defend the weak and lowly against oppression. He was often requested to arbitrate in affairs of the state and of the family, and invariably did honor to his ministry, and satisfactory service to all classes. It is said by Possidius, that he was obliged sometimes to hear cases the whole day fasting, which he did diligently, affectionately and patiently, making use of every means to reconcile the parties amicably, whether they were Christians or infidels, his main object being to draw them to God, and to a virtuous life. He complained of this irksome charge only so far as it caused distraction in the exercise of holier functions; yet, charity, his only compensation, made all things supportable to him.

He was convinced, that the episcopacy is one, and that all the pastors are charged inseparably with the gospel ministry; his zeal and influence extended beyond his own household of the faith, and reached the entire African, even the whole Western Church. Profiting by the ascendancy which his renown had given him, and the hierarchicæ honor

earned by his virtue, he assisted the most eminent prelates, watched over their election, guided the choice of the people, animated the devotion of princes, and enlightened their zeal. He was the very soul of those famous councils, which, although not œcumenical, established salutary discipline, and gloriously illustrated the Church. From the college of learning and piety which he formed, a large number of missionaries, animated with his spirit, enriched many dioceses with apostolic vigor. Hippo was no longer least among the cities of Juda, the inconsiderable town became a second Rome, a model and a rule for other churches, on which the attention of Christendom was fixed; its pontiff was consulted from the extremities of the earth, for his wisdom reflected the enlightenment of the centre of gospel light. In fact, the obscure See of Augustine became a support for the chair of St. Peter, so that it may truly be said that the effects produced by Athanasius in Egypt, by Hilary in Gaul, by Ambrose in Milan, were realized by Augustine, who, as the Church beautifully

sings in the Liturgy, on his festival: *Laicos docuit, clericos monuit cunctorumque conditionibus providendo, tuam in hoc mare naviculam provide gubernavit.*

When we reflect on human frailty, and take into account the daily experience of mankind, we can easily understand how it happened that Augustine was seduced by the attractions of pleasure, his ardent imagination transported by the senses, and his natural advantages turned to the detriment of his character in his early lifetime. But it is a difficult problem to find the same man renovated by faith having such rectitude of heart in the soul once so dissipated; such love of truth where there had been an enslavement of falsehood; so great enlightenment in a region of the darkness of sin and death. How was this? It was meet that Augustine should be disciplined for a grand triumph of grace, when he became a testimony of its omnipotence, and a proof of its necessity. Providence ruled it that religion should be honored by a martyr of a novel species, who sacrificed his self-

will, became docile in defiance of prejudices, humble in despite of haughtiness, and thus assured the world that every thing is possible and feasible on the score of virtue, whereas Augustine practised it; all faith is credible, for the exalted genius of Augustine bowed submissively to the peremptory dictates of religion. In a word, one of the greatest genius', tutored by adversity, cautioned by his failings, became spiritually strengthened in proportion to the weakness of humanity, and provided truth with a defender whom infidelity could not suspect, gainsay or conquer.

The Church needed more than ever apostolic aid in the age of Augustine, when religion was exposed to the greatest trials. Christianity, it is true, was enthroned in triumph, and feared not the sword of tyrants; but in the very profundity of peace new tempests were engendered. A universal convulsion disturbed the whole of the then known world, the vast Roman empire was tottering into fragments, and a tide of barbarism swept all before it unto the extreme

limits of civilization. In the midst of this catastrophe, vain, profligate rebels against God and His anointed, excited the turbulent passions of heathens and publicans, ventilating the most hideous and nauseous contradictions to the teaching of the Church. In veterate and immutable Protestantism, true to its Satanical origin, and its volcanic constitution cradled in the bottomless pit, spread streams of the lava of infidelity in various denominations as numerous and nearly as bad as those which desolated society in the sixteenth century; and threatened a chaos in the Church parallel with the barbarian prowess which shattered the throne of the Cæsars. But the Lord provided in St. Augustine a hinderance to "the gates of hell," a great High Priest, who in his life propped up the house and fortified the temple. He took care of his nation, and delivered it from destruction, and obtained glory in his conversation with the people. As the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God. When he went up to the holy altar, he honored the vesture of holi-

ness. And about him was the ring of his brethren; and as the cedar planted in mount Libanus, and as branches of palm-trees, they stood round about him. He poured out at the foot of the altar a divine odor to the most High Prince. Then all the people together, fell down to the earth to adore the Lord their God. Then coming down, he lifted up his hands over all the congregation, to give glory to God with his lips, and to glory in his name. And he repeated his prayer, willing to show the power of God. (Eccl. 50.)

Ecclesiastical history does not exhibit any spectacle more imposing than Augustine's encounter with all the infidel and impious sectaries, alias, various denominations of his time. He restrained them by conviction, or gained them by confidence; his penetration divined their purposes; his amiability coaxed them to peace and union; and he never was discouraged by their number, nor misled by their artifices. No mind can pursue his rapid career of victory; no pen will ever adequately describe this noble champion

of the faith, battling like the Archangel Michael with "the old dragon." If that task could be accomplished, we might see Augustine resembling those valiant Israelites who skilfully used various arms at the same moment, and used both hands with equal dexterity; for he alternately combated the conceited Pelagian who exaggerated the rights of free-will, and the sordid Manichean who endeavored to debase it; the audacious Donatist who spurned the divine authority of the Church, and the insidious Arian who tried to delude it; the haughty philosopher whose reason had to be humbled, and the stupid idolater who was taught how to respect reason; and amidst those legions of innovators, so different in their pretences, interests and systems, Augustine presented an invulnerable aspect on which were engraven, as with the ancient High Priest, these two titles, "*doctrina et veritas*—doctrine and truth."

The world was still soiled by the vile remnants of paganism which had escaped the zeal of the apostles and the influence of the martyrs; being still accredited by passions,

interest, and custom, they battled against the light and virtues of Christianity; and Augustine undertook to give them the last exterminating blow. He had already in the early season of his conversion entered the lists with the Sceptics, exposed the conceited ignorance of their vain philosophy, so defiant of nature and common sense. From the chair of Hippo the prophecy of Isaias was fulfilled to the letter, the one God was exalted, and Augustine had the happiness before his death, to see the last idol fall. (Is. ii. 18.)

Whilst he triumphed over paganism, Augustine gave the final and deadly wound to the Manichees, who added many of the ancient ethnical dreams to their own peculiar errors. He had once adopted their senseless doctrines; tried to be persuaded that august virtue is the slave of fate, and that the empire of God may be divided. But if he abused reason most when prostituting it to these absurdities, he vindicated it most successfully when the abomination of infidelity was doomed to irretrievable disgrace.

Grand indeed was the triumph of Divine grace when the illustrious doctor unmasked his former deceivers, exposed them to public scorn, obliged them to fly from his presence, and almost with a breath crumbled the pillars of the faction when he defied Fortunatus, after conquering the indomitable Felix; forced Faustus to be silent, and then accomplished his conquest in the thousands of misguided partizans who, prostrate in the sanctuary of truth, abjured their errors.

Being determined to root out the pestilence most effectually, St. Augustine challenged Fortunatus, a highly esteemed Manichean priest, to a public conference, which was accepted, and lasted two days. The discussion turned principally on the origin of evil, which St. Augustine proved to be derived from the free will of the creature. Fortunatus, a very learned and able disputant, was unable to say more than that he would confer with the heads of his sect. Shame soon drove him from Hippo, and his flight caused the conversion of a large number of his deluded adherents. Faustus, a

bishop of the Manicheans in Africa, was the idol of his sect, and by his eloquence, affected modesty, and agreeable behavior, perverted many of the class of persons who have itching ears, and are addicted to man-worship. He boasted that he had forsaken all things to obey the gospel, although in reality he had nothing to forsake, and led the life of a voluptuary. This man published a book against the Catholic faith, full of blasphemous invectives against the divine revelations contained in sacred Scripture, and the mystery of the incarnation. St. Augustine answered this publication in twenty-three books, whereby he demolished the whole construction of mendacious impiety, and brought down the author to the level of his dark and disgraceful infidelity. A member of the so-called Elect of Manicheism visited Hippo for the purpose of reëstablishing his sect, so completely prostrated by the holy prowess of the noble doctor of the Church. He was not so learned as Fortunatus, but was more artful. It was agreed to hold a public disputation with St. Augustine, and the issue

was the conversion of Felix, who, on the spot, professed the Catholic faith, anathematizing Manes and his blasphemies.

The heresy of the Priscillianists, somewhat similar to Manicheism, at that time infected several parts of Spain, and likewise the errors of the Origenists. Paul Orosius, a Spanish priest, made a voyage to Africa to inform St. Augustine, whose fame had reached the whole of Christendom, about those heresies, and to receive a befitting remedy. The indefatigable Defender of the Faith produced his work "against the Priscillianists and Origenists," in which he condemned the impious errors that, the human soul is of a divine nature, sent into the body in punishment of former transgressions, till it be purified in this world; and he proved that it is created by God, and that when condemned, its torments, like those of devils, are eternal.

It surprises as much as it edifies, to behold St. Augustine constantly and successfully applying the grace which was in him to so many and so diverse emergencies of religion, that seemed solely dependent on the succor

of his genius and piety. Pascentius, superintendent of the imperial demesnes in Africa, and an Arian heretic, insulted the Catholics on account of the simplicity of their faith, and, with that paltry impudence indigenous in all generations of lay protestants, challenged the bishop to a conference. When they met, the "infidel warrior of words" would not allow notaries to write the proceedings, which St. Augustine declared would be reported according to every person's prepossession and fancy. Pascentius conceitedly insisted on having the word "consubstantial" shown to him in Scripture. St. Augustine asked him to point out in the sacred volume the term, "not begotten," which he used, and demonstrated that it suffices to find the sense of the word in equivalent terms. Maximinus, a protestant bishop of the Arian denomination, accompanied Sigisvult, commander of the Gothic troops in Africa, and when he arrived at Hippo, challenged St. Augustine to a public disputation, which, as usual, ended in the discomfiture and disgrace of the antichristian disputant.

Other protestants of Pagan and Jewish denominations elicited the zeal of the holy doctor. The latter he confuted by a treatise, in which is demonstrated the necessary abolition of the Mosaic dispensation, through its perfection and change into the gospel law, and the Church of Jesus Christ, in whom all that had been predicted and prefigured was accomplished and realized. When St. Augustine turned his attention to the idolaters, he gained their good will by rendering them several important services. This grateful disposition he improved with a view to their spiritual advantage, and induced them to embrace the faith of Christ. When the barbarians poured out a desolating torrent from Northern Europe, and Alaric wrecked and plundered Rome, the remnant of Pagans renewed their blasphemies against the Christian religion, as the cause of these calamities, St. Augustine repelled the slanders in one of the greatest works of any age—"The City of God," and demonstrated that heathen iniquity attracted the thunder-bolts of heavenly justice. No faction of incredulity or

immorality large or small, obscure or notorious, escaped the vigilance of this heroic "watchman on the towers of Sion." Several Tertullianists still subsisted at Carthage, whom St. Augustine by mildness and zeal reunited to the Catholic Church, as also another sect, called, from Abel, Abelonians. The heresiarch Jovinian was inimical to virginity consecrated by religious vows, and on this account had been condemned by Pope Siricius, and the Council of Milan; nevertheless his disciples stated that his opponents condemned matrimony. St. Augustine confuted the mendacious assertions in a book, "On the Advantages of Matrimony," in which he shows that state of life to be holy, that many engage in it upon motives of virtue, and surpass many virgins in sanctity. Against the errors of the same heresiarch, he published a book "On Holy Virginity," proving it to be a more perfect vocation, if embraced for the sake of God, with humility, and a fervent consecration of the heart to divine love.

The protestant sect of perdition which then most disturbed Africa, and gave the

greatest employment to the genius and zeal of St. Augustine, was the Donatist denomination. The first authors of this infidel faction were condemned as schismatics in a council at Rome in 313, and by the great Council of all the West at Arles in 314. Having violated the unity of the Church, they, as usually happens in all schisms, fell into the profoundest depths of heresy. Their first error was that the Church became defiled, and ceased to be the institution of Christ, this being confined within the limits of their own sect. Secondly; no sacraments can be conferred by those outside the true church, hence they rebaptized all who joined their party. They were divided into so many sects in Mauritania and Numidia, that they themselves did not know their number. The chief among these were denominated Urbanists, Claudianists, Maximianists, Primianists, Rogatists. Each party pretended that they alone had the true baptism, and were the true church.

The Donatists were exceedingly numerous in Africa, and obstinate to a degree of madness. At Hippo, catholics were in a minority,

and the Donatists had such sway, that a short time before the arrival of St. Augustine, their bishop, Faustinus, forbade any bread to be baked in the city for the use of Catholics. We are informed by St. Possidius, the disciple and biographer of St. Augustine, that far the greatest part of professing Christians in Africa were at that period infected with the errors of the Donatists, who carried their fury to the greatest excess, murdering many Catholics. St. Augustine soon commenced the apostolic work of opposing, and then extirpating the pestilential heresy, in public and in private, in the churches and houses, both by his words and writings. His learning and zeal, supported by the sanctity of his life, relieved the Catholics, and advanced the general interests of religion.

The Donatists were so much exasperated that they declared publicly, his murder would be highly meritorious before God, and the greatest service to religion; and the crime was often actually attempted by crowds of the protestant denomination of Circoncelliones, when the holy Prelate made the visit-

ation of his diocese. On one occasion he escaped the assassins because his guide had mistaken the road; for which preservation he gave public thanks to God. The saintly Bishop was obliged to ask the secular magistracy to restrain the outrages of those emissaries of Satan; at the same time that the Emperor Honorius (*proprio motu*) issued edicts against them, condemning them to heavy fines and other penalties. At first St. Augustine disapproved of such correction; but he soon was obliged to change his opinion, for, as he observes, their open seditions, and acts of violence, distinguished them from the Arians and other heretics, and required several adequate remedies. Nevertheless, he employed against them no other arms than mildness and charity. He even obtained the remission of a fine imposed on Crispin, a Donatist bishop, not only for heresy, but also for having conspired against the life of Possidius, Bishop of Calama. Those wretched enemies of religion and society, having erected the standard of rebellion and persecution, against all laws and

authority, required the just restraint of legitimate power; accordingly, the emperor commissioned lawyers, under the title of "Defenders of the Church," to prosecute the Donatists according to law. This name, long before in use, is mentioned in the Council of Carthage, A. D. 349, and in succeeding ages, and it signified a tribunal appointed to protect widows, orphans, the virtuous and the weak, from oppression. So ancient and just the institution styled in modern times, "The Inquisition,"—slandered, misrepresented and condemned by the satellites of Lucifer, who rolls in an orbit of iniquity, "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Meanwhile, St. Augustine exhorted the Catholics to labor for the conversion of the sons of perdition, by fasting and praying, and by inviting to the truth with sincere charity; avoiding all discord and contention.





CHAPTER XII.

COMBATS AND TRIUMPHS OF THE GREAT DOCTOR IN THE CAUSE OF RELIGION—IMMENSE ADVANTAGES GAINED BY HIS CONFERENCES WITH INFIDELS—IMMORTALIZED AS THE CHAMPION OF GRACE.

THE most important transaction that occurred at this time was the conference held at Carthage between the Catholics and Donatists. St. Augustine had frequently invited Proculian, the Donatist bishop of Hippo, and others of that sect, to a fair disputation before competent judges; but they constantly declined, alleging his superior eloquence. St. Aurelius of Carthage, St. Augustine and the rest of the Catholic prelates, agreed in a national council to send to all the Donatist bishops an invitation for deputies of both sides to meet at an appointed time and place, in order to discuss the controverted articles. The Donatists answered

that they could not confer with the successors of traitors and sinners, whose company would defile them. By such evasions the disputation was deferred till, at the request of the Catholics, the Emperor Honorius compelled them by a rescript to meet within four months, to hold public conference, for which he appointed as president the tribune Marcellinus. Two hundred and seventy Catholic Bishops immediately subscribed to this arrangement. Marcellinus ordered seven bishops to be chosen as disputants on each side; the Catholics were, Aurelius, Alypius, Augustine, Vincentius, Fortunatus, Fortunatianus and Possidius; the Donatists were, Primi-anus, Petilianus, Emeritus, Protasius, Montanus, Gaudentius, and Adeodatus. The conference was opened on the 1st of June 411, and continued during three days.

The principal share in the debate devolved on St. Augustine, who bore away the glory of the triumphant day, which resulted in the extirpation of a ruinous heresy, the conversion of an immense number of perverts, and salutary influences experienced from age

to age, even to the present day. Noble and sublime beyond description was the attitude of the greatest Doctor of the Church, when he confronted the malignant host of three hundred Donatist bishops. Almost singly, he attacked and defended, armed only with truth and genius; at every instant forcing "iniquity to belie itself," pursuing the enemy through every ambush of retreat; unceasingly confounding them by this startling question: "Whence do you come? where were you on yesterday?" and strengthened by the divine authority of the Church, and resting on this firm and unassailable rock, he launched forth and repelled attacks, until, by the power of inspired reason, the victory was accomplished. It would be impossible to develop or set forth in a becoming light that magnificent display of intellect, sacred learning, and Christian piety. With evangelical skill he separated the cause of the Church from that of any one of its rebellious members; demonstrating the unreasonableness of breaking unity, it being improper for a part to argue against the

whole, as it is unnatural for a separated branch to strike against the trunk. With masterly vigor he depicted schism, its perpetual variations, the full deformity of the rupture, the misfortune of its partizans—"clouds without water—withered trees, the miserable sport of wind and storm."

Eloquently and forcibly he exhibited the grand Church, whose authority cannot be usurped, nor its majesty imitated, nor its possession disturbed by any sect or party. Having no other founder than the Divine Incarnate Word, it rises as the "Pillar of Truth," strong as it is beautiful in the unity of its construction; it is pure, though vicious elements float near and around it; immovable, though the earth quakes in the shocks of scandal; like the sun, it is most brilliant and fair when shining through the clouds which seek to obscure its radiance; and visible to every eye, it encircles every age and clime; it is hailed in every language and by every people with the title, "One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church;" so that if a stranger should ask, "Where is the Catholic Church?"

no innovator would dare to point out his own meeting-house. Marcellinus pronounced judgment in favor of the Church, and the emperor issued new edicts against the Donatists, ordering their clergy to be banished out of Africa, and the usurped churches to be restored to the faithful. Pride, shame, obstinacy, essayed a temporary resistance, but in vain; the power of truth gradually crushed every obstacle. The new Samaria blushed for its desertion; the adulterous partizan abjured Donatus to return to the adorable Saviour; Africa had only one altar, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and the happy reunion which Cæsar could not inaugurate by force of law, Augustine consummated by the potency of his talent, eloquence, and grace. An occasion occurring, in connection with his conquered foes, St. Augustine displayed a charity of heart as marvellous as the prowess of his intellect.

Several of the obdurate and unconverted sectaries having lain in ambush near Hippo, had killed Restitutus, a Catholic priest; and when arrested, confessed their crime before

the magistrate, Marcellinus. St. Augustine immediately pleaded in their favor and endeavored to save them from the just rigor of the law. "We neither impeach them," said he, "nor persecuted them, and should be sorry to have the sufferings of the servants of God punished by the law of retaliation." He entreated Marcellinus to respect that meekness which the Church exercises towards all men, and requested that those criminals might not be put to death, but only restrained from hurting others, by means of imprisonment, or employment in public works. He wrote to the same purpose to Apringius the proconsul, and brother of Marcellinus, who was to be their judge, reminding him that the sufferings of Catholics were examples of patience, which we must not sully with the blood of our enemies. This signal display of St. Augustine's charity is sadly contrasted by an event that exhibits the dire malignity of Protestantism, which, from the first moment of its foundation by Lucifer, invariably returns evil for good, thus ever harmonizing with its crucifixion

of the Head of the Church, because He had wrought many miracles and prayed for his enemies. The Count Marcellinus, who was a very virtuous and religious man, entertained the greatest veneration and regard for St. Augustine, and this was reciprocated with equal affection and esteem on the part of the saint, than whom there never was a more tender or warmer friend.

When Heraclian, who had been proconsul in Africa, rebelled in 413, being vanquished by Count Marinus near Rome, he fled to Carthage, and there was put to death. The Donatists conspired to be revenged for the sentence pronounced against them at the Conference, and created suspicions and charges against Marcellinus and Apringius as being favorable to the rebels, and implicated in the revolt. At the instigation of the wicked heretics, Marinus, who had arrived in Carthage in pursuit of Heraclian, arrested the brothers, and suddenly ordered them to be beheaded. St. Augustine was deeply afflicted by this barbarous murder. He had justified his friends, and obtained a promise that they

would be liberated; but the perfidious Marinus preferred gratifying the infidel's thirst for the blood of the saints. The holy bishop visited Marcellinus in prison, afforded him all possible comfort, and prepared him for death by administering the sacraments and holy rites of the Church. He gives, in his Epistles, a pathetic description of the patience and heroic charity of the victim of heretical spite. He states that when visiting Marcellinus in prison, he asked him if he had committed any sin for which he ought to do canonical penance? he grasped the bishop's hand, and declared, "by those sacraments conferred by that hand, he never had been guilty of any such sin." St. Augustine avoided all communication with Marinus, and exhorted others to testify their indignation against him, so as to oblige him to do adequate penance for his crime. The Emperor Honorius disgraced Marinus for his evil deed, honored Marcellinus as one martyred by Donatist malice, and styled him "of glorious memory." In the *Martyrologies* this holy servant of God is ranked among the martyrs on the 8th of April.

The important service to religion rendered by St. Augustine, in his encounter with Pelagianism, stands foremost in the array of his grand labors and triumphs. Pelagius, the archenemy of divine grace, was a man of considerable talent, also favored by an imposing display of apparent virtues, and well provided with all the artifices suitable for seduction. His system of infidelity was the more attractive, whereas it pretended to encourage virtue, and less alarming to religion because it used the language of faith; it was pleasing to pride by flattering its pretensions, to nature by exaggerating its power, and to reason by extolling its capacity. The impious impostor seemed to the ignorant and unstable to remove every difficulty, to clear up every mystery, to elevate humanity, and to illustrate the divine holiness. How could there be a hope of escape from so many snares? The needful succor was prompt and ready! Pelagius might deceive the clergy in France, puzzle a council, confuse the whole East, impose on Pope Zozimus, seduce even the elect; but with St. Augustine

“the gates of hell could not prevail;” the fortress of infidelity fell beneath the prowess of the champion of divine grace.

We need not enter upon a profound dogmatic discussion, for the purpose of exhibiting the inspired reasoning of Augustine in his exposition and defence of the heavenly gifts, whence all justice comes, and the mysterious vocation which prevents man without constraint, an ineffable operation acting efficaciously on the will which acts freely, and an admirable concurrence, which at the same time gives the credit of virtue to God who excites, and to man who coöperates. It is sufficient to say, that with surpassing genius and devotion, he developed the definite truth of divine grace written by St. Paul: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do.” (Phil. ii.)

The great doctor treated this sublime subject in a manner so luminous that he seemed to lift the veil of mystery, and to pierce with a novel ray of vision, “the glass through which we look dimly.” In doing this he pro-

ceeded boldly through all sorts of difficulties without the slightest check; he combated all systems without forming any system; he vindicated the rights of God, without derogating from the privileges of man; and in the complication of mysteries, he touched the limits of reason, and the limits of faith, and chased error through its various detours, and unceasing novel forms, without ever passing, even in the slightest measure, the unique and immutable line of truth. With equal zeal and sagacity he pursued the blaspheming Pelagius, cited him to the tribunal of the supreme Pontiff, and declared that he would abdicate the See of Hippo, in case the vicious heretic should be allowed impunity. In fine, the indefatigable apostle did not relax until he saw the East and the West unitedly crushing, with the same anathema, the hideous revolt against Christ and his grace.

Thus, by the immense and magnificent labors of St. Augustine, the empire of divine grace was fixed immovably, and its necessity and power, its sweetness and gratuity, were impressed with sacred sanction. The exer-

tion and triumphs of the illustrious Doctor were not limited to the grand feats already enumerated. Arians, Priscillianists, Nestorians, Semi-Pelagians, Tertullianists, Sabelians, and a motley legion of minor sectaries vanished before him, like the clouds of night before the morning sunshine. Truly marvellous was the prophet and guide who combated so many factions without being himself a partizan; so many extravagances without any excess; and who, inflexible in principle as he was indefatigable in zeal, advanced with measured and sure steps amidst the admiration of earth and the benediction of heaven, to his loyal goal, the exaltation of Christ's kingdom.





CHAPTER XIII.

ST. AUGUSTINE CRUSHES EVERY ERROR; SUSTAINS EVERY TRUTH;
AND BY HIS PIETY AND LEARNING ADORNS AND ILLUMINES
THE WHOLE STRUCTURE OF RELIGION.

THE success of St. Augustine was glorious not only on account of the sacred intelligence which it expressed, but also from the nature of the errors upon which it acted. The early Fathers had to deal only with Montanus, Valentinus, Marcion, Basilides, and other obscure sectaries having a weak and brief posterity: it was the glory of St. Augustine to encounter those huge heresies from which are derived all the denominations of subsequent ages. From Arius to Luther, from Luther to Socinus, from Socinus to the impious babblers of the present time, every profane novelty must tremble and sink beneath the genius of the indomitable conqueror of infidelity. It was not only Donatus,

Manes and Pelagius that he crushed, but also the impious of every region, the heretics of every age; in the Pelagians all the pretended disciples of nature; in the Manicheans all the apostles of fatalism; in the Donatists all the partizans of the thing named the Church of England by law established, so very truthfully described by the historian Macaulay: "It commenced with Henry the murderer of his wives, it progressed with Somerset the murderer of his brother, and was completed by Elizabeth the murderer of her cousin and her guest;" and of which the so called Dean of Paul's meeting-house in London said, "the like of it is not known in Europe, Asia or America, not even in Timbuctoo." Schism cannot invent a pretext which Augustine has not confounded; nor heresy a sophism which he has not refuted; nor bewildered reason a difficulty which he has not solved. In his triumph over the ancients, he has anticipated the moderns: and thus entwining in the crown of his victory the past, the present and the future, and adding to the splendor of his talents the

grandeur of his services, he combines in himself the honor of all the holy doctors, and the gratitude of all ages.

Our knowledge of the Bishop of Hippo would be imperfect if the inspection of his character concluded with the aspects of polemic and controversialist. He was a profound philosopher, a wise interpreter, a skilful critic, a sublime moralist, an eloquent exponent of virtue, so that with the inexhaustible wealth of his intellect he could construct more than he destroyed, and was more able in the establishment of truth than in the dissipation of error. The truths which he maintained and so magnificently illustrated, were not some particular points of morality, or detached mysteries, or scattered rays of light, his work was a concatenation of all points of doctrine, a development of the whole plan of revelation, perfectly original without the trace of any antecedent model. It is not presumed that before him, religion had not the benefit of teachers and writers, "men of renown, great in their generation," always held in memory and honor.

Such were Lactantius, called by St. Jerome "The Christian Cicero"; St. Cyprian, as sublime in virtue as he was in diction. Origen, always admirable, though not always convincing; Tertullian, who so ably made the harshness of his expressions subservient to the boldness of his thoughts, and St. Hilary, who would have been the greatest man of the age, if St. Athanasius were not his contemporary. But each of those eminent doctors treated only some isolated truth, and discussed religion under some special aspect. St. Augustine alone embraced its totality, and presented in one complete body the majesty of its teachings; like an able architect, who takes a vast building into one point of view, and so distributes the various parts as to make harmonious unity from the foundation to the crowning of the edifice. Hence all that may be desired by mind and heart is found in the treasury of his writings. If we wish to be impressed by the grandeur of holy writ, we can read his books on *Genesis* and the *Christian Doctrine*. He exhibits the marks of the superiority of the sacred volume

above all other books; its guarantee of antiquity, its charming simplicity, and admirable blending of light and shade, alternately testing and sustaining faith; the unction which penetrates the inmost recesses of the soul, the majesty which astonishes, the eloquence which flows continuously without palling, and beautifully interweaves grand objects and familiar images, satisfying at once the most ordinary and most exalted intellects.

If it be desirable to search the ways of the interior life, the *Soliloques*, and explanation of the *Psalms*, guide surely and directly; therein every thought is a sentiment, every expression a sparkling flame. Never had divine love more tender effusions, never did piety speak sweeter language. With pathetic accents he renders the sighs of the prophet, and depicts his ecstasies in coloring of celestial light; and at the same time communicates to us the various sentiments he had himself experienced! We weep and rejoice; we fear and hope with him; and when unable to distinguish the divine from the human element, one is inclined to ask,

whether the author or the commentator is most inspired. If we seek enjoyment in the admiration of Christianity, in the beauty of its morality, and the grandeur of its benefits, full edification is afforded in the writings on the utility of faith and Christian morality. Religion appears equally sublime in the impressions it produces, and the objects it contemplates; substituting the fictitious credit of human virtues with the perfection of a justice springing up in the heart from an immortal source, it discloses a new prodigy in man, at one and the same time captive and free, submissive and great, humble and exalted. In the book entitled the "City of God," we are transported into the first principles of things, enabled to attend at the first council of creation, and to trace the whole history of religion running parallel with the course of time. In that marvellous work, St. Augustine soars above his own ordinary excellence, whilst he develops with lightning flashes the designs of God, and runs along the whole chain of religion, whereof the first and last link touches eternity. With indes-

cribable skill he depicts the concurrence of all events for the glory of the divine work. Empires reel and crumble, the sport of time, but out of every convulsion, and beyond every wreck, the faith rises intact and triumphant. Anarchy and confusion, like earthquakes and tempests, threatening universal disorder, are seen to be so many contrasts setting off the indefectible order and perpetuity of religion. Throughout this wonderful scene, which St. Augustine alone could model, the immutability of the Eternal Deity is kept in view; also His wisdom always fruitful, His power always active, reducing all things, howsoever various and different, to a solidarity of His worship. It would be no exaggeration of fancy to name this work "City of God," a magnificent hymn of loving benediction, harmonizing with the "Heavens which declare the glory of God."

Reverent curiosity may sometimes for a pious purpose attempt to scan the whole economy of man's salvation, if so, the writings on "Perseverance, and the Predestination of the Saints," unfold as much of divine truth

as the human mind is capable of receiving. There man is seen advancing between the two abysses of justice which can do every thing, and of goodness which nought obliges; sometimes abashed by fear, sometimes relieved by hope; he is taught like the royal prophet to sing "of mercy and of justice;" of mercy, that he may not be ungrateful when he is saved; of justice, that he may not complain when he is condemned. The depth of luminous thought in which St. Augustine exhausts his knowledge, is wonderful beyond all that has ever been called prodigious.

If it be asked, who has had the grandest views of religion, who has spoken of God in the most sublime terms, who has discussed mysteries most precisely, and virtue most sweetly, we are told it is Augustine. He is the patriarch amongst all the Fathers who had the greatest influence on his age, contributed most to dignify the human mind; and whilst he never borrowed from others, the learned and scientific of every age and clime have drawn much from the abundance of his gifts. To estimate his marvellous career

it would be necessary to assemble in one point of view his various enterprises; all the faithful and the ignorant persons he guided and instructed; the multitude of sinners and heretics converted; the task he assumed, to allay turmoil, to stop scandal, to answer many popular demands for his interposition. We should also take into account his correspondence with bishops, councils, with sovereign Pontiffs, with emperors, with all the saints and great men who flourished in his day, with the East and West, in fact with the universal Church, of which he was the principal oracle and representative. When we behold the monuments of his zeal and weigh the impediments of the age, owing to the scarcity of books and the difficulty of communication; when we consider that as large a portion of his life was wasted in worldliness as was employed in the service of the Lord; that after his episcopal consecration he was obliged to pass incessantly from one occupation to another, without a moment of leisure in the sanctuary or the library; when we count all those volumes, their mere catalogue

forming a large volume, and which take more time for transcription than was used in their composition; we may ask, how could one man alone write so much, and how could he draw from his mental treasury so much ancient lore, so much modern novelty? Must we think that he created that which he had not time to learn; that his knowledge was less the produce of study than of inspiration; or that the highest human capacity was multiplied in him; or that he had a power for checking the rapidity of time? In fact, it is not one man alone that we have to contemplate, but geniuses as numerous as the different subjects of his labor and zeal. When we read his ascetical works, it might appear that he was entirely occupied in meditation; or when we peruse his polemical dissertations, it might be suspected that he was always in the combat of discussion; whilst the study of his oratorical discourses would seem to leave him time for nothing else than to announce the sacred word.

A pause in admiration of the miraculous fertility of St. Augustine's apostolical labor,

suggests that we have arrived at the climax of the gifts and graces of this most privileged mortal. But there is something still more estimable in relation to his noble character as Pastor and Doctor. It is the elevated confidence of a mind knowing everything, combined with the modesty of a Christian believing that he knew nothing; the amiable docility inclining him to prefer the advice of his colleagues to the dictates of his own sovereign reason, the generous oblivion of self in all his undertakings, being desirous only to achieve the triumph of truth, and the advancement of religion; the tender piety and marvellous unction never exhausted in the arid discussions; in fine, the heroic integrity which, in the "Book of his Confessions," induced him to censure his faults with more severity than would be inflicted by the calumnies of his bitterest foe, expiating, as it were, his celebrity, by a publicity coextensive with the fame of his sanctity and learning.

This second apostle of the Gentiles could in all truth, yet with the same humility, exclaim in the words of St. Paul: "By the grace

of God I am what I am." And all generations must bow reverently to the Divine Grace, which can form such men; as simple as they are wise, they give to their genius all the credit of their virtues, and enhance their virtues with the elevation of their genius; always convinced that all is vanity except what is given by Him who created all things, who said: "Let there be light, and light was made."





CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST YEARS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S LIFE—VANDAL DEVASTATION IN HIS CHURCH AND COUNTRY—HE DISPLAYS THE WISDOM AND COURAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN HERO.

LIKE all the faithful followers of the Divine Redeemer, St. Augustine could “enter into glory only through many trials and tribulations.” In his lifetime, the judgment of heaven was awfully executed upon the gentiles who had raged, and “the people who had conspired foolish things, and the kings of the earth who stood up against the Lord and His Christ.” The gigantic fabric of Roman dominion was smitten by barbarian prowess, the spear of the Vandal shattered the imperial throne, and a Gothic banner waved over every classic land. Since the unannalled days of the first flood, when the primitive science, art and knowledge of mankind were destroyed, there had been naught

within comparison so appalling to the unsheltered world as the Scythian tide which swept all before it to the confines of civilization. The Church suffered, but did not succumb; altars were desecrated, asylums ruined, the clergy murdered, as always happens in the revolutions of barbarism and infidelity. St. Augustine suffered intensely through religious sympathy, even whilst the sad events were far out of his sight. His faith was his victory, his hope was his strength, yet the magnanimity of his spirit caused him, through the greater elevation of his charity, to shudder in the tempest like the cedar of Libanus, that owing to its height bows before the gusts of the hurricane, although never riven nor uprooted. At length grief came upon him in his homestead of religion, was increased by bitter personal experience, and the heavy misfortunes which befell his flock, and the entire fold of his native land.

Count Bonifacius, chief commander of the imperial forces, had the character of a virtuous devoted Christian; he was loyal to church and state, and accordingly was es-

teemed as a dutiful disciple and trusty friend by the bishop of Hippo. After the death of his wife he resolved to forsake the world, and to embrace a monastic state. St. Augustine and St. Alypius knowing well the value of vocations coming not from the disinterested oblation of the heart, but from the sulky temper of selfishness, dissuaded him, as they were sure that he would be more useful to church and state in his secular condition of life. It would be well if the same discretion were used with persons who insult religion by pretending to use it, when huffed, as a means of spiritual suicide. Bonifacius by degrees strayed from his Christian course of life, and being commissioned by the emperor to proceed to Spain, he there married a protestant woman of the Arian denomination, related to the royal Vandal family. This alliance procured for him the friendship of the infidels, and although he insisted on the woman becoming a catholic before the celebration of the marriage, it would appear to be the cause of evil consequences. It undoubtedly afforded an oppor-

tunity to Ætius, a rival officer, to render the fidelity of Bonifacius suspected by Placidia, at that time regent of the empire during the minority of her son, Valentinian III. In an unhappy moment Bonifacius was induced, by the vile passions of selfishness and personal spite, to make a treaty with the Vandals of Spain for the invasion of the fertile and prosperous province of Africa. St. Augustine wrote to him, exhorting him to do penance for his sins, and to return to his duty as a Christian and citizen. But Bonifacius was not disposed to take his advice. Genseric, King of the Vandals, greedily accepted the traitorous invitation, and led from Spain, to conquest and devastation, an army which in its chieftain and its host would pass muster as a levy *en masse* from the infernal regions.

There never has been an invasion more sanguinary and ruinous. The Vandals, naturally cruel, had their cruelty aggravated by the persuasion that they were hated and despised; and being Arians, their ferocity was increased by heretical animosity. The fair land of Hannibal and Augustine, so long

esteemed the garden of the world, on account of its fertility and opulence, its industry and commerce; and the number of its cities and towns, magnificent in edifices, eminent for the culture of liberal arts and sciences, was rapidly desolated by fire and sword. At the risk of their own destruction, the Vandals spared not the harvest lands, nor fruits of trees, nor vine nor olive, nor any kind of vegetation, in order to starve the unfortunate people who sought refuge on the mountains, and in the caverns of the wilderness. Rank, wealth, talent, feebleness of age or sex, were equally disregarded by the remorseless murderers. Delicate women, persons notably refined and illustrious, were heavily laden, and driven along the highways like beasts of burden. Infants were torn from the bosoms of mothers and dashed against the stones. When a fortress was attacked, and considered impregnable, the barbarians collected a multitude of prisoners and slaughtered them close to the ramparts, in order that the infection from the putrefying bodies might spread death amongst the besieged, and force them

to surrender. Frenzied Arianism made a countless host of martyrs. Bishops, priests, religious men and women, whole families of pious and devoted Christians, with mangled limbs, laden with chains and exhausted by famine, were dispersed on the highways. Mansuetus, Bishop of Uri, was burned at the gate of Furnes, and Papinian, Bishop of Vita, was roasted alive with red hot bars of iron. Altars and sanctuaries were desecrated; churches razed to the ground; the abodes of charity and learning desolated; and gloom, silence and ruin alone made record of the times and places where former generations enjoyed the delights and consolations of religion and civilization.

It is startling to behold such horrors befalling a land once so renowned for its saints and martyrs, its churches, councils, and doctors, its maintenance of sound doctrine and discipline. A distressing explanation is given by writers of the time, especially Salvian, a cotemporary witness. The terrible catastrophe was regarded as a well deserved chastisement. The Vandals themselves said

that it was not by their own impulse they acted so ferociously, being impelled by an irresistible internal force. With the exception of a small number of faithful servants of God, the Roman province of Africa became a sink of iniquity. Whilst each barbarous nation had some particular prominent vice, the Africans surpassed in the uniformity and universality of crime. Widows and orphans were especially oppressed, and the poor in general were so much tormented, that in fits of desperation they prayed God to deliver the place to the barbarians. A considerable portion of the population, nominally Christian, were heathens at heart. They adored the goddess Astarte; were devoted to the most hideous impersonations of impurity and debauchery; and from the sacrifices to idols, proceeded to the church to receive sacrilegiously holy communion. St. Augustine was moved by the terrible visitation; and in proportion to the vivacity of his mind and the generosity of his heart, he deplored the devastation of his native land. He mourned not only for the physical calami-

ties of the people, but his whole soul was overwhelmed with grief for the spiritual ruin that was likely to ensue. He labored incessantly as bishop, friend and citizen, to administer relief and consolation. All the operations that hitherto so often and so diversely issued from his piety, learning, and zeal, seemed to concentrate in one act of devotion to meet the fearful emergency. He was constant in prayer, beseeching the Lord to give to his servants all seasonable graces, and especially for himself he asked the help necessary to enable him to fulfil all the extraordinary duties that devolved on him. He preached, like St. Paul, "in season and out of season," exhorting the people to constancy and resignation, to reverence for the unspeakable mercies and unsearchable judgments of God, always just, holy, and adorable, and with extraordinary emphasis he besought them to turn their sufferings to advantage, by bearing them as penance for sin, and in imitation of the passion and death of the Divine Saviour.

From some of his discourses, and through

the narratives of the time, especially those of St. Possidius, we see the great Bishop appearing in the awful crisis like the miraculous cloud in the camp of Israel, affording light and shelter. Hence from all sides he was applied to for guidance and encouragement. Thus he was consulted by a bishop named Quodvultdeus, and by Honoratus the bishop of Thabenna, whether it were lawful for bishops, and other clergymen to fly upon the approach of the barbarians. St. Augustine's answer to Quodvultdeus is lost; but in that to Honoratus he refers to it, and repeats the same advice. He states that, "It is lawful for a bishop or priest to fly, when he alone is aimed at, and the people are not molested; or when the people are all fled, so that the pastor has none left who have need of his ministry; or when the ministry may be better performed by others who have no occasion to fly." "In all other cases," he says, "pastors are obliged to watch over their flock, which Christ has committed to them, neither can they forsake it without a crime." Representing the desolation of a

town like to be taken, and the necessity of the presence of Christ's ministers, he writes: "In such occasions what flocking is there to the church, of persons of all ages and sexes, of whom some require baptism, others absolution and penance, and all crave comfort. If then no ministers are to be found, what misfortune for such to go out of life unregenerate, or, if penitents, not absolved! What grief to their faithful kindred, that they cannot hope to see them in everlasting rest! What cries, what lamentations; nay, what imprecations from some to see themselves without ministers and without sacraments! If, on the contrary, ministers have proved faithful in not forsaking their people, they are an assistance to all, according to the power received from God. Some are baptized; others are reconciled; no one is deprived of the communion of our Lord's body. All are comforted, fortified, and exhorted to implore, by fervent prayers, the assistance of the divine mercy." From these epistles we can understand how the faithful Shepherd himself was employed in the terrible crisis.



CHAPTER XV.

THE CLOSING SCENE HARMONIZES WITH THE GRANDEUR AND BEAUTY OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S LIFE—HIS DEATH PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD.

COUNT DARIUS was sent by the empress Placidia into Africa, to treat of peace; Bonifacius produced authentic evidence, showing how he had been betrayed, and driven to his unfortunate course by the treachery of Ætius; and having returned to his allegiance, was again entrusted with the command of the imperial army. He, by money and force of arms, endeavored to retrieve the loss of Africa, but all in vain. The barbarians were insatiable in their feast of blood, and their appetite was whetted by the heretics who availed themselves of the fatal opportunity for glutting their animosity against the Church. Onward swept the tide of desolation, until it encircled Hippo, the

strongest fortress in Africa. Thither fled Bonifacius after defeat in battle; Possidius and several bishops took refuge in the same place, seeking rather the consolation of St. Augustine, than doubtful protection against the enemy.

The Vandals marshalled their forces before the city in May 430, besieging it by sea and land. St. Augustine said to his friends: "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 prayer was favorably received by the Divine Master, to whom he had been "a good and faithful servant." In the third month of the siege the holy Bishop, noble Confessor, and illustrious Doctor, was seized by a fever. From the first moment of his illness he was sure that he was blessed with the summons "to enter into the joy of the Lord." It must always be esteemed a happy privilege for those who wish to tread in the footsteps of the saints,

that we have the early life of St. Augustine presented to us by himself in the Book of his Confessions; and the scene of his mortal dissolution depicted by an eye-witness, his own saintly disciple, Possidius. Undoubtedly, the best use of life is to learn how to die. Poor simpletons esteem it a very sacred industry to prepare for the stormy day by heaping some rotting rubbish on the verge of the grave; most proper it is, for those who have the cunning of the gospel, to be fitted to break through the lurid tempest with the triumphant war song of a Christian deadly combat: "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?" We are taught the desirable lesson at the death-bed of St. Augustine, through the means of Possidius' narrative, so excellent, because so strictly matter of fact.

During the long years of the holy Prelate's retirement from the world death had been the chief subject of his meditations, and in his last days he spoke of "the mortal putting on immortality" with great cheerfulness, saying, "We have a merciful God." He often spoke

of the resignation and joy of St. Ambrose in his last moments; and related the saying of our Lord to a certain bishop in a vision, mentioned by St. Cyprian: "You are afraid to suffer here, and unwilling to go hence; what shall I do with you?" He also mentioned the last words of a friend and fellow-bishop, who, when he was departing out of this world, said to one, that remarked he might recover from his illness: "If I must die once, why not now?" He could not repress the desires of his soul for the glorious condition of eternity, when "we shall see God face to face, and know Him as He is." He expressed the emotions of his heart in the words of the Psalmist: "Till I shall come, till I appear before him, I cease not to weep, and these tears are sweet to me as food. With this thirst with which I am consumed, and ardently carried towards the fountain of my love, whilst my joy is delayed, I continually burn more and more vehemently. In the prosperity of the world no less than in its adversity, I pour forth tears of this ardent desire, which never languishes or

abates. When it is well with me as to the world, it is ill with me till I appear before the face of my God." His fervor increased with each declining hour, and intensified his compunction and humble penance. He used often say in familiar discourse, that, "after the remission of sins received in baptism, the most perfect Christian ought not to leave this world without earnest repentance." Whilst the saint lay sick, Possidius relates, by the imposition of his hands he restored to perfect health a man who was brought to him for that purpose on account of an advice given in a vision. Possidius adds: "I knew both when he was a priest, and when he was a bishop, that being requested to pray for certain persons that were possessed, he had poured out prayers and supplications to our Lord, and the devils departed from them."

Ten days before his death he withdrew into complete retirement, not allowing any one to visit him, except those attendants whose services were indispensable. All this time was spent in profound meditation and

prayer. The penitential psalms of David were, by his orders, hung in tablets upon the wall by his bedside, and as he there lay prostrate, like the holy mourners agonizing at the foot of the cross of Calvary, life's tide ebbed in his utterance of the words of that tearful psalmody. The holy, sweet, adorable name, so cherished in childhood's innocence, so profoundly revered in manhood's exalted temper, wafted to eternal bliss the immortal soul on the expiring breath that exclaimed JESUS! when St. Augustine, on the 28th of August, 430, departed into possession of the kingdom prepared for him by the Father whom he loved.

“We being present,” adds Possidius, “the adorable sacrifice was offered to God for his recommendation, (as had been done by him for his mother St. Monica,) and so he was buried. He made no will, for this poor man of Christ had nothing to bequeath. His library and manuscripts, already bestowed on the Church, he ordered should be carefully preserved.”

We turn back over the lapse of time which

makes the fourteen hundredth anniversary of St. Augustine's natal day, and looking at the sepulchre of the illustrious dead, we exclaim: must the oracles of the world die like the rest of men; neither the glory they expanded on human nature, nor the vital fire of the Divine Spirit within their souls, can arrest the blow which hurls them into the dust of the common wreck of mortality! The reverie is broken by the voice of the "Resurrection and the Life," telling us that the great Augustine, who believed in Jesus, is not dead; his doctrine, his piety, his zeal, his triumphs and his benefactions, have not descended into the grave with his mortal clothing; the vesture of his immortal fame is in the safe deposit of religion, and in all its integrity transmitted from generation to generation. He lives eternally in the councils where his decisions have become the infallible teaching of the Church; in the chairs of truth, where he is daily quoted as the wisest interpreter; in the writings of all the doctors who draw from the fountain of his inspiration. So long as schisms will last,

they shall be confounded by the catholicity of Augustine; so long as the proud will resist, they shall be subdued by his docility; so long as irreligion will vaunt the prestige of pretended great men, the conceit shall be crushed by the magnificent authority of Augustine. After all the vicissitudes of fourteen hundred years, his genius lives unimpaired, unclouded, exercising its immutable and immeasurable influence throughout the whole universe of religion, and shines as a beacon light on the ramparts of the city of God, making plain the path for the followers of Christ, guiding wanderers out of labyrinths, and deterring intrusions of the enemy. During those many generations, all the great men in the history of the Church have fertilized their talents with the wealth of his intelligence. Like those mighty orbs of light, which in their movement in the firmament draw onward a multitude of minor luminaries, St. Augustine impels every mind, brightens every thought, directs every pen daily consecrated to the service of religion; so that if ever his writings should be des-

troyed, his name alone will be an encouragement and security for the defenders of the faith.

The vacant see of St. Augustine had no successor. The African Province, the cherished jewel of the Roman empire, sparkled for a short time in the Vandal diadem. The Greek supplanted the Vandal, the Saracen supplanted the Greek, and the home of Augustine was blotted out from the map of Christendom. Northern Africa is the only land in which the light of the gospel, after a long and brilliant day, was totally extinguished. The arts which had been cultivated by Rome and Carthage were buried in ignorance, the doctrine of Cyprian was forgotten; till at length a people without discipline or knowledge or hope, submissively sunk under the yoke of the Arabian impostor. But Christian Africa produced one solitary flower, of which the bloom and fragrance escaped the desolating hurricane, and its seed has survived the dissolutions of time. In Bonas—as Hippo is now called—the memory of Augustine endures as that of the “Gheber

Saint, who taught the religion of the Son of Mary, before the birth of Mohammed.”

The inhabitants of Hippo emigrated to foreign countries, abandoning all to the barbarians, who destroyed the greater part of it. The Saint's body, which was buried in the church of St. Stephen, was respected by the barbarian heretics, and his library also escaped the fury of the invaders. Fifty years after his death, the bishops banished by Huneric carried this sacred treasure to the Island of Sardinia. There it remained till the year 720, when Luitpraud, the illustrious and pious king of the Lombards, redeemed it, at a great cost, from the Saracens, and transferred it with a gorgeous and devout ceremonial to the church of St. Peter at Pavia. The history of this translation was written by Oldrad, Archbishop of Milan, by order of the emperor Charlemagne. The holy relics were deposited with the utmost care, in a coffin of lead, enclosed in another of silver, the whole being secured in a sarcophagus of marble, upon which in numerous inscriptions was engraved the name, AUGUS-

TINUS. In this condition the revered relics were discovered in 1695. They were proved authentic by the bishop of Pavia in 1728, whose decision was confirmed by His Holiness Benedict XIII. Christendom rejoiced when in the year 1830, Algiers, as the land of St. Augustine is now called, was conquered by France, and the victorious banner of the cross again floated at Hippo (Bona). The first archbishop of the redeemed territory, Mons. Dupuch, appointed in 1838, petitioned the Holy See for permission to translate the relics of St. Augustine to the same place where arose the "Light of Doctors," whence it illumined the universe of faith, and ascended to shine with "those who instruct many unto justice," like stars, "in a firmament of glory." The pious request of the archbishop was granted, the relics were uncased, and properly examined and attested, the right arm, shoulder and blade bone being entire amidst the crumbled remains. This present epoch being evidently the evening hour of the setting sun of the two thousand-year-day, declining unto the

sombre advent, when "the Son of Man will scarcely find faith," the canonized ark was borne across the deep blue Mediterranean waves without pomp or jubilee, and in a twilight such as glimmered in the death-chamber of the Saint, was laid on the ground where Monica wept and prayed, where Augustine praised the wondrous works of God, and offered the "clean oblation, rendering the name of the Lord glorious amongst the gentiles." On this anniversary of the natal day of the Holy Father, 28th of August, 1872, the pilgrim affections of devoted clients approach the shrine on which, as of old, is engraven "AUGUSTINUS:" there we meditate as he suggested, there we confess as he taught us, there we feel the unrest as he expressed it: "*Domine, inquietum est cor meum, donec quiescat in te.*" and we pray: O God, who by revealing the most hidden secrets of Thine wisdom to our blessed Father Augustine, and by kindling in his heart the flames of divine charity, didst renew in thy Church the miracle of a pillar of cloud and fire, grant

that by his guidance we may happily pass over the gulfs of the world, and deserve to reach the land of eternal promise. Amen.





CHAPTER XVI.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S WRITINGS.

ST. AUGUSTINE surpasses all the doctors of the church in the abundance and variety of his writings. His biographer and disciple, St. Possidius, reckons the productions of his pen, including sermons and letters, at ten hundred and thirty. With astonishment and admiration we there perceive how he devoted himself, with immense industry and with fervid religious zeal, to the duties of his apostolical station, to the defence of the church, and the promulgation of Christian knowledge and civilization. As his early and favorite study had been eloquence, his style of oratory was magnificent, the more especially as he had for it a natural adaptation in the grasp of his mind, the intensity of his feelings, and the happy facility of his language. But he improved his natural powers by earnest and protracted study, the only luxury he enjoyed, when not tasting

the sweets of heaven in the elevation of prayer. It was by no royal road that St. Augustine attained his lofty eminence, nor his force and unbounded influence, but by the rough and rugged path of untiring industry. In all his works there is reach of thought, sublimity of conception, beauty and force of style. Even when the pressure of exciting and disturbing circumstances hindered that *labor limæ* so essential to literary success, they will bear a favorable comparison with productions of a similar kind in any age or language. They are not artificial or stately; they possess a surprising freshness and elasticity, and abound in fine natural strokes and bursts of eloquence. Freed from the trammels of artistic elaboration, he was more direct and fervid, and poured out in spontaneous beauty the fulness of a noble intellect and a generous heart. It is evident that he wrote, not with ambition to acquire honor and praise, but with moderation and humility, for the love of God and man. If he lacks the learning of Origen and Jerome, he surpasses them in originality, depth, and

fulness of soul. Critics have blamed him for verbosity and frequent repetitions; his style also is found sometimes negligent, but this happened through design, for with ingenuous fidelity he says, "I would rather be censured by the grammarians than not understood by the people."

His controversial works, in which he abounded, are able, earnest, and learned, without being dictatorial, sophistical, or vehement. They bear down all opposition, and render truth invincible: like the imperial eagle, so often pictured in connection with his name, which, whether soaring in mid-air, or perched upon the summit of some lofty rock, sweeps the landscape with his piercing eyes, and falls with such unerring precision upon his prey, that it can no more escape his talons than his lightning glance. In the grand work—the "City of God"—we admire a genius as vast as profound, which sees and judges at one glance, legislators and conquerors, kings and nations, the crimes and virtues of men; and traces with a rapid but impressive pencil the hand of God on human

grandeur, and kingdoms which die like their masters. Never did uninspired writer condense so many facts with such little confusion, nor dispose such dissimilar materials with so much skill and regularity. Instead of a laborious antiquarian, who at a remote distance is obliged to grope his way by the dim and partial lights he has successively collected, he seems rather contemplating, from a lofty elevation, the shifting fortunes of fleeting empires, as they rose and passed in review before him; seizing and sketching their prominent features with the spirit and fidelity of a living observer. The excellence of all his works must be ascribed to the direction which his mind received from the impulse of religion. Naturally possessed of talents that would confer eminence on any individual, they derived dignity from the cause to which they were devoted. Gifted with a genius which seldom falls to the lot of the religious, and filled with a spirit of religion that does not often accompany men of genius, the rare union of these qualities produced an irresistible effect. Though his

mind was stored with a vast accumulation of knowledge, which a splendid eloquence could adorn, the ardent zeal for religion by which it was exalted, rendered his natural sublimity more sublime.

From the comprehensive mass of writings it is easy to determine the significance and influence of St. Augustine's highly gifted mind and his truly pious heart. His genius and religious disposition gave him such a character, that he was willingly esteemed as head and leading spirit of the African Church. Hence, around him, Aurelius of Carthage, the primate of Africa, Evodius of Uzala, Fortunatus of Cirta, Possidius of Calama, Alypius of Tagestum, and many other bishops, gladly ranged themselves. 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 Church and theological science reach. In fact, no other uninspired teacher has merited the title of "Light of Doctors," with which the Bishop of Hippo has been hailed throughout the universe of faith.



CHAPTER XVII.

SYNOPSIS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S WORKS.

UR holy doctor, who had been involved in the errors of the Manichees, became the champion of truth against them. He began at Rome his three books, "*On Free-will*," in which he demonstrates against them that article of faith; and, as if he had foreseen the Pelagian heresy, he teaches that the good use of free-will is only from God, and an effect of his grace. His chief design in this work is to prove that the will of the creature is the only cause of sin, and he treats of original sin and its effects. In his book, "*On the Manners of the Church*," he shows, against the slanders of the Manichees, the sanctity of her doctrine and morals: he produces several precedents of holy men, setting forth the examples of many monks and nuns, who, having severed themselves from the

world, spend their lives in constant abstinence and in exercises of piety; also of many holy prelates and priests, who keep themselves pure in the midst of a corrupt age; and lastly, of an infinite number of lay-christians, who lead most exemplary lives. He says, that though there are some superstitious or wicked persons in the church, she reproveth and instructs them. In another book called, "*On the Manners of the Manichees,*" he sets forth the hypocrisy, impiety, and licentiousness of those heretics, and the falsehood of the boasted chastity and austerity of their elect.

One of his best works against the Manichees is the elegant and excellent book, "*On the True Religion,*" which he addressed to Romanian, whom he had formerly engaged in that sect, who was his patron, and whose son, Licentius, was his beloved disciple. This work is justly admired by St. Paulinus; it was the last which St. Augustine wrote before he was advanced to the priesthood, and in it appears how well he was already versed in the doctrine of our faith and in

the writings of the fathers as well as in the heathen philosophers. He shows that religion, which adores one God, and which teaches us to pay to him the true worship which he requires, is the only one thing that can lead us to truth, virtue and happiness, and that this is only the Catholic faith. He refutes idolatry, Judaism, and all heresies, and Manicheism in particular; with its doctrine of the evil principle, and of the origin of evil, which he proves to spring from the malice and defect of creatures. He teaches that sin is so essentially voluntary, that unless it be so, it is not sin; for otherwise all exhortations and corrections, and the very law of God itself would be useless. As to his saying, that miracles had then ceased, this he afterwards corrected, adding that he meant the ordinary and frequent gifts of miraculous powers; for, as he says, even when he wrote this, he had seen some miracles performed at Milan. He proves that both authority and reason lead us to the Catholic Church, and insists on the sanctity of its morals; he mentions its innumerable martyrs and holy virgins,

though some bad livers are tolerated in it, who are like chaff mingled with the corn on the barn-floor: he closes the work with an exhortation to the practice of charity towards God and our neighbor; to that of religion and of all other virtues, and insists on the obligation of renouncing the theatre, and all the criminal and vain sports of the world.

St. Augustine beautifies his sermons with scarce any other figures than interrogations, antitheses, and sonorous alliterations, to which his quick, lively imagination inclined him, and which were best relished by the Africans in that age. But he checked the turns of his fancy by the ingenious simplicity of his pious affecting sentiments, which make his discourses everywhere tender and persuasive. All his works plainly show how full his soul was of the love of God, and he knew very well how to express to others the strong sense he had of it.

St. Augustine wrote in 393, in two books, an exposition of the Sermon of our Lord on the Mount, (Mat. v. vi. vii.) in which is comprised the perfection of the divine pre-

cepts, which form the true Christian spirit. This work contains many useful lessons of virtue, especially against rash judgment. The holy father in the second book explains the Lord's Prayer. His one hundred and twenty-four tracts on the Gospel of St. John were begun by him in 416, and are homilies, which he preached every day of the week. In them he often confutes the Arians, Manichees, Donatists, and Pelagians. He shows the Donatists that their sufferings, of which they boasted, could never avail them, much less procure the glory of martyrs, because they suffered not for Christ, being out of his Church, and destitute of charity. He excellently inculcates the grievous evil of the least venial sin, which is deliberately committed, and easily multiplied, and the fruit and advantages of divine love, the proof of which is the observance of the divine commandments. In his ten tracts on the first epistle of St. John, he draws at length, the portraiture of divine charity, and recommends the necessary fear of God's judgments, which paves the way to love in a soul.

St. Augustine was a priest when he wrote his "*Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*," in which among other precepts he lays down discreet rules of charity to be observed in correcting others; particularly, that it be always done out of a pure motive of charity, and that this be made appear to him who is corrected. About the same time he composed his "*Exposition of several passages in the Epistle to the Romans*," in answer to difficulties proposed to him: also, "*The Beginning of an Exposition upon the Epistle to the Romans*," which he never finished, being deterred by the length and difficulty of the task.

His "*Enarrations or Discourses on the Psalms*," which he finished in 415, take up the fourth tome of his works. He professes first to explain the literal sense, but adapts it almost always to Christ and his Church, and often gives only an exposition, that is spiritual or moral: after this, by allusions or allegories, he draws some moral instruction very profitable to the people. This work is not so much a literal exposition of the

Psalter as a collection of Christian maxims and rules of piety, which the author usually enforces in a pathetic manner, especially on penance, divine love, contempt of the world, and prayer. St. Fulgentius owed his conversion to the reading of the discourse on the 36th Psalm, in which he treats on the last judgment, &c. In these discourses he often speaks of the obligation of giving alms, for which he exhorts every one to set apart every tenth penny out of his revenues or gains. He frequently repeats what the rest of the fathers inculcate, that *all possessions, which are superfluous, belong by right to the poor*. He complains, that many measure their pretended necessities by the demands of luxury, vanity, pride and extravagance, and he says: "We shall have many things superfluous, if we content ourselves with necessaries; but if we listen to vanity, nothing will be enough. Seek what suffices for the work of God, not what inordinate passions crave. You say you have children. Count one more in your family. Give something to Christ. Some lay up for their chil-

dren, and these for their children, and even for great-grandchildren. But what do they set apart for Christ? What for their own souls? Among the children which they have on earth, let them count one brother, whom they have in heaven. Let them afford Him a share, to whom they owe all."

St. Augustine wrote certain other books on the scripture not by way of sermons. The first, which he composed after his return to Africa, was "*A Book upon Genesis*," in which he explains the history of the creation against the Manichees, and shows the origin of sin to be not from God, but from the malice of the creature, and the abuse which it makes of free-will. The distinction he here makes of four senses of the Holy Scripture, is famous; the *historical*, which takes place in relating matters of fact; the *allegorical*, which explains what is spoken by figures; *analogical*, which compares together the Old and New Testaments, and refers the first to the latter; and the *ætiological*, which points out the reasons of the actions and discourses related in the Scriptures. Some moderns

add the *anagogical* sense, by which the sacred text is applied to the kingdom of heaven, to which it conducts us. St. Augustine, in his twelve books "*Upon Genesis, according to the letter,*" pursues the same method as in the foregoing work, in expounding the history of the creation against the Manichees; but starts many difficulties, which he leaves for a farther discussion.

His seven books "*On the Particular Ways of Speech in the Seven First Books of the Old Testament,*" are answers to several difficult questions on the Pentateuch, and the Books of Joshua and Judges. This is a curious and learned work, full of judicious remarks, in which he adheres to the literal sense. His "*Notes upon Job*" are short hints, which he wrote in the margin of the sacred text, and are a key to a literal exposition, discovering useful notions, which may be farther improved. The "*Speculum, or Looking-glass,*" taken out of the Scripture, is a collection of passages for the direction of manners. His "*Harmony,*" or book *On the Agreement of the Evangelists,* was composed about the year

399. His two books "*Of Questions on the Gospels*" are of the same date, and contain the answers to forty-seven difficulties propounded to him on the Gospel of St. Matthew, and to fifty-one on that of St. Luke.

These comments on several parts of the Old and New Testament make up the two parts of the third tome of the Father's works in the Benedictine edition; and to them are prefixed his four books on "*The Christian Doctrine.*" In the first book he lays down general principles for the study of the Holy Scriptures, for the understanding of which he requires unfeigned faith and sincere charity. In the second he says, "That the degrees by which we may attain to the perfect knowledge of true wisdom are, the fear of God, piety, knowledge, courage, counsel, and purity of heart." He sums up the canonical books of Scripture, and among the translations thereof prefers the ancient Latin, as being the most literal and clearest; and among the Greek versions he adheres to the Septuagint. In the third book he gives rules for distinguishing the senses of the sacred

text, especially the proper or literal from the figurative. In the fourth he says, "That as the Scriptures are to be expounded by preachers for the instruction of others, he advises that, in the first place, they prepare themselves for this function by prayer, and that their lives correspond with their sermons."

The sixth tome of St. Augustine's works comprises his dogmatical books upon several points of morality and discipline. His book of "*Eighty-three Questions*," contains his resolutions of as many difficulties, upon different subjects on which he had been consulted. Simplician had no sooner succeeded St. Ambrose, who died on the 4th of April in 397, than he propounded to St. Augustine certain difficulties concerning the text of Paul's epistle to the Romans relating to predestination, and others regarding other parts of the Scripture. St. Augustine, who had been lately consecrated bishop, answered him by his two books to Simplician, in which he corrected his former notions and expressions in his exposition of several passages in the epistle

to the Romans written in 394, not sufficiently accurate on the subject of divine grace. He was convinced of the absolute necessity of that supernatural succor by that passage: "What hast thou, which thou has not received?" as he says in his book "*On the Predestination of the Saints*," and in that "*On the Gift of Perseverance*." And he cautions us, that he only wrote accurately upon the subject of grace from the time he was made bishop. His book of "*Eight Questions to Dulcitius*," a tribune in Africa, contains answers to several difficulties proposed by him.

In his Treatise "*Concerning the belief of those things that are not conceived*," he proves in favor of faith, that many things are believed, that are not conceived or apprehended by the senses, as when we love a friend or a stranger merely upon the reputation of his probity. In his book "*On Faith and Good Works*" he confutes certain errors, as that no one that has been baptized can be damned eternally, &c. His book "*On Faith and the Symbol*" is an exposition of all the articles of the Creed which he delivered

whilst he was a priest, in presence of a synod assembled at Hippo in 393. In his book "*On Faith and Works*," he demonstrates that faith will not save us without good works. His "*Enchiridion, or Manual*," was addressed to Laurentius, a pious Roman Lord, brother of Dulcitus, who had desired of him an abridgment of the Christian religion. St. Augustine shows that it is comprised in the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity, by which we worship and glorify God, and render him the spiritual homage of our souls.

In his book "*On the Christian Combat*," he exhorts us to arm ourselves against temptations by a lively faith, mortification and the succor of grace. In that "*On Catechising the Ignorant*," he prescribes the method of teaching the catechism usefully, so that the hearer may believe what is spoken, may hope what he believes, and may love what he hopes for. He would have it taught in such a manner as to be rendered agreeable and entertaining, and the grace of the Holy Ghost to be often implored in this holy function.

His book "*On the Care for the Dead*," was addressed to St. Paulinus in 421, of which work mention has been made in the life of that saint. His discourse "*On Patience*," is a recommendation of that virtue. In his sermon on the Creed, he mentions that all adult persons learned it by heart before they were baptized, and recited it every night and morning. That "*On Fasting*," shows its advantages. In that "*On the Plunder of Rome by Alaric*," he shows that calamity to be an effect of a just and merciful Providence. He says that in 396 the Emperor Arcadius and all the citizens abandoned Constantinople one day, fearing it was going to be destroyed by a ball of fire, which appeared in the air; but, that God having spared it through their tears and prayers, they soon returned to their former disorders. In his treatise "*On the Prediction of Devils*," he proves that their oracles could never foretell any thing but what they could learn by natural means, or in their natural causes, or by subtle conjectures.

The epistles of great men are generally

interesting and curious, both for illustrating their history and giving the genuine portraiture of their mind; those of St. Augustine are particularly so, on account of the importance of the subjects treated in them. Several are so many excellent and learned treatises, and contain many admirable instructions for the practice of perfect virtue. In them he mentions his own frequent indispositions, and the habitual weakness of his constitution. In the thirty-eighth, to Profuturus, he says he was confined to his bed under violent pain, but adds: "Though I suffer, yet I am well, because I am as God would have me to be; for when we will not what He wills, it is we that are in the fault, as He can neither do nor permit anything but what is just." In the thirty-sixth, he answereth Casulanus about the fast of Saturday, that "the Church observes fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, because the Jews formed their conspiracy to put Christ to death on Wednesday, and executed it on Friday. As to Saturday, he bids him follow the custom of the place where he should be,

according to the rule of St. Ambrose, who told his mother, "When I am here (at Milan) I do not fast upon Saturdays; when I am at Rome I fast upon that day." If the custom of the place be not uniform, as in many churches in Africa, he advises him to do as the bishop of the place should do or direct. He gives the same answer in his fifty-fourth, to Januarius. He says in the same, that they do well who communicate daily, provided it be done worthily, and with the humility of Zaccheus when he received Christ under his roof; but that they are also to be commended who sometimes imitate the humble centurion, and set apart only Sundays and Saturdays, or certain other days, for communicating, in order to do it with greater devotion. He lays down this principle, that a custom universally received in the Church must be looked upon as settled by the apostles, or by general council, as the annual celebrations of Easter, Pentecost, the Ascension and Passion of Christ. He says, that though the faithful at first communicated after supper, the apostles afterwards or-

dained, that out of reverence to so great a sacrament, all should communicate fasting.

In the fifty-fifth, to the same Januarius, he speaks of Lent and of other laws of the Church, but says that certain rites and customs may be sometimes practised by particular persons, which are only tolerated by the Church, and may be sometimes such as are better rejected than observed. It would be tedious to mention all the important points of faith and discipline which he discusses in many of his epistles; but devout persons will find nothing more agreeable than the perfect maxims of Christian virtue which he inculcates. With what charity and tenderness does he comfort Crysinus under temporal losses and calamities, putting him in mind, that God is our only good, and a good which can never fail us, if we study truly to belong to him. If he suffers us to be afflicted in this world, it is only for our greater advantage. He explains the duties of a wife towards her husband in his letter to Ecdicia, showing her that she was obliged to condescend and conform to the humor of her

morose husband, not only in duties which she essentially owed him, but also in things indifferent: that she ought not to wear black clothes, seeing this gave him offence; and she might be humble in mind in rich and gay dress (provided it were modest, and not such as the apostle condemns) if he should insist upon her wearing it. He tells her she ought, in all things reasonable, to agree with her husband as to the manner of educating their son, and rather leave to him the chief care, when he required it. He severely chides her for having given goods and money to the poor without his tacit consent, and obliges her to ask his pardon for it, whether his unwillingness to allow her extraordinary charities proceeded from a just and prudent care to provide for their son, or from any imperfect motive. He exhorts her to gain him by meekness and charity, and to endeavor by all means to reclaim him from his adulteries and other vices, especially by praying for him. "Pray for him," says the saint, "and from the bottom of your heart. For tears are, as it were, the blood of a heart pierced

with grief," &c. In like manner did he press upon husbands the respect, tender affection, and just condescension, which they owe to their wives; and so with regard to other states.

The documents he gave to Proba are more general. Proba, Falconia, the widow of Probus, who had been prefect of the prætorium, and consul in 371, withdrew into Africa with her mother-in-law Juliana, and her daughter Demetrias, after Alaric the Goth had plundered Rome. This holy widow, being sensible that assiduous prayer was her chief duty, desired St. Augustine to send her some instructions in writing about the manner how she ought to pray. The saint told her she must learn to despise the world and its pleasures, and sigh after the true happiness of divine grace and charity, which is to be the principal object of all our prayers: that prayer must be made by the earnest cry of the heart, and ought to be without ceasing, by the continued burning desire of the soul seeking God; secondly, by having regular hours for daily devotions; and thirdly, by frequently

raising our hearts to God during all our actions, with fervent aspirations, in imitation of the Egyptian monks. He gave her an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, adding, that we are to recommend to God not only our spiritual, but also our corporal necessities, especially our health, that we may consecrate it to the divine service; for without health, all other temporal blessings avail us little; but this and other temporal favors we must ask with resignation to the divine will, and with a view to our spiritual advantage, lest in punishment of our impatience, God should give us them when they are pernicious to our souls, as he granted in anger the flesh meat, which the Jews in the wilderness asked with murmuring, and at the same time visited them with the chastisement of their gluttony and rebellion; whereas he refused to hear St. Paul, because a trial was more expedient for him.

We have a remarkable instance of St. Augustine's meekness and humility, in his controversy with St. Jerome. The latter, in his exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to

the Galatians, had explained the passage of his "*withstanding and blaming St. Peter for withdrawing from the table of the Gentiles upon the arrival of the Jewish converts,*" as if this had been a mere collusion between the apostles to prevent the scandal of either party, and as if St. Paul did not think St. Peter in any fault; because he allowed the observance of such legal ceremonies at that time no less than St. Peter did. St. Augustine in 395, being only priest, wrote to him against this exposition, showing, that though the apostles certainly agreed in doctrine, yet in this action of St. Peter there was an indiscretion or inadvertence, which gave to the gentile converts an occasion of scandal; and that if St. Paul did not blame him seriously he must have been guilty of an officious lie; and by admitting such a fallacy, any passage in the Scriptures may be eluded in the like manner. This letter of St. Augustine happened, by the detention and death of the bearer, never to be delivered. In 397, St. Augustine, being then bishop, wrote to St. Jerome another letter upon the same

subject, which, by another accident, fell into the hands of several persons in Italy, and was only sent accidentally to St. Jerome in Palestine; at which St. Jerome took offence. Several other letters passed between them on this affair, in which St. Augustine shows that the apostles tolerated, for some time, the ceremonies of the Jewish law, so they might be abrogated by insensible degrees, and the synagogue buried with honor. He conjures St. Jerome by the meekness of Christ to pardon what he had offended him in, thankfully submits himself to his reprehension and reproof, professing himself always ready to be taught by him as his master, and corrected by him as his censor, and desires to drop the inquiry, if it caused any breach of friendship; that they might provide for their mutual salvation. "I entreat you again and again," says he, in another letter, "to correct me confidently when you perceive me to stand in need of it; for, though the office of a bishop be greater than that of a priest, yet in many things is Augustine inferior to Jerome." The saint imputes the whole blame

of this dispute to himself, and his own negligence, because he had not added, that the toleration of the legal rites only belonged to that time when the New Law began to be promulgated. St. Jerome afterwards tacitly came over to St. Augustine's opinion, which is confirmed by the general suffrage of theologians. St. Augustine grieved exceedingly to see the debate betwixt Jerome and Ruffinus carried on with warmth, and conjured them with the greatest tenderness imaginable to forbear invectives. "Could I meet you both together in any place," said he, "I would fall down at your feet, I would weep as long as I were able. I would beseech as much as I love you, sometimes each for himself, then each one for the other, and for many others, especially the weak for whom Christ died." He always dreaded the itch of vainglory in literary contests, in which men love an opinion, as he says, "Not because it is true, but because it is their own, and they dispute, not for the truth, but for the victory." For his part, he was so much upon his guard to shun this rock, that charity

and humility were nowhere more visibly the governing principles of his heart, than on such occasions.

He trembled always at the danger of secret complacency, or vainglory, amidst the praises of others. Thus he writes of this temptation in his *Confessions*: "We are daily assaulted, O Lord, with these temptations; we are tempted without ceasing. The tongues of men are as a furnace, in which we are daily tried. . . . Thou knowest the groans of my heart to Thee concerning this thing, and the floods of my eyes. For I cannot easily discover the advances that I make towards being more clean from this plague, and I very much dread my hidden sins, which are seen by thine eyes, but not mine. In other temptations I have some way by which I may try myself; but none at all in this."

He complains bitterly in a letter to Aurelius, Archbishop of Carthage, how subtly and imperceptibly this dangerous vice insinuates itself into our souls, adding: "This I write, to discover my evils to you, that you may know in what things to pray to God for my

infirmities." Sincere humility made him love, at every turn, to confess his ignorance, and no less readily than candidly, often to say, "I know it not;" an answer which does more honor to a true genius than the greatest display of wit and learning; yet, which costs so much to many, that they often turn themselves into every shape, rather than make this humble acknowledgment.

From this sincere humility, St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions*, or praises of the divine mercy and justice, about the year 397, not long after he was made bishop, when all the world admired his sanctity, and he enjoyed the greatest honor and fame. Possidius assures us that his chief design in composing this work was to study his own humiliation, and to endeavor that no one should think of him above what he confessed himself to be. He therefore divulged all the sins of his youth in the first nine books, and in the tenth published the many imperfections to which he was still subject, humbly begging the intercession of all Christians in his behalf. The saint himself, when sending

this book to Count Darius, tells him that "The caresses of this world are more dangerous than its persecutions. See what I am from this book: believe me, who bear testimony of myself, and regard not what others say of me. . . . Praise with me the goodness of God for the great mercy he hath shown in me, and pray for me, that he will be pleased to finish what he hath begun in me, and that he never suffer me to destroy myself." He has interspersed in it sublime and solid reflections on the greatness and goodness of God, the vanity of the world, and the miseries of sin, with most useful instructions for furthering the spiritual life. Ever since this work has been written, it has been always read by pious persons with delight and admiration. The saint having given an account of his own actions in the first ten books, in the last three takes occasion to speak of his love for the Holy Scriptures, and discusses several metaphysical difficulties concerning time, and the creation of the world, or the first part of the history of Genesis, against the Manichees.

Besides the works above mentioned, which St. Augustine composed against the Manichees, he wrote, in 391, soon after he was ordained priest, his book "*On the Advantage of Believing*," to reclaim his friend Honoratus from that heresy. In this work he overthrows the Manichean principle: "The light of reason suffices to discover to us the truth, without faith, or the use of authority." He shows that it is wisdom, not rash credulity, to believe those that are worthy of credit, even in matters of civil life; and especially, that true wisdom never can be attained without consulting authority. He demonstrates that the authority of the Catholic Church justly deserves and commands our respect and assent, and says: "Why shall we make any difficulty to throw ourselves upon the authority of the Catholic Church, which hath always maintained herself by the succession of bishops in the apostolic sees, (in spite of all the endeavors of heretics condemned by her,) by the people's faith, by the decisions of councils, and by the authority of miracles? It is

either a matchless impiety or an indiscreet arrogancy, not to acknowledge her doctrine for the rule of our faith."

About the same time he composed his book, "*Of the Two Souls*," against the error of the Manichees, asserting that every man has two souls, the one good, of a divine substance, and the other evil, of the nature of darkness peculiar to the flesh. Among the twelve disciples whom Manes sent to preach in different nations, the most famous was Adimantus: he had written a book in Latin, in which he pretended to show an opposition between the Old and New Testaments. This work St. Augustine refuted by his book, "*Against Adimantus*," justifying the agreement between the passages that were objected. Having refuted the disciple, he took the master in hand, by his book against Manes' Epistle of the Foundation, in which that heresiarch had couched the principal articles, which he proposed to his followers. St. Augustine gives us his words from that part of the letter, which he refutes and demonstrates the principle to be advanced by him

without the least shadow of proof, and to be contrary even to reason and common sense. The saint lays down his reasons for adhering to the Catholic Church in these terms: "Several motives keep me in the bosom of the Catholic Church: the general consent of nations and people; an authority grounded upon miracles, upheld by hope, perfected by charity, and confirmed by antiquity: the succession of bishops from St. Peter to our time; and the name of the Catholic Church, which is so peculiar to the true Church that though all heretics call themselves Catholics, yet when you ask in any country whatever, where the Catholics meet, they dare not show the place of their assemblies." He says, "I would not believe the gospel, if the authority of the Church did not move me thereto."

St. Augustine, in his first books "*Against Faustus*," justifies the passages of the New Testament relating to the genealogy of Christ, and the mystery of the incarnation, which Faustus pretended to have been falsified: and in the fifth, reproaches the Elect

among the Manichees with voluptuousness and avarice, notwithstanding their hypocrisy, and opposes to them the sincere virtue and penitential lives of many Catholics. From the sixth to the twenty-third book he defends the Old Testament, after which he returns again to the New. In the twentieth, he takes occasion from the Jewish sacrifices, to reproach the Manichees with paying a superstitious honor to the sun, moon, and stars. Faustus objected to the Catholics their veneration and festivals of martyrs. To this St. Augustine answered, that "They honored the martyrs in order to partake in their merits, to be assisted by their prayers, and excited to imitate their example; but never paid to them the worship of *latría*, which is due to God alone, nor offered sacrifices to them, but only to God in thanksgiving for their graces."

In his two books "*Against Felix*," or the acts of a conference with him, he confutes the Manichean system concerning the nature of God, and the origin of evil. Soon after, he composed against these heretics a book, "*On the Nature of God*," in which he handles the

same subject more fully. Secundinus, a Manichee, having by a letter urged St. Augustine to return to that sect, the saint answered him by a book, which he preferred to all his other writings against those heretics. He gives in it the reasons of his conversion, and overthrows the principle of Manicheism. This work is entitled "*Against Secundinus.*" Several years after this, an anonymous book of some ancient Marcionite, or other such heretic, who denied that God was the author of the Old Testament and Creator of the world, being put into the hands of several persons at Hippo, St Augustine confuted it about the year 420, by his two books, "*Against the Adversary of the Law and the Prophets.*"

His conflict with the Arians was begun by an *Answer* he published in 417, to an Arian sermon, which contained the chief objections against the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. His Conference with Maximinus, an Arian bishop, and his two books against him, which were written to check his boastings after the conference, were the fruits of his labors in 428. His fifteen books on the

Trinity were begun in 400, and finished in 416, and are rather a dogmatical than a controversial treatise on that mystery. In the beginning he lays down just cautions against any false idea of God, by either apprehending Him as a corporeal substance, or as a limited spirit, like a soul, consequently liable to imperfections; for God is infinite, immense, and incomprehensible. In the first eight books he proves the unity of the divine essence, and the trinity of the persons; he discourseth in the fourth of the incarnation of the Son, and in the fifth he refutes the sophisms of heretics. In the latter books he endeavors to explain the Trinity, of which he finds an imperfect emblem in man, namely, in his spirit or soul, his knowledge of himself, and his love of himself: and again in his memory, understanding, and will, three powers of the same mind, though these, and all other representations, are infinitely imperfect. He teaches that the Son is begotten of the Father by his understanding, or knowledge of himself, (he being the Father's internal real subsisting Word, consubstantial to him,) and the Holy

Ghost proceeds by his will, as he is the eternal subsisting love of the Father and the Son. To these polemical writings in the eighth tome are prefixed his Treatise against the Jews, and his succinct history of heresies, addressed to Quodvultdeus, Deacon of Carthage, and containing a list of eighty-eight heresies, beginning with the Simonians, and ending with the Pelagians.

The great work "*Of the City of God*," consists of twenty-two books, and is a very learned apology for the Christian religion. In the first ten books the saint refutes the slanders of the heathens, showing that the Christian religion was not the cause of the fall of Rome; for the very barbarians who plundered it granted a privilege of asylum to the churches of the apostles, and the sepulchres of martyrs, which no heathens did to the temples of their gods. St. Augustine shows that temporal calamities are often advantageous to the virtuous; many under these gave heroic proofs of patience, chastity, and all virtues; whereas the boasted Lucretia and Cato murdered themselves out

of cowardice and impatience under afflictions. He mentions the impiety and vices of the Pagan Romans, the obscenities practised in their religious rites, the cruelty of their civil wars, much more horrible than that of the Goths: the voluptuousness, avarice, and ambition of the latter ages of the republic, which he dates from their building of the first amphitheatre, which Scipio Nasica prudently, but in vain, opposed. He shows that greater calamities had often befallen the world in the reign of idolatry; and that the enlargement of the Roman empire could not be ascribed to any idols. Though great empires, without justice, are but great robberies, (which he proves at large,) he thinks that God might give the Pagan Romans victory, as a temporal recompense of some moral virtues; setting before our eyes, that if the imperfect virtues of heathens are so rewarded, what will be the recompense of true virtue in eternal glory! Confuting the doctrine of destiny, he shows that God's foreknowledge agrees with man's free-will, and he gives

an admirable description of the happiness of a virtuous prince, which he places altogether in his piety, not in temporal felicity, though he mentions and sets forth the temporal prosperity of Constantine and Theodosius. He shows the ridiculous folly of the theology and pretended divinities of the heathens. He refutes the theology of their philosophers, even of the Platonists, whom he prefers to the rest, but who all honored demons as subaltern deities; whereas no Christian priest offers sacrifice to Peter, Paul, or Cyprian, but to God upon the monuments of martyrs. He proves all the demons of the heathen philosophers to be evil spirits. Good angels neither require adoration nor sacrifices, and miracles performed by their interposition are wrought by God's power, who by them makes himself known to men.

In the following twelve books he treats of "*The two cities of God and the world;*" describing their origin, their progress, and their respective ends. He passes from the diversity of good and bad angels to speak of their

creation, and that of the visible world. Next he proceeds to the creation of man, and his fall. He pursues the history of the two cities through the first patriarchs, from Cain and Abel to Noe's flood, making the ark to represent the Church, and illustrating his narrative with curious allegories and reflections. In the last chapter of the fourteenth book he observes, that self-love in contempt of God, and the love of God in contempt of self-love, have built these two opposite cities, and characterize and distinguish their citizens. This history he carries down to Solomon, then resumes the history of the world in that of the ancient monarchies, beginning with the Assyrians in the East, and the small kingdom of Sicyon in Greece, the first two that were erected. He everywhere enlivens his narration with ingenious reflections, and closes it with the triumph of Christ over hell, in his incarnation and death, and the establishment of his Church, which is victorious over persecutions and heresies, and will endure till his second coming at the last day. In the nineteenth book he treats of the latter end of

both cities; the inhabitants of each aim at sovereign felicity, or the chief good; but those of the terrestrial know so little of it, that the wisest among their philosophers were at a loss to find in what it consisted, Varro reckoning two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions among them about it: only the true religion discovers to men this most important truth, and shows that it consists in eternal life, and that we cannot be happy in this life, but only in hope, which gives a kind of anticipation of the peace and joy to come. In the twentieth book he gives a description of the last judgment, and the general resurrection. In the twenty-first, he speaks of the end of the terrestrial city, and of the horrible torments of hell, especially their eternity, which he proves clearly from our most holy faith; whence, he says, the Church never prays for the salvation of devils or damned souls; though he acknowledges temporary chastisements for the purgation of smaller sins after death, in those who here belonged to Christ, and did not die separated from him by any grievous sin. The subject

of his last book is the glorious immortality of the saints in the heavenly city. He mentions the qualities of glorified bodies, and proves their resurrection from that of Christ, and from the faith of the Church, confirmed by undoubted prophecies and miracles; he relates several wrought in his own time by the relics of saints, both at Milan and in Africa, to some of which he had been an eye-witness. He finishes the portraiture of the happiness of the blessed, by a sketch of what their souls will enjoy. "How great," said he, "will be that felicity that shall be disturbed with no evil, and where no other business shall be followed but that of singing the praises of God, who shall be all in all? . . . Every inhabitant of this divine city shall have a will perfectly free, exempt from all evil, filled with all manner of good, enjoying without intermission the delights of an immortal felicity, without remembrance either of his faults, or of his miseries, otherwise than to bless his Redeemer for his deliverance."

Our holy doctor, in his "*Retractations*,"

gives this caution concerning his two treatises "*Against Lying*," that they are both so intricate, he had once some thoughts of suppressing them. But this seems to regard only some of his mystical interpretations of certain scriptural examples; for the principles which he lays down are most just and important. The Origenists, with Plato, maintained that officious lies are lawful for a good and necessary end. To confute this pernicious doctrine St. Augustine composed, in 395, his book "*On Lying*." He defines lying to be a disagreement between a man's words and his mind, for to lie is to speak what we do not think. He takes into consideration the objections brought from examples of lies mentioned in the Old Testament, as of Jacob, Judith, &c., and answers, that the patriarchs, who seem to have lied, did not intend that what they said should be understood in the usual sense, but that they meant to designate by a prophetic spirit those things that were signified by their actions, which were figurative. He throws out this answer chiefly

for fear of any concessions which the Manichees might abuse to insult the patriarchs, or the Old Testament; but adds, both in this and the following treatise, that if this solution appear not satisfactory, we must condemn such lies, as we do David's sins; and says that at least the Holy Ghost never approves any example of lying, unless it be by comparing it with a greater evil. He then demonstrates that we must never do the least evil, whatever good may be procured by it; and it is clear, both from the Holy Scriptures and the light of reason, that all lying is essentially a sin. Whence he concludes, that no lie is ever to be told, to preserve our chastity, or life, or that of others; or secure the salvation of our neighbor, as to procure baptism for our dying child, or for any other reason or good whatever; it never being lawful to commit adultery, theft, or any other sin, for such an end. Death and all torments ought to be more eligible than the least lie: nor can the evils of others be imputed to us, which we cannot prevent without sin.

His book, "*Against Lying to Consentius*," was composed long after the former, upon the same principles, in the year 420, and is clearer and more methodical. He wrote it to confute both the error of the Priscillianists, (who held lying, even to conceal their religious sentiments, lawful,) and that of some Catholics of Spain, who pretended lying allowable, in order to detect those heretics, upon which case Consentius had consulted him. The holy doctor shows we are bound often to conceal the truth, but must never prevent any evils by lying; and mentions one Firmus, bishop of Tagaste, who having concealed an innocent man from the pagan judge, chose rather to suffer the rack than to discover, or by lying, to say he knew not where he was. In such cases he will have us only raise our hearts earnestly to God, and commit to him the event. That the Scripture condemns all kinds of lies, is what the whole Catholic Church teaches. Some have pretended to justify equivocations by his mystical interpretations of the passages relating to Jacob, and others; some of which,

Natalis Alexander, out of respect to the memory of great men, stretched so far as to give his adversary a handle for wrangling on this question. But St. Augustine proposes his first answer to those examples in such a manner as not to rest the cause upon this solution; for he adds, that, "if it seems not satisfactory as to any of those ancient saints, and if they seem to be excused from a lie, they cannot be excused from sinning, unless upon the plea of invincible ignorance." "God, who is truth itself, can never approve any kind of lying; nor can any thing be more destructive of civil society and commerce, than that doctrine which allows it by principle. It would be more eligible to live among dumb persons than in a nation of liars." Artificial lies, or mental reservations and equivocations, are not less condemned by the saint, both in his definitions, and in the whole force of his reasoning, than any other kind of lies, and are the more pernicious, as they are more artfully disguised. To allow them, in religious matters or oaths, on any account whatever, is an error con-

demned by the Catholic Church. By the same principle is demonstrated the essential iniquity of all lying, in whatever circumstances, and on all subjects. Let those who dispute this point have dealings with persons of this cast, who in all affairs, judged by themselves of sufficient importance to require it, study by artful equivocations to raise mists for deception; then experience will help to open their eyes, and make them desire, that persons of such principles should carry them marked on their forehead, as princes, by declaring open war, warn enemies to stand upon their guard. How easily would these new doctors have disengaged St. Augustine in all his difficulties, how to save the life of the innocent man, and rescue the dying unbaptized infant out of the hands of infidels?

His writings against the Donatists fill the ninth tome of his works. The first of these is the "*Hymn or Psalm Abecedarius*," which is divided into two parts, each of which begins with a different letter of the alphabet, containing a short account and confutation of this schism, expressed in terms adapted to

the capacity of the common people who were taught this hymn. The saint composed it as an antidote against the heresy, upon his first coming to Hippo. Parmenianus, the successor of Donatus in the see of Carthage, had been confuted by St. Optatus, but left behind him a letter, which he had written against Tichonius, a person of his own sect, who had published some scruples which he had concerning the universality of the church foretold by the prophets. This work of Parmenianus was looked upon by the Donatists as a complete justification of their schism. St. Augustine therefore took it in hand about the year 401, and clearly confuted it by his three books "*Against Parmenianus*," in which he shows that the Church of Christ, according to the prophets, is the Church of all nations, and is not defiled by the society of some wicked person living in her communion; and he confutes the slanders of the Donatists concerning the origin of their sect.

In his seven books "*On Baptism*," against the Donatists, composed about the same time, he shows the mistake of St. Cyprian,

and proves that this sacrament may be validly conferred by heretics, and cannot be reiterated when it has been duly administered by them, any more than when it has been administered by sinners within the pale of the Church. Petilianus, who had formerly been a lawyer, and was made by the Donatists bishop of Cirtha in Numidia, acquired a great reputation in his party by his noisy declamatory eloquence. An Epistle which he published against the Catholics drew from St. Augustine three books, entitled "*Against Petilianus.*" In the second and third book, the saint proves the Church must be universal, and spread throughout the world; and takes off the force of Petilianus's objections, borrowed from misapplied passages of Scripture.

The saint's treatise "*On the Unity of the Church,*" was a pastoral charge addressed to his own flock, in which he points out the true Church by this mark—that it is one and catholic, or universal, and spread over the whole earth: consequently it could not be confined to Africa, to the house of Lucilla,

or to a few lurkers at Rome. Cresconius, a Donatist, and a grammarian by profession, having written against him in defence of Petilianus, the saint, about the year 409, answered in four books, retorting all the arguments, and the conduct of the Donatists in the schism of the Maximianists, by which he invincibly demonstrated that they condemned themselves. In his book "*On the Unity of Baptism,*" against Petilianus, he confutes, by the authority and practice of the universal Church, the error of the Donatists in reiterating the sacrament of baptism, and shows that the Church is composed of good and bad, but that the good are not to be found out of its pale. He allows, indeed, those to be brethren in the eyes of God, who are in the true Church in the sincere desire of their hearts, and use all endeavors impartially to discover it, but are deprived of its external communion merely by the circumstance of invincible ignorance, though God alone can be judge of this interior disposition; but the Church only considers exterior acts or circumstances, as the direct object of her laws

of discipline. This maxim of St. Augustine appears from the very definition which he gives of a heretic, viz: that "he is a person who by criminal passions, or with a view to temporal motives, publishes or embraces an erroneous doctrine in faith." Also from his letter to Glorius, Eleusius, Felix, and Grammaticus, all Donatists, written about the year 398, where he says: "When they who defend their false opinion with no obstinate malice, having received it from their parents, and diligently seek the truth, ready to be corrected when they have found it, are no way to be ranked among heretics. . . . If I did not think you such, perhaps I should not trouble you with my letters."

St. Augustine compiled a "*Breviculum, or Abridgment,*" of the conference of Carthage. He composed and inscribed to the lay-part of the Donatists a treatise after the conference, in which he set off all the advantages which the Catholics had gained by it, and the shifts and evasions which the Donatist bishops had used to prevent its being held, and in it to stave off the main business. Gauden-

tius, one of the Donatist disputants in the conference, continued so obstinate in defence of his sect, that he threatened to burn himself with his church, rather than to suffer the emperor's officers to restore his church to the Catholics. St. Augustine refuted two letters which he had written, the first of which was an impious defence of suicide. In 418, St. Augustine being obliged to go to Cæsarea, made a moving sermon on the unity of the Church, in the presence of Emeritus, the Donatist bishop, who was one of the chief men of his party, and had spoken most in the conference of Carthage, where he was one of the commissioners or disputants. Two days after, St. Augustine, St. Alypius and others, held a conference in his presence, but he refused to speak, and persisted obstinately, though his friends and relations, and almost his whole flock had embraced the Catholic faith.

The tribune Marcellinus, who had presided at the conference at Carthage, being perplexed by certain objections started by the Pelagians, consulted St. Augustine about

them. The holy bishop answered him by three books entitled, "*On the Demerit of Sins, and their Remission,*" otherwise, "*On the Baptism of Children,*" proving in the first, that man is become subject to death only by the demerit of sin; that the sin of Adam has infected all his race, and that children are baptized in order to obtain the remission of original sin. In the second, he teaches that all men can avoid every actual sin; yet that no one lives entirely exempt from all smaller sins, for the remission of which we are always to pray. In the third, he answers some objections.

Marcellinus did not understand how men have the power of avoiding all venial sins if no man ordinarily does it. St. Augustine, in order to give him satisfaction, composed his book "*On the Spirit and the Letter,*" in which he warmly disputes against the enemies of divine grace, shows by several examples, that there are things possible, which never come to pass, and explains the succor of divine grace, which is shed by the Holy Ghost into our hearts, and which makes us

love and accomplish those good actions which are commanded us. He shows that grace does not destroy or impair free-will, but strengthens it, gives it exertion, or acts in supernatural virtue. In reconciling grace and free-will he acknowledges a mystery, which he will not be so presumptuous as to pretend to fathom, but cries out with the apostle: "O the depth, &c." Rom. xi. 33. And, "Is there any injustice in God?" Rom. ix. 14. This concord of grace and free-will he everywhere calls a most difficult question, and frequently answers it only by having recourse to this exclamation of St. Paul. He observes that Pelagius sometimes gave the name of grace to free-will itself, because it is a gift of God; and that he sometimes spoke of the external grace of preaching, and its impression upon the heart, which he called an interior grace; but that he used these speeches only, that he might disguise his heresy under subtle evasions the more easily to deny the necessity of true interior grace, which he said was only given to render the practice of virtue more easy, but was not necessary.

A book written by Pelagius, in which the poison of this heresy was concealed under these equivocations, was put into St. Augustine's hands by Timasius and James, two young men eminent for their birth and learning, who had been disciples of Pelagius, but were converted by our holy doctor, who refuted that work by his book called "*On Nature and Grace.*" In this he detects those artifices, and proves that nature is not blamable, though it is weakened by the corruption of sin and stands in need of grace to deliver it, to enlighten the understanding, and to enable the will both to desire and to do good. About the same time he composed his small treatise "*On the Perfection of Righteousness,*" showing against a sophistical book of Celestius, that for a man to pass his whole life without ever committing the least sin, is a grace, which God does not usually grant to the greatest saints; so that it is ridiculous to believe that man can compass this by the sole strength of free-will.

Upon the news of Pelagius having justified himself in the council of Diospolis, St.

Augustine suspected what the cause was, but for want of proofs waited till he received the acts of that council. Upon which he wrote in 417, his book "*On the Acts of Pelagius*," in which he manifestly detected his cheats at the synod of Diospolis. In 418, after the Pelagian heresy, with its authors, was condemned by several councils and by Pope Zosimus, he composed against it his book "*On the Grace of Jesus Christ*," and another "*On Original Sin*," proving against these heretics the necessity of grace for doing good works and attaining to Christian perfection; and the universal contagion of the sin of Adam, and the necessity of its remission by baptism. His two books "*On Marriage and Concupiscence*" were compiled in 419, in order to remove a peevish objection of the Pelagians, that if concupiscence be an effect of sin, and if men are born in sin, marriage must be a sin.

In 420 he published four books "*On the Soul and its Original*," addressed to one Victor, a convert from the Donatists, to refute several errors concerning the propa-

gation of original sin in the soul, and to prove that the doctrine of its preëxistence in another state before this in the body, cannot be maintained by any Catholic, and that the soul is a spiritual substance. He says, that, though this Victor had advanced in writing several errors, here refuted, he continued nevertheless a Catholic, because he only maintained them through ignorance, and declared in the beginning and end of his work, that he would correct his opinions, if they were found amiss. Two letters, the one written by Julianus of Eclanum, filled with Pelagian objections, having been industriously scattered about in the city of Rome and other places, Pope Boniface, who had succeeded Zosimus in 419, sent them to St. Augustine, who answered them in 420, by his "*Four Books to Boniface*," against the Pelagians. As to their complaint, renewed by some in our time, that the bishops had only subscribed to their condemnation, dispersed in their own sees, without assembling in councils, he shows that few heresies have been condemned by general councils, but

only by the agreement of the pastors, who detected them, in all parts where they were known.

Julianus of Eclanum had acquired a reputation for virtue by distributing his fortune among the poor in a famine, but afterwards is charged with crimes of impurity. Vanity and self-conceit seem to have been the occasion of his ruin. In four books he disputed virulently against original sin, and on concupiscence, grace, and the virtues of heathens. St. Augustine answered him in six books written about the year 423. After producing the testimony of the ancient fathers for original sin, he has many beautiful reflections concerning their authority. Julian having published eight books against him filled with bitter invectives, the saint was prevailed upon by importunities to make him a reply. He produces Julian's own terms, and answers them plainly and in few words.

A numerous monastery at Adrumetum was at that time governed by an abbot called Valentine. Florus, a monk of this house, having met at Uzalis with St. Augustine's

letter to Sixtus (then priest, afterwards pope) against the Pelagians, sent a copy of it home, by his companion Felix. Five or six ignorant monks raised a clamor against the letter, and against Florus and Felix, as if they denied free-will in man. The abbot was appealed to, who easily discerned in the letter the style and doctrine of St. Augustine. Evodius, bishop of Uzalis, wrote to the monks to exhort them to peace and brotherly love; but the animosity continued in spite of all the abbot's endeavors to stifle it, he therefore permitted them to send Cresconius and another Felix, two young monks, to lay the matter before St. Augustine. They accused Florus to him as a Predestinarian; the saint instructed them in the doctrine of the church, and dismissed them with a letter on that subject to Valentine and his monks. For the instruction of these monks he wrote his book "*On Grace and Free-will,*" in which he shows that neither of these two points must be so maintained as to trespass upon the other. He desired to see Florus, whom the abbot accordingly sent. St. Au-

gustine was overjoyed to find, upon examination, his faith to have been perfectly orthodox, and free from the error of Predestinationism, which was only a false consequence, which his ignorant adversaries inferred from the doctrine of grace. Fearing that they, out of ignorance, leaned towards Pelagianism, he inscribed to Valentine and his monks his book "*On Correction and Grace*," which he composed for their use; showing that corrections and admonitions to virtue are necessary, because we have free-will: nevertheless, we must not deny the necessity of divine grace to good actions: the rocks on both sides, on which many have split, are equally to be avoided.

Among the heathen philosophers of old some were fatalists, imagining that the divine foreknowledge of all future events could not be established but upon the ruins of free-will in men: others, to maintain free-will, sacrilegiously denied a divine prescience of all human actions. Pelagian heretics are blind amidst the light of faith, and see not the absolute necessity of divine grace: Predesti-

narians, on the other side, ascribe to divine grace and predestination a necessitating influence, which is incompatible with the active indifference and free election, in which the essence of liberty consists. This election in Christian virtue is the effect of grace, but of a grace which gives the exercise or actual exertion of the free-will; being adapted to the exigency of the free creature. For God by his omnipotent act moves all things according to their exigency: he is absolute master of the human will, and by grace the cause of all its good desires, but inspires them without prejudice to its liberty. St. Augustine teaches that grace is entirely consistent with the exercise of our free-will, which he everywhere proves, because without it, precepts and exhortations would be useless, and chastisement for transgressions unjust.

Bolingbroke took up, at second-hand, the slander of the Pelagians and Semipelagians against the doctrine of St. Augustine, when he charges it with Predestinationism and with ascribing to grace a necessitating force, in-

compatible with the genuine idea of free-will. Such, indeed, were the systems of Luther and Calvin, though Melancthon exchanged Predestinationism for Pelagianism, amongst the immediate followers of the former, and Arminius did the same among part of the Dutch Calvinists. Notwithstanding the condemnation of Arminius in the Calvinistical council of Dort, Pelagianism is now the most prevailing doctrine even among Calvinists, as Le Clerc, Burnet, and others testify. Those Jansenists, who teach that divine grace exerts its power upon the will with an absolute and simple necessity, are to be ranked among Predestinarian heretics, though the system of two delectations (however false it may appear) fall not under this censure, if it be maintained without this or any other erroneous condition, or circumstance implied in it; whether it be restrained to the order of grace, or to be extended to all natural actions, to which Massoulié and Hume have endeavored to apply it.

December 415, a council of fourteen bishops, among whom was John of Jerusalem,

was held at Diospolis or Lydda, in which Pelagius was obliged to appear, and give an account of his faith, two Gaulish bishops, who had been driven from their sees, Heros of Arles, and Lazarus of Aix, being his accusers. Pelagius covered the propositions with which he was charged with a gloss, which made them seem excusable, and was discharged because he appeared to be a Catholic; but his error was condemned by the council, and he himself was obliged to abjure it. It is true indeed, that he only did it in words; for he never changed his opinion, and deceived the bishops. After this council he became very vain, and boasted of the advantage he had gained in it; but durst not show the proceedings, because people would have seen that he had been forced to disown his errors. He was content to spread abroad a letter, which he wrote to his acquaintance, in which he said that fourteen bishops had approved his opinion, namely, that a man may live without sin, and may easily keep the divine commandments, if he will. But he did not say, that he had added in the council

these words, with the grace of God : and he added in his letter the word easily, which he dared not pronounce in the council, as St. Augustine takes notice. The bishops of Africa were too well acquainted with his artifices to be easily imposed upon, and assembling two councils, one at Carthage, and the other at Milevis, in 416, they wrote against him to Pope Innocent, who commending their pastoral vigilance, declared Pelagius and Celestius deprived of the communion of the Church : for he saw, the answers of the former in the council of Diospolis were no way satisfactory, as appears from his and St. Augustine's letters upon this affair. Pelagius wrote to the Pope to justify himself, and Celestius, who had got himself ordained priest at Ephesus, went to Rome in person, where Zosimus had succeeded Innocent in the papal chair in March 417. Celestius presented to him a confession of faith, in which he was very explicit on the first articles of the Creed, and professed, that if in any letter he had advanced any thing in which he had been mistaken, he submitted it to

his judgment, and begged to be set right. Pope Zosimus had so much regard to his pretended submission, that he wrote in his favor to the African bishops; though he would not take off the excommunication, which they had pronounced against Celestius, but deferred passing sentence for two months. In the meantime St. Aurelius assembled a council at Carthage of two hundred and fourteen bishops, which renewed the sentence of excommunication against Celestius, and declared that they constantly adhered to the decree of Pope Innocent.

Pope Zosimus having received their letters of information, condemned the Pelagians, and cited Celestius to appear again: but the heretic fled secretly out of Rome, and travelled into the East. Upon which Zosimus passed a solemn sentence of excommunication upon Pelagius and Celestius, and sent it into Africa, and to all the chief Churches of the East. The emperors Honorius and Theodosius made an edict, which they sent to the three prefects of the prætorium, to be published through the whole empire, by

which they banished Pelagius and Celestius, and condemned to perpetual banishment and confiscation of estates all persons who should maintain their doctrine. Pelagius and Celestius, after this, lurked privately in the East. In Italy eighteen bishops refused to subscribe to the letter and sentence of Zosimus, and were deprived of their sees. The most learned and warmest stickler among these was Julianus, bishop of Eclanum in Campania. He afterwards turned schoolmaster in Sicily: his tomb was discovered there in the ninth century in a small village. His writings show him to have been one of the vainest boasters of the human race, full of Pelagian pride, and a contempt of all other men, but of quick parts, and abundance of wit. It is sufficiently understood from what has been said, that the chief errors of the Pelagian heresy regard original sin and divine grace; the former they denied, and also the necessity of the latter; they affirmed that a man could live exempt from all sin, without grace, and they extolled the virtues of the Pagans. St. Augustine maintained, on the

contrary, the truths of the Catholic faith with invincible force; and he proved from clear passages in Holy Scripture that all men are sinners, and bound to pray for the pardon of sins; for without an extraordinary grace, such as was given to the Virgin Mary, saints offend by small transgressions of a faulty inadvertence, against which they watch, and for which they live in constant compunction. He also proves, that the virtues of heathens are often counterfeit, namely, when they are founded in, or infected with motives of vain-glory or other passions: they are true moral virtues, and may deserve some temporal recompense, if they spring purely from principles of moral honesty; but no virtue can be meritorious of eternal life, which is not animated by the principle of supernatural life, (that is, divine charity,) and not produced by a supernatural grace. He teaches, that the divine grace, obtained for us by Christ's redemption, works in us the consent of our will to all virtue, though not without our free concurrence; so that all the good that can be in us is to be attributed to the Creator, and

no one can boast of his good works against another. But God cannot be the author of evil, which rises entirely from the malice and defect of rectitude in the free-will of the creature, to whom nothing remains without the divine concurrence, but the wretched power of depraving and corrupting itself, or at most, of doing that from self-love, which ought to be done for God alone. It cannot, without grace, do any action of which God is the supernatural end, nor of which, by consequence, he will be the recompense. But the necessary grace is never wanting but through our fault.

Through the corruption of human nature by sin, pride being become the darling passion of our heart, men are born with a propensity to Pelagianism, or principles, which flatter an opinion of our own strength, merit and self-sufficiency. It is not therefore to be wondered, that this heresy found many advocates; next to that of Arianism the Church never received a more dangerous assault. The wound, which this monster caused, would certainly have been much deeper, had

not God raised up this eminent doctor of his grace to be a bulwark for the defence of the truth. He was a trumpet to excite the zeal of the other pastors, and, as it were, the soul of all their deliberations, councils and endeavors to extinguish the rising flame. To him is the Church indebted, as to the chief instrument of God, in overthrowing this heresy. From its ashes sprung Semi-pelagianism, the authors of which were certain priests, bishops, and monks, in Gaul, at Lerins, and in other parts about Marseilles, St. Prosper and Hilarius, two zealous and learned laymen, informed St. Augustine by letters in 429, that these persons expressed the utmost admiration for all his other actions and words, but took offence at his doctrine of grace, as if it destroyed free-will in man; they taught that the beginning of faith, and the first desire of virtue are from the creature, and move God to bestow that grace, which is necessary for men to execute and accomplish good works. They said, that as to the children who die without baptism, and those infidels to whom the faith is

never preached, the reason of their misfortune is, that God foresees they would not make a good use of longer life or of the gospel; and that he, on that account, deprives them of those graces. St. Augustine, in answer to these letters, wrote two books against this error, one entitled, "*On the Predestination of the Saints*," the other, "*On the Gift of Perseverance*," showing that the authors of this doctrine did not recede from the great principle of Pelagius, and that to ascribe to the creature the beginning of virtue, is to give the whole to it, not to God. The saint treats the Semipelagians as brethren, because they erred without obstinacy, and their error had not been yet condemned by any express definition of the Church. The principal persons who espoused it, seem to have been Cassian at Marseilles, and certain monks of Lerins. Faustus, abbot of Lerins, carried this error to the greatest length.

The two works which do most honor to St. Augustine's name, are those of his *Confessions* and *Retractations*; in the former of

which, with the most sincere humility and compunction, he lays open the errors of his conduct, and in the latter, those of his judgment. This work of his *Retractations* he began in the year 426, the seventy-second of his age, reviewing his writings, which were very numerous, and correcting the mistakes he had made in an humble sense of them, and with a surprising candor and severity, never seeking the least gloss or excuse to extenuate them.





THE MONASTIC FOUNDATIONS AND RELIGIOUS RULES OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

I.

THE devout and zealous members of the Church, who aspire to perfect evangelical perfection by means of vows, and the observance of a certain rule in retirement and in community life, are called, in ecclesiastical language, Religious, and Monks. In the earliest days of the Christian era such persons, imitating St. John the Baptist and the ancient prophets, retired to solitude for the purpose of employing their lifetime in prayer, humble mortification, pious labor, and all the exercises agreeing with the commandments and counsels of the gospel. At the commencement of the apostolic mission of "teaching all things Christ commanded to be observed," the faithful considered the

silent and solitary life of the "Holy Family" a pattern for monastic institutions. Jesus Christ seemed to give occasion for the observance of the "Religious Rule," by His retirement and fasting in the desert, and by his habitual seclusion in prayer and contemplation; also by his laudatory notice of the solitary life of St. John. (Matth. xi.) The eulogy of the prophets bestowed by St. Paul (Heb. xii.) favored the views of those persons inclined to asceticism.

When heathen persecution raged in the first three centuries, many Christians of Egypt and the province of Pontus fled to the deserts from capture and torments. A taste for solitude was thus acquired, and became attractive when it was desirable to escape from the contagion of immorality, and the distractions of corrupted society. St. Paul, the first Hermit, retired to the desert of Thebes in the year 259, where he lived to the age of one hundred and fourteen years, his abode being a caverned rock, his food and raiment the fruits and leaves of the forest trees. His Egyptian countryman, St. Anthony, embraced

the same mode of life, and had many followers, who inhabited separated distant cells. In the next century all those recluses were congregated in monasteries by St. Pacomius, and observed a rule he prescribed, in communities of thirty and forty members. In the year 306, St. Hilarion, disciple of St. Anthony, founded in Palestine, monasteries like those established in Egypt. The monastic life was rapidly introduced in Syria, Armenia, Pontus and Cappadocia. St. Basil became acquainted with this system in Egypt. He composed a rule for the monks, which was esteemed so wise and perfect that it was adopted generally throughout the East, where it is still preserved. The monks were habitually occupied in prayer, psalmody, sacred reading, penitential exercises, and manual labor. In Mesopotamia and Persia the monks were missionaries, and many were bishops. In the year 340, St. Athanasius published in Italy the life of St. Anthony, and thus inspired the Christians of the West with the desire to imitate that holy servant of the Lord. The Regular—Religious life was

judged and decided upon, by wise and virtuous persons of every degree of intelligence and social rank, as being conformable to the rule of our Divine Saviour: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matth. xvi.) They considered that St. Paul exhorted on this subject when he said, "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences. (Gal. v.) "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away (1 Cor. ix.)

When St. Augustine experienced the earliest impulses of grace, and was living in the world before his conversion, he was worried by the dreary waste of the days deprived of heavenly light, and contemplated a solitude where, in company with friends of the same age, and of the same elevated taste, life might be spent at a distance from the sad disturbances of the world. The project was abandoned through want of the proper means of construction; but the knowledge of the mon-

astic life which he acquired after his baptism, from the institutions then flourishing in Italy, determined him to execute his design. In the year 388 he established a monastery near to his native city Tagestum, and in the Community formed of his relatives and friends, entered upon the Religious Life according to the rules which he composed.

II.

SUMMARY OF THE RULES OF THE HOLY FATHER ST. AUGUSTINE.

First, my dear brethren, love God above all things; and secondly, your neighbor as yourselves; for those two commandments have been given to us principally.

Then follow those things which we have ordered to be observed in your monastery. Remember, first, that the purpose for which you are assembled, is to live in union and concord, that you may have but one heart and one soul in God.

Be careful not to have anything in particular, but all in common, and that food and clothing be distributed to every one of you by your superior; not equally, for all have

not equal need, but to each, according to his necessity. It is thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "that all things were in common." Let those who bring fortunes to the monastery put them in common, but those who had none in the world, should not come to seek in the monastery what they would not have had elsewhere; they must, however, be assisted in their infirmity, and their wants supplied, although in the world their poverty might have been so great that they could not procure the necessaries of life. Let them not esteem themselves happy for having found in the monastery the conveniences of diet and clothing which they could not have had elsewhere; nor become vain at being associated with, and made companions of those whom they would not have presumed to approach in their former state; but let them raise their hearts to heaven, and not amuse themselves in seeking terrestrial comforts; lest it should happen that the monastery be profitable to the rich and not to the poor; if the rich be made humble, and the poor become proud.

Care must also be taken that those who held some rank in the world should not despise their brethren, who having been poor, were received into this holy society. Let them rejoice more in the company of their poor brothers, than at the dignity of their rich friends. Neither should they exalt nor esteem themselves the more for having contributed to the support of the community, than if they had continued to enjoy their property in the world, for all sorts of sins appear in the accomplishment of bad works, but pride lies in wait for good works, to destroy them. To what purpose is it to give one's goods to the poor, and to become poor one's self, if the miserable soul become prouder in despising them, than she had been in possessing them? Live then together in perfect union and concord, and honor God, revering in each other His sacred temples.

Apply to prayer and meditation at the hours and time appointed. Let nothing be done in the oratory, or choir, but what it is destined for. If, besides the hours prescribed, some having leisure, desire to pray

there, they should not be prevented or disturbed by others. When you are occupied in church service, that is, in reciting or singing the psalms or hymns, let your heart be attentive to what your voice pronounces, and be careful not to sing but what is prescribed, and what is not prescribed, do not sing.

Subdue your flesh by fasting and abstinence as far as your health will permit, but if some cannot do this strictly, they should at all events not take anything out of the usual hours of meals, unless they be really sick. When you come to table, be careful to listen quietly and attentively to the lecture, which is read according to custom, to the end, that not only the mouth may receive its nourishment, but that the ear be also filled with the Word of God. If some be treated differently from others, on account of the infirmities they have contracted by their former diet, or manner of living; this should not appear unjust or unreasonable to those whose constitutions are more robust; nor should they esteem the infirm happier, for getting better

nourishment than they do; they should rather feel consolation at enjoying that good health which the others do not. If more clothing, food, bed-clothes, &c., be given to those who come to the monastery, after having been delicately reared in the world, than to others who are stronger, and of course happier; those to whom these things are denied should consider how much the former have relinquished of the life they led in the world, though they cannot attain to the frugality and abstinence of the latter, who have more vigor; these must not, therefore, be displeased if more be given to such delicate persons, as this is not done to show them more respect, but to relieve their infirmity; otherwise a deplorable evil would ensue, that in the monastery, where the rich are taught to labor as far as they are able, the poor, on the other hand, become delicate. Though it may be expedient to give but little food to the sick, for fear of hurting or overcharging their stomachs, yet when recovering, they must be well treated, so as speedily to regain their former strength,

even though they had arisen from the lowest condition of the poor, for they have acquired by their sickness the same infirmity which the rich had from the beginning, because of their delicate rearing. When restored to health, they must return to their better and happier custom, which is more becoming the servants of God; nor must they, when in health, seek those indulgences which were necessary for them when sick. Those who have strength to support frugality should deem themselves happy, for it is more desirable to want little than to have much.

Let no singularity appear in your apparel, and seek not to please by your dress, but by your conduct. Seek rather to be in the company of your brethren, than alone, and let nothing appear either in your walk, carriage, gestures, or movements, that could offend the eye of others, but all that gravity and modesty becoming the sanctity of your holy profession; and keep so strict a watch over your eyes, as never to fix them on any person.

If you remark in any of your brethren

a considerable defect, acquaint him thereof without delay, that he may correct himself, and prevent the evil from increasing; but if, after having been warned, you see he relapses, you should denounce him as a sick person who requires to be cured, after having made one or two observe it, that in case of necessity he may be convicted by the testimony of two or three, and corrected as may be found expedient. Do not, however, look upon yourself as disaffected towards him, for if, by your silence you allow to perish your brethren whom you might have corrected by a timely discovery, you partake in their guilt. If your brother had a bodily wound which he wished to hide, fearing an incision, would it not be cruelty in you to conceal it, and charity to discover it? How much more then ought you to manifest his spiritual wound, lest a more dangerous corruption be engendered in his soul? But previous to his being brought before those by whom he is to be convicted, in case he denies the fact, he must be first brought to the Superior. and privately repre-

hended, in order that few may be acquainted with his fault; but if he persist in denying it, the others must be called, that he may not only be tried before one witness, but convicted before all, by the testimony of two or three. Being convicted, he must undergo the penance imposed, according to the decision and discretion of the Superior. If he refuses to receive it, he must be separated from the rest, (which is charity, not cruelty,) for fear of destroying them by his pestilential contagion: and this same method must be carefully observed in the research, conviction, and correction of all faults, but always with a great love of the persons, and hatred of their vices.

Let your clothing be kept in the same place, under the care of one or two, or as many as may be necessary to keep them in good order and preservation. As your nourishment is supplied from the same funds, so should your clothing likewise. Be not solicitous about the clothing given you, whether it be suited to the season or not; or about what you have left off, contenting

yourselves that you want nothing necessary. Should murmuring or contention arise on this head, so that any one complains of getting worse clothes than he had before, and that he does not deserve to be more indifferently clad than others, hereby you may judge how deficient you are in sanctity and the interior ornaments of the soul, since such anxiety arises from those of the body. When you get your habits, those you lay aside must be kept in a common wardrobe, and all must be under the charge of the same person, in order that no one should work in particular for himself, whether for the bed, habit or other clothing, but all should be done for the community with more care and pleasure than if for himself; for it is written that *charity seeketh not its own*, and this is manifested by preferring common to particular works, and not particular works to common. In proportion as you find you pay more attention to what is common than to what is particular, you will perceive the progress you have made, and it will appear that charity, which is permanent, holds the first

place in your hearts, and shines forth even in the use of casual necessities.

If any sick person require assistance, it must not be deferred, but given without murmur, according to the advice of the physicians. Though he should not even desire it, the Superior must insist upon his doing what is expedient for his health; if, on the contrary, he should wish for what is hurtful, he must not be gratified, for we often esteem as salutary what is really prejudicial. If the servant of God has any hidden corporal pain, he must be credited, nor should it be doubted that he suffers the indisposition he complains of; however, in order to ascertain whether what he desires be expedient for the relief of his complaint, the physician must be consulted. One of the brethren must be appointed for the care of the sick, the infirm, or those who are in a state of convalescence, in order to obtain from the depository what may be requisite for them. Those who are charged with the depository should cheerfully serve their brothers, and not delay giving what is necessary.

Carefully avoid disputes and contentions; but should they arise, terminate them speedily, lest anger become hatred, and a mote be thus increased to a beam. "He who hates his brother is a murderer." Whoever offends his brother by harsh or injurious words, should repair the evil by immediate satisfaction, and he who has been offended should forgive without contestation. If both be in fault, and have given mutual offence, they should be reconciled and have recourse to prayer; which ought to be the more holy, as it is more frequent among you. He who though often tempted to anger and quickness of temper, readily apologizes, is more praiseworthy than that other who is not so easily moved, but reluctantly acknowledges his fault. Those who refuse to forgive, or to apologize, or who do so against their will, are uselessly to themselves in the monastery, though they be not expelled. Abstain, therefore, from all rude and uncivil words; but should they escape your lips, be not backward in applying a proper remedy from the same source whence the wound proceeded.

When it is necessary to make use of harsh expressions, either for the instruction or reprehension of those confided to your care, and that on these occasions, you may have exceeded the just bounds of moderation, you are not, under pretence of humility, to ask pardon of them for your fault, for this may diminish your authority, and render you less useful to them. Acknowledge it, however, to the common *Lord and Master of all*, who knows with what tenderness you love those whom perhaps you have reprehended with unnecessary warmth. Love should be spiritual, and not sensible, among you.

Obey your Superior, showing the greatest respect, lest otherwise God be offended. In order that these injunctions may be punctually observed, and that nothing through negligence, pass without correction or amendment, the Superior will be particularly watchful. As to himself, let him not esteem himself happy to have the power of governing and commanding, but rather be enabled to serve his brethren with charity. Let him have precedence and honor before the world,

but before God let him be humbly assiduous amongst you, and be to all an example of good works. He should correct the unruly, console the pusillanimous, support and cherish the infirm, be patient towards all, ready to correct where necessary, but imposing correction with fear; let him seek rather to be loved than dreaded, though both are useful, remembering always, that he has to render an account of you to God; for which reason, in obeying him, compassionate not only yourselves, but others whose danger is great in proportion to their charge. May God's grace enable you to observe these ordinances with charity, loving the interior beauty of virtue, and by your example to become a good odor in Jesus Christ, not as servants under the yoke of the law, but as persons of free condition under the ordinance of grace. But in order that you may see yourselves in this rule, as in a mirror, let it be read once a week, lest through forgetfulness you neglect any thing; and if you find you have done what is prescribed, thank God, from whom all good

proceeds, but if you perceive you have failed in any point thereof, repent of the same, and be more careful in future, beseeching God to pardon your fault, and to protect you from temptation.

It is certain that St. Augustine appointed manual labor in his monastery, since about the year 400 he wrote a book "*On the Labor of Monks*," to prove this exercise to be part of the penitential obligations of the monastic state. He prescribed useful studies and spiritual functions, instead of manual labor, for those qualified or called to the ministry of the altar.

When St. Augustine was ordained priest, and removed to Hippo, many of his religious brethren followed him, and with the assistance of his bishop, St. Valerius, he founded there a new monastery, the monks of which St. Paulinus saluted when he wrote to the holy Doctor in 394. Thence came forth nine eminent bishops, who by their learning, and the sanctity of their manners, were so many bright ornaments of the Church of Africa, namely, St. Alypius of Tagestum, St. Evo-

dius of Uzalis, St. Possidius of Calama, Pro-futurus and Fortunatus of Cirtha, Severus of Milevis, Urbanis of Sicca, Boniface and Peregrinus. When the illustrious Father was consecrated bishop, being obliged to live with his clergy in the city, he formed them into a regular community under the same rule observed at Tagestum. This is the original of the Regular Canons of St. Augustine, an organization distinct from the first Order of Hermits.

St. Augustine instituted a nunnery of his Order, after he was promoted to the episcopal dignity; and his sister, who renounced the world in her widowhood, was chosen the first Superioress.

The Religious Institute of the "Hermits of the Order of St. Augustine," soon spread over Africa, but was extinguished by the invasion of the Vandals. It was translated with the exiled bishops and clergy in company with the relics of the holy founder. Being revived in Europe principally through the agency of St. Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspa, one of its most illustrious members, it spread

rapidly into different nations. It flourished in several separate communities which fixed their Hermitages in solitudes where, in course of time, the wilderness and waste places were really made to smile under the operation of the sons of the holy and zealous Patriarch of Hippo. The several congregations united in one organized body under the canonical authorization of Pope Alexander IV. in the year 1254, and added to the Rule such Constitutions as were fitted for the reconstructed Order, and, without, making any substantial alteration, the Rules were formed to meet the mission of the brethren.

III.

The Divine Word made Flesh is to the Jews a scandal and to the Gentiles a folly: in like manner the perfection of Christian life manifested in the monastic institute is a subject for denunciation or scorn amongst infidels and sophists. It is held in admiration by all saintly and intelligent persons who never fail to discern its edifying and civilizing influ-

ence in every clime and generation where the Religious Brethren are seen rendering the name of the Lord glorious. From the first days of Christianity those admirable examples of charity continually appeared to astonish the heathen world. All the members of the great Christian family strove with each other in zeal, devotedness and charity; they formed "*one body and one soul;*" they possessed nothing of their own, and their goods, placed in common, served to relieve the poor and the unfortunate; they looked upon themselves as the depositaries of the favors of Providence, commissioned to distribute them to those who were deprived of them; so that fortune was not a property to them, but a burden, a title to which all those whom the finger of God pointed out had a right. The first Christians did not confine their assistance to their brethren in the faith, but all the unfortunate, whatever was their religion and social condition, saw the hands of mercy and the treasures of the most ingenious charity opened to them. During three centuries this admirable perfection of Chris-

tian fraternity subsisted in all its splendor. But when the faith became general and the Cæsars embraced the religion of the Saviour, this rapture of fervor was extinguished with the fire of persecution; not that Christians were less attached to the dogmas of their belief, but the practice of the evangelical counsels was expediently modified a little, to suit the course of events, and the exigencies of ordinary life.

Yet the genius of Christianity, that had wrought so many wonders, and had converted the world, wished to perpetuate to our days all those great prodigies of disinterestedness, self-denial and charity, which had victoriously proved its celestial origin. From the bosom of the Church, "the Spouse of Jesus Christ," men, animated with the Spirit of God, came out at "sundry times and in divers manners," and preserved in all its purity the perfection of the first centuries. To the various corporations formed after the apostolic model the poor were thenceforth seen to carry their misery. No wounded were left to the stray help of a Samaritan. No Lazarus was any

longer dependent on the surgical skill of the dogs on the highways. To the sacred retreats of the Religious Fraternity the unfortunate came to relate their troubles and to seek for consolation. The rich trusted these men dedicated to the relief of so many wants, and pouring abundant alms into their hands, commissioned them to pursue with their solicitude, poverty or misfortune into their most secret haunts.

As numberless evils continually assault humanity, innumerable corporations, differing in their object, although one in the spirit that animated them, arose to devote themselves to the relief of every human misery, and to aid in every operation for social welfare. Well have they accomplished their noble task!

This necessarily is very obscure, and very perplexing to certain sapient idiots, who having eyes see not, having ears hear not, and "do not understand what they say nor whereof they affirm." For example, utilitarian philosophy cannot solve the problem of the Hermit's life, even though enjoying

the patronage of the active and illustrious St. Augustine. History gives some *useful* and entertaining information on that score. The Church is catholic in the discharge of its parental care, hence it has placed watchful sentinels in every place where mankind could incur danger; it has scattered them all over the surface of the globe, amongst rocks and shoals, on the tops of mountains, in the depths of forests. There these devoted men waited during their whole life for the bewildered traveller, who stood in need of their succor. Vestiges of these *useful* establishments are to be found everywhere, and tell the story that it was often agreeable to have a hermit near at hand. If the frail boats of fishermen, surprised by a storm, or by night, endeavored in vain to reach their port, a light suddenly piercing through the darkness, shone upon one of the small desert islands which are formed along the coasts. It was the hermit of the rock who had lighted the kind beacon, in order to direct the uncertain course of the unhappy sailors. If the tempest was too

violent, they tied their boat to the shore, and clambering up the rock, came to claim from the hermit the succor of hospitality. If there was any dangerous passage infested by thieves, or exposed to the sudden overflowings of a torrent, hermits came to fix their dwelling amongst these dangers; day and night with their ears on the alert, they heard the least shout of alarm, or the remote noise of a torrent as it rolled along. They had established ingenious marks, to inform the travellers not to advance but with precaution. If some were victims to their imprudence, the hermits ran, with the courage and intrepidity of warriors, to rescue them from the banditti, or they dashed forward to draw from the abyss the unhappy travellers who had been carried away by the current. Thus, upon many of the most dangerous parts of the Durance, a capricious river, which sometimes rolls a small stream of pale and discolored water through barren sands, and at other times suddenly covers an immense extent of land, pious establishments were built, where the travel-

ler was always sure of finding an asylum and protection. Attracted by the holiness and charity of the Religious, many inhabitants from the neighboring countries came to fix their dwellings near them, and the modest monastery became the origin of wealthy towns, which have forgotten their venerable founders. Now that countries are crossed in every direction by high roads, that the passage of rivers is sure, that an armed militia watches over the safety of travellers, and commerce, industry, and military strength have changed everywhere the system of communications, we do not sufficiently reflect how great and heroic were the services rendered by the monks of all orders. But if we go back to the times of semi-barbarism, when vast regions were divided into a great number of independent principalities, and no important improvement could be propagated; if we reflect, that frequent wars and jealous rivalry divided the vassals of different lords, and filled all the country with horrors and bloodshed; if, on the other side, we call to mind the isolation

to which the monks condemned themselves, all the ennui of solitude, the dangers to which they were exposed in those dreary retreats, where their eyes met only with a gaping abyss under their feet, beetling rocks over their heads, and around them gloomy forests always resounding with fierce howlings, we shall agree that the life of those Religious was admirable, their devotedness useful, and that, inspired by religion, some of them deserved to be honored with the name of St. Augustine.

Sophists have asked, what is the utility of monasteries where Religious of orders variously titled, though one in origin and design, live in tranquillity, and in apparent idleness, without engaging in active life, and the service of their neighbor? No regard can be entertained for the stupid and malignant persons who utter this impertinence, and we answer those kind of questions merely for the sake of the enjoyment of admiring the operatives in the employment of the Lord. We cannot consider any class of Religious as useless even if they attend

only to prayer. It is fortunate that there are men who pray for their brethen, who interpose between heaven and us; who raise their hands on the mountain whilst others fight in the plain; who make up for the negligence of some, or the distracted life of others; who expiate the faults or abandonings of the crowd; who turn aside the anger of God, provoked by our passions; who weep between the porch and the altar, and draw upon the state, and upon private persons, those succors and favors of which we are all in need. It is fortunate that there are asylums where men, tired of the world, may shelter themselves, escape those occasions which have been so often fatal; may shelter themselves, escape those occasions which may have been hurtful to them; put a barrier between them and powerful seductions, and prepare in silence for their last passage. But we deny that any Religious within or outside the cloister have been useless, or have endured the fatigue of idleness, or the sickening tranquillity of sloth.

All the Monks (we will use the generic

name) found a means of being useful to society, and from the obscurity of their little cells, their learned studies enlightened the world which they had quitted. They raised antiquity from the dust of forgetfulness; they discovered precious monuments, and shed the brightness of erudition and criticism on all objects of study. The cloistered Religious were eminently adapted to these works; in their monasteries they were, in fact, less distracted by the affairs of the world, less enervated to seek repose. There they had the help of large libraries; they put in common all their researches and resources, and the old brethren, by making the young help them, formed successors in the same career. These are they who have cured us of our ignorance, and who, for centuries, have buried themselves in the *dust* of schools, to draw us from barbarism. They were never afraid of knowledge, since they opened its sources; they had no other view than to make us share the lights which they had collected with so much labor and fatigue, in the ruins of Greece and Rome.

The ancients paid divine worship to him who first made use of the plough, and taught them to seek in the bosom of the earth for all the resources of life. Modern sages have scarcely preserved the remembrance of those useful men who restored to life the art of agriculture, after the invasions of the Barbarians, where the first notions of it had been lost; or if we are told that it is to the Monks that we owe this immense benefit, the important information is received with indifference and contempt. Some persons know only how to profit by the services of every kind rendered by the Monks, and overwhelm them, in return, with affronts and contempt. For, in spite of the pride and presumption of this retrograde age, it must be acknowledged that everything originally came to us from the Religious orders; the clearing of lands, the opening of roads, the increase of villages, colleges and hospitals, the promotion of internal and external commerce, civil laws and politics; such are a few of the *utilities* of monasticism.

The greatest part of the grants made to

monasteries were of waste lands, which the monks cultivated with their own hands; wild forests, impracticable marshes, vast moors, were the source of the so much reprobated riches of the Religious. Those provinces which are so productive now-a-days, those fertile hills covered with vines and grain, were places overgrown with thorns and briars, where the first Religious dwelt in cottages made of branches, till they had finished their painful labor of clearing. Whole families came to seek an asylum under the direction of the brethren; the monasteries were surrounded with widows and old soldiers, penniless laborers, and all sorts of infirm people. The Fathers gave them employment, taught them the best way to be industrious, and generously helped them to do their work. All became happy and active cultivators, after the example of those benefactors of the human family who felled trees with their own hands, guided the plough, sowed the corn, and covered the hitherto uncultivated soil with crops. The Monks have done exactly the reverse of that which

their libellers assert, who defame them as being a hindrance to the extension of the human race. Their virtue cherished and spread a comfortable and healthy population in those countries where the vice of the calumniators is a check upon the fecundity of divine creation. The greatest part of those towns, whose origin does not reach the time of the Roman dominion, have been founded by Hermit pioneers, by monastic husbandmen, around whom flocked crowds of people desiring to be blessed, instructed and employed.

Besides the rural labors and all the other services of which we have spoken, the Religious found a great many other ways of being useful. They practised mechanics, and extended commerce within and without Europe. A congregation of the order of the brethren, shoemakers and tailors, was instituted to afford the utility and comfort of our present mode of dress. "As for interior commerce, fairs and markets first belonged to the monasteries, and had been established by them. The Religious spun the greater

part of the linen cloth of Europe; they were first to make beer, and provide a refreshing beverage for the foggy and frosty climates too inhospitable for the vine. The fine wines of the Archipelago, Hungary, Italy, France and Spain, were first successfully made by religious communities. Several articles of *utility* and convenience, viz: parchment, wax, flax, marble, goldsmith's work, woollen and silk fabrics, and tapestry, were improved by the manufacture of those industrious contemplatives. The Monks also cultivated the arts; they were the painters, sculptors, and architects of the Gothic age. Always ingenious in finishing what they had not the glory of inventing, they collected in their pious retreats the precious sparks, and it was from the depths of cloisters that the flames of knowledge burst forth which afterwards enlightened the world."

The eulogy and vindication of the Religious orders may be summed up in the fact of their immortal endurance. They have been harassed in all countries and generations, by every persecution that the ingenuity

of Satan could devise, and the malignity of man could execute. The words of our divine Saviour are certainly and specially applicable to the monastic brethren whom He addresses when He says: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . . The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . . . They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God." (John xv. xvi.) This prediction has been fulfilled to the letter in the religious communities. Nevertheless they have persevered in their mission, and advanced through "trials and tribulations," to the accomplishment of their noble task of giving glory to God and peace to men. Meanwhile hosts of their enemies have fallen in discredit, despair and death. Innumerable charters, codes and constitu-

tions have been projected and proclaimed by philanthropists and philosophers, which have lasted only throughout the term of their sudden expiration. How different the case of the gospel simpletons; for instance, the Rule of St. Augustine. For fourteen hundred years that Rule has been maturing its immortality, by its inspiration numerous eaglets from the eyry of Hippo have been lifted towards the sun of truth, and onward they will float in the air jubilant with praises to God, who by divine grace made

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BEFORE thy eyes, O Lord, we bring our sins, and with them compare the stripes we have received.

If we weigh the evil we have done, we find what we suffer to be much less than what we deserve.

What we have committed, far outweighs what we endure.

We feel the punishment of sin, and yet we turn not from our wilfulness of sinning.

Our weakness faints under thy scourges; but our perverseness is still the same.

Our diseased mind is racked with pain; and our neck is as stiff as ever.

Our life is spent in sighs and grief; but in our actions we are not reformed.

If thou expectest our amendment, we grow

no better; if thou takest revenge, we are not able to subsist.

When we are chastised, we acknowledge what we have done; but when thy visitation is over, we forget what we have wept for.

If thou stretchest out thy hand, we promise duty; if thou suspendest thy sword, we keep not our promise.

If thou strikest, we cry for pardon; and if thou pardonest, we provoke thee again to strike.

Here, O Lord, are thy criminals, confessing their guilt; we know, that unless thou forgive, thou mayest justly destroy us.

Grant without merit, what we ask, O Almighty Father: who out of nothing didst create us to ask thee: through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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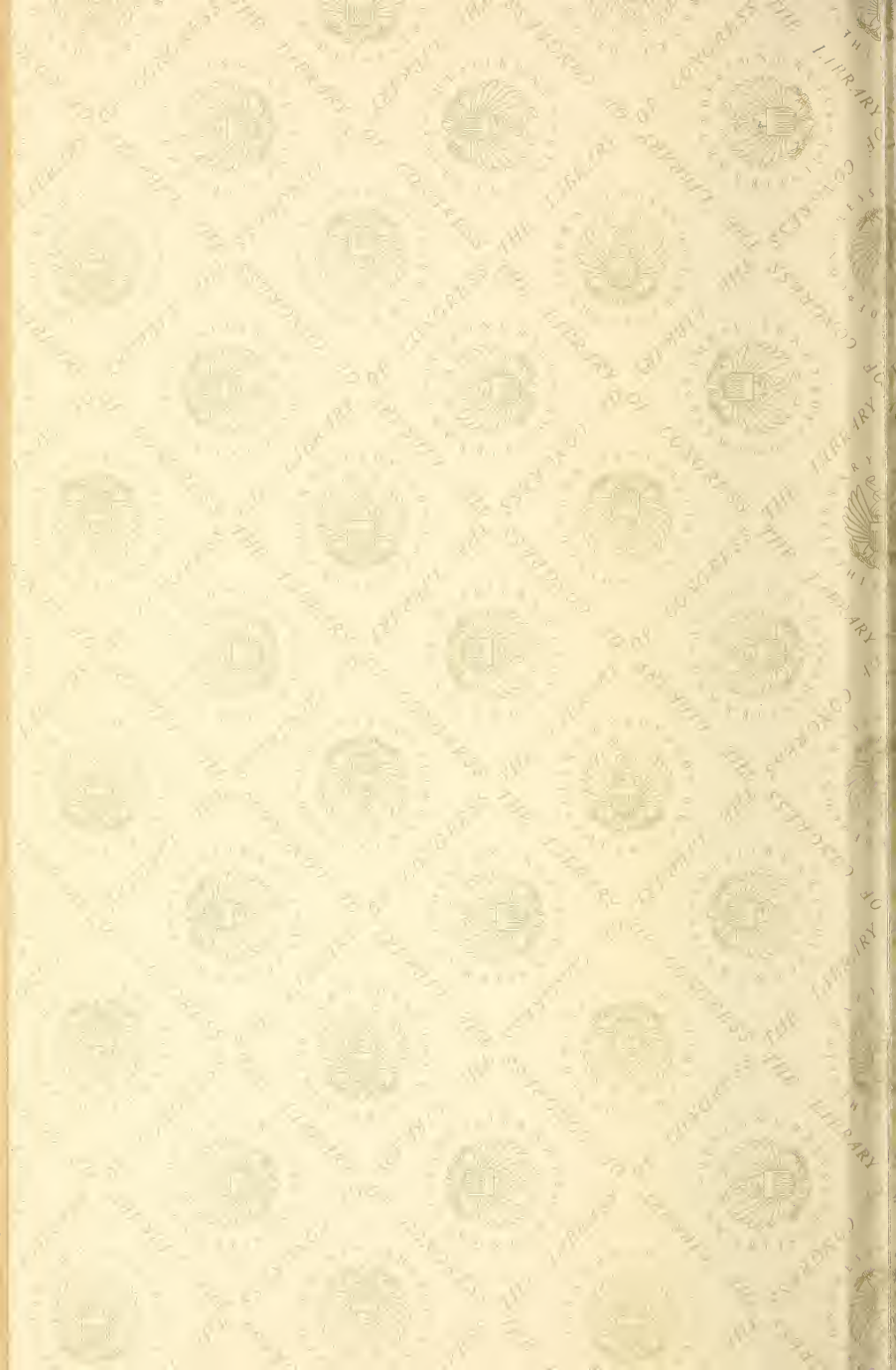
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