

THE BHAKTAS OF THE WORLD

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1. *ST. AUGUSTINE*

ST. AUGUSTINE

A STUDY IN HIS PERSONAL RELIGION

BY

ELEANOR McDOUGALL, M.A., D.LITT.

Principal

Women's Christian College, Madras

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY FOR INDIA

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PREFACE

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C.G. The City of God.

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ST. AUGUSTINE

A Study in his Personal Religion

INTRODUCTION

It is a hopeful sign that in these days of ours, when men are so wayward and yet so wistful, the voice of St. Augustine should be finding an ever-widening circle of hearers. New editions and translations of his writings appear from time to time, books explanatory of his thought find attentive readers, and new light on his personality is welcomed. There is no writer of the fourth and fifth centuries and, except St. Francis and St. Theresa, there is no Christian Saint so interesting to our time as this African Bishop.

This interest arises partly from the similarity between his day and ours. We seem to stand, and he certainly stood, between two ages. Like St. Augustine we are watching an old order change, yielding place to new. When he was a boy the ordered civilization of the Roman Empire seemed to most men as stable as the solar system; when he died all was chaos. The Christian Church had lost its visible centre. It was rent asunder by schisms and bewildered by heresies. Distressing problems of faith and practice presented themselves at every turn. But Augustine remained serene

and undismayed, for he saw and he was able to make others see the vision of the City of God, eternal in the Heavens.

We live as he did in an age of turmoil, and though there is much reason to believe that the forces which are now shaking the world are rather the energies of a new life than the powers of destruction, yet there is nothing that we need more than the serenity of faith. In these days 'when all that seems has suffered shock' and nothing remains stable except 'the Living Will that shall endure', it will comfort us to study the experience of Augustine, who had found God and therefore had no fear though the earth were removed.

But his appeal is not only to men perplexed by national and racial problems. Augustine is one of the first explorers of the human soul and the greatest expert among the Christian Fathers in the personal religious life of the individual. He has indeed other claims to fame. As the writer of the first spiritual autobiography and a psychologist of the highest order he has opened up new paths for the student of human nature. As a philosopher of great metaphysical subtlety he is the delight of those who sharpen thought to a vanishing point of acuteness. As a teacher and exponent of Christian theology he is a master builder of doctrine second only to St. Paul himself. Since those turbulent days of the fifth century he has spoken to every generation of Western thinkers and has been heard and heeded by the best of them.

Yet it is for none of these reasons that Augustine, 'one of the supreme souls of humanity,' is known and loved as we know and love a personal friend. Thousands who have never read a line of his philosophical and doctrinal treatises have followed him along the path of bhakti and have found him a guide and a brother. In all his books and letters a living soul is speaking to or of the Living God, and his words are as fresh now as when he wrote them. In his great nature and intense experience we see our own spiritual struggles and aspirations transfigured, and from his salvation we gather hope of our own.

CHAPTER I

The Times of Augustine

Aurelius Augustine, the greatest personality in the Christian Church between St. Paul and Martin Luther, lived through one of the most critical periods of human history. His long life of seventy-six years witnessed the fall of the Roman Empire, a shock of which the reverberation has hardly yet died away. When he was born the Western World lay steeped in a golden haze of tranquillity and prosperity. When he died the Northern barbarian had overrun Europe, had captured Christian Rome, and was hammering at the gates of his remote African city.

Comfort, content, delight,
The ages' slow-bought gain,
They shrivelled in a night

and the Dark Ages had begun.

Augustine was born, in the year 354 A.D., at Thagaste, a little town not far from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. The far-flung net of Roman administration had brought even this distant land under the control of the Imperial Government. The Empire of which it formed the southern boundary extended from the Rhine to the Sahara Desert, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic Ocean. Within this vast area the Roman Peace held all the differing

racés and populations under the spell of a common tranquillity. The frontiers were guarded by strong legions, but within the Empire there was little show of force, and many of the provinces had no standing army. Trade flourished and travel was swift and safe. Education, though by no means universal, was widely spread. The administration and public services were well-organized and efficient. Dynastic wars, such as those which surrounded the rise and fall of the Emperor Julian, might trouble for a few months the more central parts of the Empire, but their echoes scarcely reached the African provinces. Emperors might rise and fall, but the Imperial Government must have seemed the most stable thing in the experience of men, as much a part of ordinary life as the daylight and as indestructible as the sea.

Yet these tranquil years had neither the freshness of morning nor the radiance of sunset. They passed heavily along like the hours of a sultry afternoon when thunderclouds not yet seen are oppressing the atmosphere and all nature seems drowned in listlessness. A dull torpor lay over the Empire. Nothing seemed worth while. There were no great causes, nothing to live or die for. The omnipresent Government was too powerful and had gathered everything into its efficient hands. There were hundreds of capable officials but no great statesmen. The rulers and governors, great and small, were responsible to the Emperor only,

and he was too remote and magnificent to arouse a feeling of personal devotion. The Emperors were mostly very able men, but there was no glamour about them, and the dynasty changed so often that men could not cherish a spirit of loyalty to an Imperial house such as had bound the Romans of an earlier century with romantic devotion even to the most worthless of the line of Julius and Augustus. There seemed to be nothing to fight for, and now that military service had become a specialised vocation instead of the occasional duty of every citizen, the armies consisted of highly trained mercenaries, chiefly foreigners. Ordinary citizens took little interest in politics, feeling no responsibility for the carrying on of the State, and there was indeed very little that they could do.

The intellectual life of the Empire lay under the same heavy spell of dullness. No great work in literature or art dates from this time. Men were learned but not original. They wrote commentaries on the great works of earlier times, and disputed about doubtful interpretations of difficult passages. Education, as described by Augustine in his account of his college days, was concerned almost entirely with words. It was based on literature, philosophy, rhetoric, logic, geometry, music and arithmetic, all of which were made the subject of discussion and declamation. Rhetoric was the art most highly esteemed; the age debarred from, or averse to, deeds took refuge in speeches.

Augustine himself as a teacher of rhetoric excelled all others of his day, but his first act after his conversion was 'to withdraw the service of my tongue from the marts of lip-labour,) c. 9.2. that the young, no students in Thy law, nor in Thy peace, but in lying dotages and law-skirmishes, should no longer buy at my mouth arms for their madness,' and his account of his proficiency when a little boy is pathetic:

'What is it to me, O my true life, my God, c. 1. 17. that my declamation was applauded above so many of my own age and class? Is not all this smoke and wind? And was there nothing else whereon to exercise my wit and tongue? Thy praises, Lord, Thy praises might have stayed the yet tender shoot of my heart by the prop of Thy Scriptures; so had it not trailed away amid these empty trifles, a defiled prey for the birds of the air. For in more ways than one do men sacrifice to the rebellious angels.'

This zeal for rhetoric was part of the natural reaction of the human spirit against the heavy tranquillity of the times. Men craved for excitement, and found it in the cruel shows of the amphitheatre, the uncanny rituals of astrology and sorcery, the wild emotions of theosophy, and the exhilaration of the oratorical contests. Augustine describes with vividness the allurements of these passionate pursuits. He had personally no liking for the murderous contests of the arena, and warned his students against them, but he tells in his own vivid way how his friend Alypius, 'the brother of my c. 9. 4.

c. 6. 8. heart', 'was carried away incredibly with an incredible eagerness after the shows of gladiators', and how, after overcoming the temptation and feeling quite confident that it would never again master him, he looked once more upon the light 'bold' rather than resolute'. 'For as soon as he saw that blood he therewith drank down savageness; nor turned away, but fixed his eyes drinking in frenzy, unawares, and was delighted with that guilty fight and intoxicated with that bloody pastime. . . . Yet didst Thou with a most strong and most merciful hand pluck him thence, and taughtest him to have confidence not in himself, but in Thee. But this was after.'

He tells also of the excitement of the rhetorical exhibitions and contests, in which he seems to have been very successful, and how his heart 'panted with these anxieties and was boiling with the feverishness of consuming thoughts', and how, as he was passing through the streets of Milan on his way to one of his oratorical triumphs, the sight of a poor beggar, joking and joyous, brought home to him the sense of futility, 'for by all such efforts of ours, as those wherein I then toiled, dragging along, under the goading of desire, the burden of my own wretchedness, and, by dragging, augmenting it, we yet looked to arrive only at that very joyousness whither that beggar-man had arrived before us, who should never perchance attain it'.

For all these excitements men paid the price in morose weariness which again drove them to

seek yet keener stimulants. 'For Thou hast C. 1. 12.
commanded, and so it is, that every inordinate
affection should be its own punishment.'

There was one region which offered a place of escape from the jaded pettiness of life, but even there the stifling atmosphere of languor was not without influence. The Christian religion was the one fresh and stirring element in the intellectual and social life of the day, but even religion had become affected by the paralysis which fettered all other activities of men's minds. There was more life and energy in Christianity than in any other interest of the time, but the Church militant had become the Church litigant, and was spending on schisms and heresies the powers which should have been conquering the world. Forty years before the birth of Augustine, in A.D. 313, Constantine's Edict of Milan had given the Christian religion a nominal supremacy in the Roman Empire. The last great persecution of the Christians had ended in A.D. 311 and the long endurance of passive resistance was victorious. The persecuted Church had overcome evil with good, and the Roman Empire became the vassal of the Christian faith. The brief reaction under the Emperor Julian (A.D. 361-365) which took place in Augustine's childhood, and his subtle attempts to remove Christian influence from the all-important field of education, had only shown the strength of the cause which he so deeply disdained. The Church was very widely extended and very ably organized. Its bishops were among the most

important men in the Empire, and in A.D. 390 Ambrose of Milan was able to exclude the very Emperor Theodosius himself from the Cathedral, until after eight months of recalcitrance he entered it as a penitent. There was a marked improvement in the moral life of the Empire, many old abuses were abolished, and there were many instances of holy and devoted living. Rome was a place of purer and better life than ever in her history. It is deeply pathetic that the Christian victory came too late to save Rome, but that victory, however genuine, had in it elements which might have made the temporal supremacy of the Church disastrous to its true life.

The Emperors after Julian declared themselves to be Christian, and no other religion was publicly observed. But though external respect was paid to the public rites of Christian worship, personal and private religion was not fashionable. It was the property of women, priests, the illiterate and the weak. Men of education sometimes amused themselves with subtle discussions of the various heresies which at that time distressed and distracted the Church, much as they discussed the points at issue between the Greek schools of philosophy, and when some crisis in life awoke them to the consciousness of a deeper need, they took refuge in the wildest and most fantastic superstitions. Augustine's narrative about the learned and famous Victorinus, his extreme reluctance to
c. & 2. submit to baptism, 'being ashamed of the

Sacrament of the humility of Thy Word,' and the burst of rapture in the congregation at Rome when after long struggle he 'pronounced the true faith with an excellent boldness', gives an interesting view of the attitude of polite and educated society towards personal religion. On the other hand, the multitude of lower standing flocked into the Church as soon as the Emperors declared for Christianity, and the Church was not strong or wise enough to deal with the situation. Together with much true faith we find a strong admixture of Pagan elements in the belief and practice of Christians, a terrified clinging to magic and astrology, a dependence on ritual and a blind belief in the mechanical efficacy of sacramental acts, many puerilities of interpretation of the Bible, and a growing preponderance of organization and ecclesiastical politics. The evangelistic work of the Church almost ceased; there was little or no interest in the 'regions beyond', or desire to preach the Gospel in new lands. India, China, even Parthia and Arabia were scarcely thought of. The natural consequence of this neglect, then as at other times and in other places, was a turning of the spiritual force of the Church against itself, the growth of heresies, the outbreak of disastrous schisms. There were many local jealousies and rivalries, involving quarrels between neighbouring Churches over land and property and the much-prized possession of relics of saints and martyrs. The more earnest and serious men and women of the Church found

a refuge in asceticism, and there were hermits, monks, and nuns in large numbers. Voluntary celibacy, which seemed to many an achievement of super-human purity, received an exaggerated reverence, a tribute to the strength of the evil from which it recoiled. In North Africa especially the Church sometimes showed a fierce strength which drove Christian men of opposing parties into violent collision with each other, and impelled some of the noblest to fantastic practices of self-torture. Yet within this Church, so faulty and so inadequate, there lay hid the deepest reality of the present and the brightest hope of the future. The Divine Light in these earthen vessels flickered and flared, and cast monstrous shadows, yet it illumined the darkness.

Such was the world in which Augustine spent the greater part of his life. He passed all his days in North Africa except those momentous years in Italy (A.D. 383 to 388), the years of his conversion and baptism. After his return to Africa in his thirty-fourth year he never left it again. Therefore he was not one of the first to realize the onslaught of the irresistible barbaric invasion which was to wreck the whole earthly scheme of things for Roman citizens. The thunder of the approaching storm had been muttering ominously in the North for many years, and the Roman armies drove back the advancing hordes of barbarian warriors with ever increasing difficulty. At the beginning of the fifth century the oncoming tide swept over

the sea-wall, and in A.D. 410 the whole world woke with a start to find the Imperial City of Rome in the hands of Alaric the Goth. A new world was coming into being,

With agonies, with energies,
With overthrowings and with cries,
And undulations to and fro.

The invaders had reached the southern limit of the Empire and were besieging his own little African city when Augustine died.

CHAPTER II

The Conversion of Augustine

C. 4. 14. *And Thou wast at the helm, but very secretly*

The biography of Augustine is definitely broken into two parts by his conversion, which took place in the autumn of A.D. 386 when he was thirty-two years old. This great event caused so complete a change in his whole scheme of life and mode of being that he very truly describes it as a new birth. As he says in L. 231. 6. a letter written some thirty years later : ' I had destroyed myself, but He who created me, created me anew,' and the very centre of his personality was shifted.

In our study then of the devotion of St. Augustine we must consider how he came to desire to draw near to God, and then how, when his feet were set in the path of bhakti he followed further and further on to

those shining table-lands,
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.

Of the former part of his life Augustine himself has given us an imperishable record in his matchless book of 'Confessions', written some ten years later than his baptism. This book is addressed to no human reader, but to God Himself, and is one long cry of remorse,

wonder, gratitude, joy and love, expressed with a passionate intensity which demonstrates its own sincerity. Augustine, the most reverent of men, would have held it blasphemy to mingle fiction with his contrite confessions to God. He intended the book to be read, and seems to have regarded the writing of it as an act of penance, and as a corrective to the high esteem in which he was held by the whole Christian Church. He says:

'What then have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions—as if they could heal all my infirmities—a race curious to know the lives of others, slothful to amend their own? Why seek they to hear from me what I am; who will not hear from Thee what they themselves are? . . . Do Thou, my inmost Physician, make plain unto me what object I may gain by doing this. For the confessions of my past sins, which Thou hast forgiven and covered, that Thou mightest bless me in Thee, changing my soul by Faith and by Thy Sacrament, when read and heard, stir up the heart, that it sleep not in despair and say "I cannot", but awake in the love of Thy mercy and the sweetness of Thy grace, whereby whoso is weak is strong, when by it he has become conscious of his own weakness. And the good delight to hear of the past evils of such as now are freed from them, not because they are evils, but because they have been and are not . . . To such will I discover myself; they will breathe freely at my good deeds, sigh for my ill deeds. My good deeds are Thine appoint-

c. 10. 3.

c. 10. 4.

ment and Thy gifts; my evil ones are my offences and Thy judgement. Let them breathe freely at the one, sigh at the other; and let hymns and weeping go up into Thy sight out of the hearts of my brethren This is the object of my confessions to confess this, not before Thee only in a secret exultation with trembling and a secret sorrow with hope, but in the ears also of the believing sons of men, sharers of my joy and partners in my mortality, my fellow-citizens and fellow-pilgrims, who are gone before or are to follow on, companions of my way'.

And writing many years later to one Darius, who had begged for a copy of the book, he says :

- L. 231. 6. 'Take then, my son, the books which thou hast desired, the books of my Confessions; in them behold me, lest thou praise me beyond what I am; in them accept what I say of myself and not what others say of me; in them behold and ponder what I have been in myself and through myself; and if anything in me wins thy approval, join me in praising, not me, but Him whom I desire to be praised concerning me. . . . And when thou findest me there, pray for me that I may not fall away, but may be perfected.'

This book, with a few extracts from his later letters, gives us the material for our study of Augustine's conversion, but as his purpose was purely spiritual, he tells us very little about the external facts of his life, and leaves out much

that we should like to know. Fortunately there is other evidence about a man so famous. His life was not rich in any but spiritual events and the external record of his years can be easily given. Aurelius Augustinus, a Roman African, was born on the 13th November A.D. 354, as we have already said, at Thagaste, a small town in the neighbourhood of Carthage, the capital of the Roman provinces of Africa. The Roman Empire had recently adopted Christianity as the State religion, but Patricius, the father of Augustine, had not chosen to become a Christian. He forbade his wife, the saintly Monica, to bring up their son in her religion and he was not baptized. Augustine proved to be a child of remarkable promise and his father, who was a poor man, strove to give him the best education that he could afford. At Thagaste and later at the University of Carthage, Augustine easily outstripped all competitors and won great distinction. In early manhood he lost his father, who had become a Christian shortly before his death, and Monica came to live with her son. He took up the teaching of oratory as a profession, and easily won wealth and fame. In A.D. 383 he left Africa and went to Italy, where he soon received a State appointment as Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Milan. Here he became acquainted with the Bishop Ambrose, and realized for the first time that a man of commanding intellect might be a convert to the Christian faith. As he listened to

Ambrose it became clear to Augustine that his intellectual difficulties concerning the doctrines of Christianity had been unconsciously fostered by himself in order to escape the unwelcome duty of subjecting his conscience to the law of Christ. But worldly things were very dear to him, and it was only after an intensely painful struggle that he renounced ambition and unchastity, and flung himself at the feet of Christ. His submission, when once made, was without reserves. He was baptized by Ambrose on Easter Day A.D. 387 and returned to Africa, where after giving all his money to the poor, he formed an ashram with a few of his friends and spent his time in prayer and study. Three years later he reluctantly yielded to persuasion and became a priest. In A.D. 395 he became a Bishop, but he remained until his death in the small and obscure see of Hippo in Africa. His sermons, his books and his letters carried his thought over the whole Roman Empire and have deeply influenced Christianity until this day. He endured the Fall of Rome in A.D. 410 and wrote his greatest book, *The City of God*, to strengthen the wavering faith of those who saw in that disaster the defeat of Christianity. In A.D. 430 his city Hippo was besieged by the barbarian Vandals, but he refused to escape and leave his people. He died in their midst of illness shortly before the city was captured.

Let us turn from this bare record of facts and dates to the wonderful pages in which
c. 9.4. Augustine himself tells how from being 'a

blind and bitter brawler' he became a Christian bhakta, a man vividly conscious of God in Christ, and devoted to Him with a deep and reverent love. The first and the last sentences of the book are cries of wonder, love and praise, and in the course of his narrative he interrupts himself a hundred times by an outburst of adoration, but his fervour is always disciplined and ennobled by a deep sense of awe and mystery. He begins:

'Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be c.1.1.
praised; great is Thy power and Thy wisdom
infinite', and he ends:

'When all is done I hope that I shall rest in c.13.38.
Thy great Holiness, but Thou, O Good that
needest no good thing, Thou art ever at peace,
since Thou Thyself art Thine own peace. And
shall man give understanding of this to man,
shall angel to angel? Shall angel to man? From
Thee let us ask, Thee let us seek, at Thy door
let us knock. Thus, thus shall there be
receiving, finding, opening. Amen.'

All that lies between is an amplification of these words, and it is deeply interesting to watch, as Augustine slowly reveals his spiritual history to his readers, how the elements of the true bhakta unfold in his character. From his earliest childhood he shows two of the essential qualities of the mystic, ardour and spiritual desire, uniting in himself, as we may gather, the main characteristics of his two parents. For Patricius, his father, 'was fervid, as in his c.9.9.
affections, so in his anger', a passionate and

eager spirit, and his mother Monica was indeed
 -c. 9. 11. as her son calls her 'a religious and holy soul'.
 She was of those to whom spiritual things are
 more actual and real than earthly things, and
 her one desire and ambition for her brilliant and
 famous son was his conversion to God. Words
 spoken to him a few days before her last illness,
 soon after his baptism, reveal the depths of her
 spirit :

c. 9. 10. 'Son, for my part I have no further delight
 in any thing in this life. What I do here any
 longer, and to what end I am here, I know not,
 now that my hopes in this world are accom-
 plished. One thing there was for which I
 desired to linger for a while in this life, that I
 might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died.
 My God hath done this for me more abundantly,
 that I should now see thee also, despising
 earthly happiness, become His servant: what
 do I here?'

Monica was a woman of quiet spirit and
 attained the desires of her heart by patient
 prayer and unfailing sweetness. She must have
 suffered greatly through the long years of her
 marriage with her choleric and inconstant hus-
 -c. 3. 11. band, and yet more when after the conversion
 and death of Patricius she had yet through
 fifteen long years to watch Augustine 'involved
 and re-involved in the profound darkness' of
 heresy and sin, but she had the happiness of
 being always tenderly loved by both of them.
 c. 9. 11. With Patricius she lived 'in great harmony,'
 and of Augustine she said during her last illness

‘with great affection of love, that she had never heard any harsh or reproachful sound uttered by my mouth against her.’ His account of her youth shows a character of real charm. We are glad to hear of her ‘mirthful freaks, which in youthful spirits are wont to be kept under by the gravity of their elders’ and we cannot but respect a girl who could subdue in herself ‘a love of wine which had crept upon her’, and who could while still a very young wife overcome the prejudice and bitterness of her mother-in-law, so that henceforth ‘they lived together with a remarkable sweetness of mutual kindness’. We see the future Bishop Augustine in the woman who ‘was such a peace-maker, that hearing on both sides most bitter things . . . she would never disclose aught of the one to the other’. ‘A small good this might appear to me’ adds Augustine, himself in later days a great discourager of gossip, ‘did I not to my grief know numberless persons, who through some horrible and wide-spreading contagion of sin, not only disclose to persons mutually angered things said in anger, but add withal things never spoken.’

Monica seems to have had that power of attracting affection which is so marked a characteristic of her son. At all times of his life Augustine was much loved by very many people; he was always surrounded by troops of friends; and his correspondence shows the difficulties and embarrassments in which this loveliness of his occasionally involved him. Even now he

awakens in his readers a personal affection not often given to 'historical characters'. One of his best translators, Dr. Marcus Dods, thus gives way to his feelings at the end of his preface to the translation of *The City of God*:

'That the present translation also might be improved, we know; that many men were fitter for the task on the score of scholarship, we are very sensible; but that any one would have executed it with intenser affection and veneration for the author, we are not prepared to admit'.

Sober Scottish divines do not, as a rule, write about their 'intense affection' for anyone or anything, and it is pleasant to read this tribute to the man who says of himself in his confessions

C. 3. 1. that 'to love and to be beloved was sweet to me'.

Monica was not allowed to baptize her child, nor did he become familiar with the Bible till he was grown up. But she gave him his earliest

C. 1. 9. knowledge of God as 'some great One, who though hidden from our senses, could hear and help us'; and the little boy 'though small, yet with no small earnestness' prayed that he might not be beaten at school. This petition was not granted and little Augustine doubted the value of prayer, though from time to time, in moments of great stress, he turned to God. He was not a saintly child; his sole delight was play, as he records, and though a sudden and acute illness once turned his anxious thoughts to divine things, his equally sudden recovery dispelled

his seriousness. Yet all through his wanderings in later years he never lost the reverence for God and the sense of awe and mystery with which Monica had inspired him, and thus was saved from the shallow and superficial conceptions of religion which were so common among the educated men of his time.

More than that, Monica succeeded (and all teachers of religion to children must long to share her success) in bringing her child under the spell of the name of Christ :

'For this name, according to Thy mercy, O Lord, this name of my Saviour Thy son, had my tender heart, even with my mother's milk, devoutly drunk in and deeply treasured, and whatsoever was without that name, though never so learned, polished, or true, took not entire hold of me.' C. 3. 4.

The magic of this name, sounding like some Church-bell through the darkness of night to guide lost way-farers, recalled Augustine again and again from perilous quagmires into which his truant feet were wandering, and after many years led him safely 'from the dimness of things seen to the clearness of things unseen.' Monica could have given her son no more potent amulets than these two—the reverence for God, and the wistful love of the name of Christ—but it must have seemed to her that her teaching was all in vain. While he was still a child Augustine clung to her and believed with her belief, but when he grew to be a boy he turned away from such matters and plunged eagerly 'into the stormy inter- C. 1. 8.

course of human life,' delighting in every physical and mental excitement, wayward in his choices and impulses, longing to excel though generous in defeat. The harsh discipline of school, of which he writes with some indignation, was probably good for him, as his ardour for the studies which he loved would have left him entirely ignorant of the studies which he disliked if he had had his own way. And his dislike extended only to the elementary stages of certain subjects; later there was no study without charm for him, nor any that he did not master.

We may think of Augustine as a child of high promise, eager at play, at books, in friendship, throwing himself ardently into all the pursuits of his school-fellows and giving but scanty attention to spiritual things, yet never wholly devoid of the sense of awe and mystery and never quite without something Holy to love and revere. The time of danger began for him when he was fifteen, and the poverty of his parents caused him to wait a year, free from the discipline of school, before he could be sent to Carthage for what we may call his University studies. From this time on we follow the

C. 9. 2. course of 'his horrible and deadly sins' as he calls them. Judged by the standard of his age, the first which he confesses were not very serious. The organized robbery in his

C. 2. 6. neighbour's orchard, 'that deed of darkness' to the analysis and reprobation of which he devotes the greater part of the Second Book of

the Confessions, seems to most of us a very pardonable escapade, especially since, as he remorsefully confesses, he did it for the fun of the thing and not for the pleasure of eating pears. 'It was the sport, which as it were tickled our hearts, that we beguiled those who little thought what we were doing, and much disliked it.' Yet as Augustine ponders over it he sees, and sees rightly, that the guilt of the deed lies just in the very fact that it had no adequate motive, that he sinned so easily and lightly, not under the stress of fierce temptation, 'compelled by no hunger, nor poverty, but through the cloyedness of well-doing and a pamperedness of iniquity. For I stole that of which I had enough and much better. Nor cared I to enjoy what I stole, but joyed in the theft and sin itself When it is said, "Let's go, let's do it," we are ashamed not to be shameless.'

Augustine was a law-abiding man all his life. Vulgar transgression did not appeal to him, and the sins which he so bitterly bewails were not such as to discredit him in the eyes of men. Little if any blame would in those days attach to him, if he yielded to the other temptation which in this year began to beset him, the temptation to sexual sin. Against this Monica warned him in private with great anxiety, and though 'nothing thereof sunk into my heart, so as to do it,' yet he was sufficiently moved to utter a very remarkable prayer. 'Grant me purity of heart, O Lord, but not just now, O Lord'.

This must be the real meaning of many of the prayers which we offer to God, for while there are few who do not desire purity and holiness in the abstract, there are few who are willing to receive such costly blessings at short notice. We disguise this from ourselves, but Augustine had already the clearness of insight and the sincerity towards God which are characteristic of the true bhakta.

- For the present however, the words of Monica
- C. 2. 3. 'seemed to me womanish advices which I should blush to obey,' especially as such obedience would expose him to the ridicule of his school-
- C. 2. 10. fellows. 'Who can disentangle that twisted and intricate knottiness? Foul it is; I hate to think on it, to look on it. But Thee I long for, O Righteousness and Innocency, beautiful and comely to all pure eyes, and of a satisfaction unsating. With Thee is rest entire, and life imperturbable. Whoso enters into Thee, enters into the joy of the Lord, and shall not fear, and shall do excellently in the All-Excellent. I sank away from Thee, and I wandered, O my God, too much astray from Thee my stay, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a barren land.'

Augustine says nothing at this place about the baptism and death of his father, and perhaps he had already gone to Carthage when these events happened. He had a brilliant University career, concerning which, writing in his Christian days when humility had become to him almost the chief of virtues, he ventures to say but little :

‘What did it profit me, that all the books c. 4. 16.
 I could procure of the so-called liberal arts, I,
 the vile slave of vile affections, read by myself,
 and understood? And I delighted in them,
 but knew not whence came all that was true
 therein or certain. For I had my back to the
 light, and my face to the things enlightened;
 whence my face, with which I discerned the
 things enlightened, itself was not enlightened.
 Whatever was written, either on rhetoric, or
 logic, geometry, music, and arithmetic,
 by myself without much difficulty or any
 instructor, I understood, Thou knowest, O
 Lord my God; because both quickness of
 understanding, and acuteness in discerning, is
 Thy gift; yet did I not thence sacrifice to Thee.
 So then it served not to my use, but rather
 to my perdition, since I went about to get
 so good a portion of my substance into
 my own keeping; and I kept not my
 strength for Thee, but wandered from Thee
 into a far country, to spend it upon harlotries.
 For what profited me good abilities, not employed
 to good uses? For I felt not that those arts
 were attained with great difficulty, even by
 the studious and talented, until I attempted to
 explain them to such; when he most excelled in
 them who followed me not altogether slowly.’
 ‘And now I was chief of the rhetoric school, c. 3. 3.
 whereat I joyed proudly and full of arrogancy.’

The ambition which afterwards proved to be
 so great a snare to him grew at this time
 into a passion, exceeded only by that other deep

thirst, the longing of the bhakta for love, which only after many years found its satisfaction in no human affection, but in God. 'I loved not yet, but I loved to love, and out of a deep-seated want I hated myself for wanting not. I sought what I might love, in love with loving, and safety I hated, and a way without snares. For within me 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.'

At Carthage there was abundant provision for the lowest satisfactions, 'a cauldron of unholy loves,' and for a time Augustine drank deep of their lawless enchantments. But this time of unbridled indulgence was very short. At the age of eighteen Augustine was already the father of a son, and had formed the connection with the mother of Adeodatus, 'whereto if the honourable name of marriage were added' there was nothing in it to be condemned. 'In those years I had one—not in that which is called lawful marriage, but whom I had found out in a wayward passion, void of understanding; yet but one, remaining faithful even to her.' Why this long and tender connection could not be hallowed by marriage, we do not know. Augustine was never without consciousness of the sin of it, and it proved the chief obstacle in the way of his surrender to God. We should like to know more of this beloved mistress of

Augustine, a woman who could hold him faithful to her through fifteen years and then give him up to appease the consciences of both, and depart to Africa 'leaving my heart which cleave to her torn and wounded and bleeding.' Whether they ever met again when he also returned from Milan to Africa, whether she kept her vow of chastity though he for a time so sadly and shamefully broke his, whether she ever again saw her son Adeodatus or was present at his untimely death, Augustine does not tell in his Confessions, nor is there any record in the writings of others. Yet she had her share in the making of a saint. c. 6. 15.

Augustine accuses himself of other errors at that time, a love for stage-plays, which were licentious enough at that time to justify the Christian disapproval of the theatre, of sacrilegious dealings with magic and sorcery, and above all, with his passionate pursuit of fame. The grosser allurements of intoxication and gambling never took any hold of him. To most men of his time he must have seemed a very well-conducted youth, and Monica's tears of anguish about him were caused far more by his heresies and wanderings from the Faith than by any great transgressions on his part. For at this time Augustine's interest in Divine things re-awakened, and his speculations about God, being intellectual rather than spiritual, at first led him into regions that were full of horror to her loyal and reverent spirit.

It was no Christian voice which recalled Augustine to the thought of God, but a book of Cicero's written in praise of philosophy.

C. 3. 4. 'In that unsettled age of mine' (his nineteenth year). 'I learned books of eloquence, wherein I desired to be eminent, out of a damnable and vain glorious end, a joy in human vanity. In the ordinary course of study, I fell upon a certain book of Cicero, whose speech almost all admire, not so his heart. This book of his contains a certain exhortation to philosophy and is called 'Hortensius.' But this book altered my affections, and turned my prayers to Thyself, O Lord, and made me have other purposes and desires. Every vain hope at once became worthless to me, and I longed with an incredibly burning desire for an immortality of wisdom, and began now to arise that I might return to Thee.'

It is deeply significant that even in this enkindling book, which he remembered twelve years later as the first help towards his conversion, Augustine felt a lack. 'And since at that time (Thou, O light of my heart, knowest) Apostolic Scripture was not known to me, I was delighted with that exhortation so far only, that I was thereby strongly roused, and kindled, and inflamed to love, and seek, and obtain, and hold, and embrace not this or that sect, but wisdom itself, whatever it were; and this alone checked me thus enkindled, that the name of Christ was not in it'

C. 1. 20. With all the ardour of a true bhakta Augustine now yearned for truth. Throughout his life this keen thirst was characteristic of him. 'I delighted in truth' he says of himself as a small

boy. Vagueness and looseness of thought were abhorrent to him, and he delighted in subtle trains of reasoning, ('my pet hobby' as he says L. 3. 3. in a letter to Alypius, written a few years after his conversion 'and one in which perhaps I enjoy myself too much'). Abstract thought was a kind of home to him. The mysteries which enfold our daily life, which most of us accept so idly with a listless wonder were full of eager fascination for Augustine. What we mean by 'time,' what 'memory' is, the paradoxes of our being which never perplex most of us because we never notice them, the inscrutable secret of the will, 'the abysmal depths of personality'—Augustine must find the truth of these matters or be desolate. Truth was not to him 'fair, faint and far,' a distant and inaccessible ideal, but the very necessity of his life. 'The life of blessedness' he said 'is joy concerning truth.' We have seen him as a youth of nineteen years, exulting in the first pride of his mighty intellect, mastering with ease the subtleties of Aristotle, but longing most for truth, and ten years later we find him 'over- C. 10. 23. charged with most gnawing care, lest I should die before I found the truth.' C. 7. 5.

Augustine still kept some traces of his mother's piety about him. He occasionally went to Church at Carthage, and when he had to name his unwelcome babe ('who yet, once C. 4. 2. born, compelled love') he called him Adeodatus, 'given by God.' So when at the bidding of Cicero he set out to seek an immortality of wisdom, he turned first to the Bible.

C. 3. 5. 'I resolved then to bend my mind to the holy Scriptures, that I might see what they were. But behold, I see a thing not understood by the proud, nor laid open to children, lowly in access, in its recesses lofty, and veiled with mysteries; and I was not such as could enter into it, or stoop my neck to follow its steps. For not as I now speak did I feel when I turned to those Scriptures; but they seemed to me unworthy to be compared to the stateliness of Cicero, for my swelling pride shrank from their lowliness, nor could my sharp wit pierce the interior thereof. Yet were they such as would grow up in a little one. But I disdained to be a little one; and swollen with pride, took myself to be a great one.'

As the Bible failed to interest him, he was attracted next by the fantastic theosophy of the Manichæan sect, and indeed went so far as to join the second rank of adherents, 'the listeners' with the aspiration of attaining to the first rank, 'the elect.' This sect, deriving ultimately from old Babylonian origins, had borrowed much from Zoroastrian doctrines and much from Christian documents, and the founder Mani, who was born at Ecbatana in Persia about A.D. 215, declared himself to be the promised Paraclete. While his followers rejected all the Old Testament and most of the New, they paid a certain reverence to Christ, regarding His suffering and death as phantasmal, because pain was beneath His dignity. They amused themselves with ridicule of the morality and diction

of the earlier books of the Old Testament and prided themselves on a much more spiritual worship than the Christian Church seemed to practice.

Augustine's deep reverence for God, which was often shocked by the material imagery used by many Christians to express their conceptions of the Inconceivable, inclined him to welcome the emphasis which the Manichaeans laid on the spiritual being of the Divine; his acute and subtle fancy enjoyed their speculations and investigations into the ultimate nature of matter; but, as he came to see later, the chief attraction of the Manichaean tenets for him was the flattery of his intellectual pride. The good Bishop to whom Monica went in her anguish at her son's desertion of the Christian faith, diagnosed his case very shrewdly, 'When she entreated him to vouchsafe to converse with me, refute my errors, unteach me ill things, and teach me good things (for this he was wont to do, when he found persons fitted to receive it), he refused, wisely, as I afterwards perceived. For he answered that I was yet unteachable, being puffed up with the novelty of that heresy, and had already perplexed divers unskilful persons with captious questions, as she had told him: "but let him alone a while" (saith he) "only pray God for him, he will of himself by reading find what that error is, and how great its impiety."' That is what did indeed happen, but nine more years were to pass before Augustine could gladden her with the tidings 'that I was

C. 3. 12

C. 6. 1.

- now no longer a Manichee, though not yet a Catholic Christian', nine years in which 'I lived seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in divers lusts; openly, by sciences which they call liberal; secretly, with a false-named religion; here proud, there superstitious, everywhere vain.'

There was a strong attraction also for Augustine, who even in his most headstrong days was always uneasily conscious of sin, in the Manichaean doctrine which transferred the guilt to something that was not himself, whether to the Creator or to some vague 'evil nature'.

c 5.10. 'For I still thought "that it was not we that sin, but that I know not what other nature sinned in us"; and it delighted my pride to be free from blame; and when I had done any evil, not to confess that I had done any, that Thou mightest heal my soul because it had sinned against Thee; but I loved to excuse it, and to accuse I know not what other thing which was with me, but which I was not. But in truth it was wholly I, and my impiety had divided me against myself, and that sin was the more incurable, whereby I did not judge myself to be a sinner.' What was best and what was worst in Augustine kept him so long a Manichee. Reverence, ardour for knowledge, pride and self-indulgence all combined to draw him deeper and deeper into those marshy regions, and he eagerly defended and taught those congenial doctrines.

But he could not find enduring satisfaction in them, and it was not very long before a sudden

shock revealed to him the hollowness of his spiritual peace. He had now completed his education, had returned to Thagaste and was teaching rhetoric there with much acceptance. There he had entered into close friendship with a former school-fellow, one of the many friendships which play such a beautiful part in his whole life. No one has described friendship more charmingly: 'To talk and jest together, C. 4. 8. to do kind offices by turns, to read together honied books, to play the fool and be earnest together, to dissent at times without discontent, as a man might with his own self, and even with the seldomness of these dissentings, to season our more frequent consentings, sometimes to teach and sometimes learn, to long for the absent with impatience, and welcome the coming with joy. These and the like expressions, proceeding out of the hearts of those that loved and were loved again, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing gestures, were so much fuel to melt our souls together and out of many make but one.'

Such was his love for his early friend. 'It C. 4. 4. was too sweet, ripened by the warmth of kindred studies, for from the true faith (which he as a youth had not soundly and thoroughly imbibed) I had warped him also to those superstitious fables, for which my mother bewailed me. With me he now erred in mind, nor could my soul be without him. But behold, Thou wert close on the steps of Thy fugitives, at once God of vengeance, and Fountain of

mercies, turning us to Thyself by wonderful means; Thou tookest that man out of this life, when he had scarce filled up one whole year of my friendship, sweet to me above all sweetness of that my life.'

Augustine had no spiritual resources with which to meet this, the first overwhelming sorrow of his life. In the God of the Manichæan doctrine he could find no comfort or

C. 4. 4. strength. 'My heart was utterly darkened, and whatever I beheld was death. My native country was a torment to me, and my father's house a strange unhappiness; and whatever I had shared with him, wanting him, became a distracting torture. Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them, and I hated all places; for that they had not him; nor could they now tell me, "he is coming" as when he was alive and absent. I became a great riddle to myself, and I asked my soul why she was so sad, and why she disquieted me sorely; but she knew not what to answer me. And if I said "Trust in God" she very rightly obeyed me not, because that most dear friend, whom she had lost, was, being man, both truer and better than that phantasm she was bid to trust in.'

C. 4. 7. And again: 'A huge load of misery weighed me down. To Thee O Lord, it ought to have been raised, for Thee to lighten; I knew it, but neither could nor would; the more, since, when I thought of Thee, Thou wert not to me any solid or substantial thing. For Thou wert not

Thyself, but a mere phantom, and my error was my God. If I offered to lay my load thereon that it might rest, it glided through the void and came rushing down again on me; and I had remained to myself a hapless spot where I could neither be, nor be from thence.'

This failure to find any comfort in God seems to have been the first step in the disillusionment of Augustine, but others followed. In the restlessness of grief he left Thagaste and returned to Carthage, where with a soul ill at ease and an aching heart he followed his professional career. Externally all went well with him. He was prosperous in all that he undertook, fame and wealth came readily to him, he was dearly loved by his mother, his mistress and many friends, a little son of extraordinary promise was growing up in his house, his students surrounded him with enthusiastic affection, yet Augustine was not happy. The sense of the transitoriness and precariousness of life, moral dissatisfaction with his own character, 'the fear of death and of Thy judgement to come, which amid all my changes, never departed from my breast,' the knowledge of his failure to find God, doubts and despairs about the whole meaning of life, kept him restless and troubled. A certain pure and deep pleasure, however, he found in philosophic enquiries of a different nature from his Manichæan speculations, and his book on the Nature of Beauty, written when he was twenty-seven and now unhappily lost, must have been

- a joy to write. Augustine resembles Plato in many ways, but in nothing more than in his mystical love of beauty. He needed beauty as painfully and persistently as he needed truth,
- C. 4. 13. and he wrote that book, as he says, 'out of my inmost heart.' He was keenly alive to the physical beauty which surrounds us on every
- C. 10. 34. side, the glory of the common sunshine, 'the
- C. G. 22. light, the queen of colours, 'the manifold and
24. various loveliness of sky, and earth and sea,' the beauty of movement in all living things, the charm of tints and hues in every part of creation. No minutest grace escaped his observant eyes.
- C. G. 22. 'Even the tiniest insect cannot be attentively
24. gazed upon without astonishment and without praising the Creator.' But even at the abundant feast of beauty spread before him on sea and land, Augustine could not appease the hunger
- C. 10. 34. of his soul. 'Very good are these things' he said 'but they are not *my* good.' There was a
- C. 10. 34. deeper need—'that Beauty which is above our souls, which my soul day and night sigheth after,' an absolute beauty which should transcend and yet contain all lesser manifestations of itself.
- C. 10. 6. His love of music also, 'the sweet melodies of varied songs' only aroused in him a longing for a yet purer harmony. Here again we see the bhakta in Augustine, who much as he delighted in beauty, yet could never be satisfied with the earthly loveliness which he so lovingly observed.

As Augustine penetrated more and more deeply into the doctrine of the Manichaeans, his disillusionment grew, and at the end of nine

years he had come to the end of their speculations. His powerful intellect had weighed their sophistries and found them wanting, and the claim of their founder to be considered the promised Paraclete revolted him when he realized the mathematical errors in his astronomy and his general inaccuracy. He was weary of cleverness and longed for simplicity and goodness. Moreover he had come to suspect that the Manichæan dogma—'that Thou, O Lord God, the Truth, wert a vast and bright body, and I a fragment of that body' had won his adherence chiefly because of his pride. 'But what prouder, than for me with a strange madness to maintain myself to be that by nature which Thou art? For whereas I was subject to change . . . yet chose I rather to imagine Thee subject to change, than myself not to be that which Thou art.' Nor, with the spell of the name of Christ still upon him, could he content himself with the Manichæan heresy 'so as to believe nothing of Him, but what I could imagine in my vanity,' but longed to find in Him something unlimited and infinite, something that exceeded his intellectual reach, however long it might be.

At the end of nine years, his intercourse with a leading Manichæan teacher, for whose coming to Carthage Augustine 'longed but too intensely . . . by conference with whom these and greater difficulties, if I had them, were to be most readily and abundantly cleared' completed his disillusionment. The amiable

Faustus, far from solving Augustine's difficulties, could scarcely understand them, and 'modestly shrank from the burden' of discussing them. He was not the only spiritual leader of the day who shrank from discussion with Augustine, who must have been a formidable antagonist in any debate. Augustine was

c. 5. 7. deeply disappointed; 'all my efforts whereby I had purposed to advance in that sect, upon knowledge of that man, came utterly to an end' and he never regained confidence in it.

Soon after this, in A.D. 338, Augustine decided, for reasons connected with his profession, to leave Carthage and seek his fortune in Rome, and in spite of the extreme distress of his mother who saw in this step the destruction of all her hopes and the fulfilment of all her fears, he persisted in his decision. By a trick he eluded her vigilance, and sailed away, leaving

c. 5. 8. her 'frantic with sorrow,' not knowing that the end of her long patience and toil in prayer was now in sight.

At Rome Augustine attached himself to some of the first rank of Manichæan adepts, the so-called 'Elect,' but he could not regain his lost confidence in their tenets. Looking round for a purer and surer faith, his mind reverted to his mother's religion, but it was not yet presented to him in a form which he could accept. His reverent mind shrank from the conception of God limited in the bounds of a human figure, which he took to be the meaning commonly received by Christians of the saying that man is

made in the image of God. 'For Thou, Most High and most near; most secret and most present; Who hast not limbs some larger, some smaller, but art wholly everywhere, and nowhere in space, art not of such corporeal shape, yet hast Thou made man after Thine own image; and behold, from head to foot is he contained in space.' c. 6. 3.

Augustine was destined to become in later days the great exponent of the spiritual Being of God and of His image in the spirit of man, but at this point in his life he took no pains to find out what the Christian doctrine really was. Despairing, as he says, of finding truth in the Church he turned to the writings of the Academic philosophers, which he had already begun to study at Carthage, and found in them a purer atmosphere and a more scientific spirit than among the Manichaeans. Their sceptical attitude, 'doubting of every thing and wavering between all' was a refreshment to him after the credulity demanded by the Manichaean tenets, and he became their adherent, with one significant reserve. 'To these philosophers, notwithstanding, because they were without the saving name of Christ, I utterly refused to commit the cure of my sick soul.' c. 5. 14.

After some months of successful professional work in Rome Augustine received an offer of an important post in North Italy. The city of Milan sent to Rome for a 'rhetoric reader' (public orator and professor of oratory) for their city, and when Augustine applied for this

position he was chosen. Arrived at Milan he became acquainted with the renowned Bishop Ambrose who, himself a convert, had given up his fortune and a great political position in order to devote himself to the service of God. His oratorical fame and his personal kindness attracted Augustine to him, and as he became intimate with him, Augustine found for the first time a mind capable of meeting his own in its reach and grasp, yet devotedly and devoutly Christian. Of him he writes many years later, 'It was by him more than by anyone else that the Lord delivered me from error, and it was by his ministry that the grace of saving baptism was given me,' and Monica, we are told, 'loved him as an angel of God' for what he was able to do for her son.

But that was later. Augustine had no thought of following the example of Ambrose when he went on Sundays to the Cathedral to hear him preach, and to judge, as a fellow-orator, of his rhetorical gifts. He found him quite equal to his fame, and by degrees began to attend to the substance as well as the manner of his discourse.

'And while I opened my heart to admit "how eloquently he spake" there also entered in "how truly he spake"; but this by degrees.' Before very long he found himself constrained to admit that he had misjudged Christian theology, and that the Catholic faith 'might be maintained without shamelessness.' Augustine's generous spirit rejoiced in the discovery, though it must have been a humiliating one for him. 'With

joy I blushed that I had so many years barked, not against the Catholic faith, but against the fictions of carnal imaginations. For so rash and impious had I been, that what I ought by enquiring to have learned, I had pronounced on, condemning.' He was able to tell Monica, when she came to live with him in his new home in Milan, that he was no longer a Manichæan, though not yet a Christian, and he frankly confessed that he had grievously misunderstood Christian doctrines. Yet not for many months would he go further. There were many motives for delay and procrastination. After nine years of Manichæan error, he feared to commit himself again to a system of doctrine, which, however alluring at first, might prove inadequate; 'as it happens that one who has tried a bad physician fears to trust himself to a good one, so was it with the health of my soul, which could not be healed but by believing, and lest it should believe falsehoods, refused to be cured.' Also he was at that time very much occupied with the ambitions and rivalries of his profession, and much interested in his students and friends. But more than this, there was growing clear to his eyes, through his acquaintance with Ambrose, an ideal of Christian life which he was not willing to face. For Ambrose led a pure and celibate life, entirely apart from 'that carnal custom' which to Augustine was so precious, that without it 'life seemed not to be life but a punishment! and it began to dawn upon

C. 6. 4.

C. 7. 17.

C. 6. 12.

Augustine that if he should find God in Christ he must do the same. For he could not marry his mistress, and he could not, if a Christian, live with her, and yet he could not, as he thought, live at all without her. Moreover, if he became a Christian, he must give up all the insincerities and deceptions incidental to the rhetoric of his time, he must never again make the worse appear the better cause, and this would mean the end of his career. It is no wonder that Augustine was unwilling to adopt a faith which would involve such sacrifices. The idea of becoming a Christian in name and not in practice, to be baptized and continue in his present ways, never occurred to him. Whatever he did he must do sincerely and ardently, any surrender he made must be without reserves. Augustine was a bhakta by nature, and it was not in him to offer a half allegiance either to the world or to Christ.

In the meantime, driven by an unquenched thirst, he pursued his search of wisdom, ashamed that eleven years of failure had now passed since on reading the 'Hortensius' he had renounced every vain hope and set out on his quest. 'And lo, I was now in my thirtieth year, sticking in the same mire, greedy of enjoying things present, which passed away and wasted my soul.' He was joined at this time by two young men, Alypius and Nebridius, friends of his from Africa and formerly his students, in whom he had inspired something of his own spiritual ardour. Long and earnestly they

debated together over the things of the soul, seeking to rid themselves of all material and corporeal conceptions of God, that they might contemplate Deity in its absolute existence. Their desire was for some conception of the Infinite, which though actual and real should be unlimited by special and temporal relations, unchangeable and imperishable. They were much helped, though, as he later thought, also much misled, by the books of the Platonists which now came into his possession. Urged by these to seek God through His witness of Himself in the soul of man, Augustine set himself to reach that inner light, and was given once and again a moment of mystical revelation. 'I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my guide; and able I was, for Thou wast becoming my helper. And I entered and beheld with the eye of my soul (such as it was) above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light, which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold brighter, and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was this light, but other, yea, far other from all these. Nor was it above my soul, as oil is above water, nor yet as heaven is above earth, but above to my soul, because It made me; and I below It because I was made by It. He that knows the Truth, knows what that Light is; and he that knows It, knows Eternity. Love knoweth it. O Truth Who art Eternity! and

Love Who art Truth! and Eternity Who art Love! Thou art my God, to Thee do I sigh night and day.' Or again, on another occasion when he was pondering on the faculty of reason,

c. 7. 17. 'which finding itself also to be in me a thing variable, raised itself up to its own understanding, and drew away my thoughts from power of habit, withdrawing itself from those troops of contradictory phantasms: that so it might find what that light was where it was bedewed, when, without all doubting, it cried out, 'that the unchangeable was to be preferred to the changeable'; whence also it knew that Unchangeable, which, unless it had in some way known, it had had no sure ground to prefer it to the changeable. And thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That Which Is. And then I saw Thy invisible things understood by the things which are made. But I could not fix my gaze thereon; and my infirmity being struck back, I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory thereof, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed on.'

These apocalyptic moments of illumination, rare and memorable, were stricken through by the sense of alienation. The former vision also

c. 7. 11. ended in rejection: 'Thee when I first knew, Thou liftedst me up, that I might see that there was that which I might see and that I was not yet such as to see. And Thou didst beat back the weakness of my sight, streaming

forth Thy beams of light upon me most strongly, and I trembled with love and awe and I perceived myself to be far off from Thee, in the region of unlikeness.' It is the pure in heart that shall see God, and as he pressed on to that Vision, Augustine felt all the memories of his joys and triumphs and sins, offspring of his pride and passion, crowding around him to block his path, with taunting cries, 'Whither goest thou, unworthy and defiled?' He felt within him a true love of God as of One actual and infinite, and he knew that there was joy and peace for him in God, but there was a hindrance which only he could remove, a weight which only he could fling aside, and he was not willing to do it. 'I doubted not in any way that there was One to whom I might cleave, but I was not such as to cleave to Thee.'

What motive induced Augustine at this critical stage of his spiritual history to read the Apostolic Scriptures, we do not know, but he says that this was precisely the moment when they could speak to him with the greatest force. His contempt for the Christian system of thought had now been dispelled by Ambrose, and the appeal of the New Testament had not been blunted by familiarity. With eager zest he seized upon the writings of St. Paul, and found his intellectual scruples melting away in the warmth of the light shed upon them. His life-long love of at least the idea of Christ now passed from reverence into awe. Till now he had thought of Him as 'a man excellent in wisdom

C. 7. 7.

C. 7. 17.

C. 7. 19.

- whom none could be equalled unto an ensample of despising things temporal for the obtaining of immortality,' but now he learnt to
- c. 7. 21. see in Him 'our Lord whom Thou has begotten co-eternal, and formedst in the beginning of Thy ways.' St. Paul produced in him entire conviction, but it was with exceeding trembling that he rejoiced.
- c. 7. 21. He was able 'from the mountain's shaggy top to see the land of peace' but the way was too rough and perilous for him to follow it.
- c. 8. 1. The sacrifice was too great. 'The Way, the Saviour Himself pleased me well, but I shrank from going through its straitness.'

The problem had now become a moral one and Augustine viewed it with his customary sincerity and clearness. His intellectual conviction led him to become a catechumen in the Christian Church, but he would not seek baptism until he could face the renunciation which it ought to involve. Months passed by, and with many fluctuations of purpose, temporary enthusiasms of resolve, periods of drowsy irresolution and procrastination, with bitter self-reproaches and idle complacency he heid on his way. His ambitions lost for the time something of their hold on him, but he was still a slave to the love of woman, and in this arena he fought his sharpest fight and incurred his most humiliating defeat. Largely at the instance of Monica, he decided to marry. His conscience would no longer sanction his life with his much-loved mistress, and she also seems

to have heard and responded to the call to renunciation. Marriage with her was out of the question, and yet he could not face a life devoid of 'that deadly sweetness.' Separation from her whom he loved and, after an interval, marriage with some suitable maiden, seemed the only possible remedy. Monica, who greatly desired a settled life for him, could yet hardly persuade herself that such a course was that destined by God for her son, and was clear-hearted enough to distinguish the vain and fantastic things which she saw in troubled dreams from the Divine intimations by which she was wont to steer her course. Yet the decision was carried out; Augustine and his beloved parted forever, and she, poor woman, returned to Africa 'vowing unto Thee never to know any other man, leaving with me my son by her.' Augustine must have felt that he had made a great sacrifice, and his heart 'torn and wounded and bleeding' may have prided itself on his fortitude, and if so, the humiliation which followed must have been very bitter. For his resolution could not stand the strain of actual suffering, he could not even for a short time sustain himself by memory and hope, and regardless of the woman whom he had loved so long and of the young girl who was to be his bride, he yielded to pain, and 'procured another, yet no wife.' It is the saddest page in Augustine's history, but the dishonour of his fall shows how fierce was the temptation, and how strong the grace by which he later won a complete victory over it.

C. 6. 12.

C. 6. 15.

C. 6. 15.

C. 6. 15.

Not until he was utterly humiliated did Augustine find salvation. He was forced by bitter experience of his own weakness to see himself as the slave of a tyrannous habit; he had also to see himself as a self-deceiver. The moment of revelation came when he was nearly thirty-two years old, in the early autumn of the year A.D. 386. Lodging with his two friends and his mother in a house lent them by a friend, he was earnestly studying the epistles of St. Paul, and making, not for the first time, plans for a community of spiritually-minded persons who should devote all their time to Divine studies. One afternoon as he and Alypius were sitting together, a visitor chanced to talk to them about the devotion of certain hermits, especially of St. Anthony, and of two young men, high in the service of the Emperor, who on reading the Life of that great ascetic had made the same renunciation. 'And both had affianced brides, who when they heard thereof, also devoted their virginity to God.'

c. 8. 6.

Like a flash there came to Augustine the conviction that it was the fear of a like renunciation that had kept him so long from the service of God. 'I had thought that I therefore deferred from day to day to reject the hopes of this world, and follow Thee only, because there did not appear aught certain, whither to direct my course. And now was the day come wherein I was to be laid bare to myself, and my conscience was to upbraid me.' His last defence was thrown down and he must face the light.

c. 8. 7.

'But Thou, O Lord, while he was speaking, c. 8. 7.
 didst turn me round towards myself, taking me
 from behind my back, where I had placed
 myself; and setting me before my face, that I
 might see how foul I was, how crooked and
 defiled, bespotted and ulcerous. And I beheld
 and stood aghast and whither to flee from
 myself I found not. And if I sought to turn
 mine eye from off myself, he went on with
 his story, and Thou again didst set me over
 against myself, and thrustedst me before my
 eyes, that I might find out my iniquity and hate
 it. I had known it, but made as though I
 saw it not, winked at it and forgot it.'

Augustine shuddered at the sight of himself.
 'I was exceedingly confounded with a horrible c. 8. 7.
 shame.' But when the visitor departed and
 Augustine tried to exert his will to pray, he
 found that he could not overcome the mute
 resistance of his soul. 'What said I not against c. 8. 7.
 myself? With what scourges of condemnation
 lashed I not my soul, that it might follow me,
 striving to go after Thee! Yet it drew back;
 refused, but excused not itself. All arguments
 were spent and confuted; there remained a
 mute shrinking; and she feared, as she would
 death, to be restrained from the flux of that
 custom, whereby she was wasting to death.'

The pages in which Augustine tells the story
 of his terrific conflict, in which heaven and hell
 fought for his soul till he nearly perished under
 the storm and stress of it, are part of the
 imperishable record of humanity, and comment

on them would be impertinent. No one but Augustine himself can write of it. The last shock of the fight was met by him in solitude, for the presence even of Alypius was not to be borne. Alone in the garden 'I flung myself down I know not how, under a certain fig tree, giving full vent to my tears, and the floods of mine eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to Thee. And not indeed in these words, yet to this purpose, spake I much to Thee: "And Thou, O Lord, how long? how long, Lord, wilt Thou be angry, for ever? Remember not my former iniquities," for I felt that I was held by them. I sent up these sorrowful words: "How long, how long," "to-morrow, and to-morrow." Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?"

C. 8. 12. 'So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting and oft repeating, "Take up and read; take up and read." Instantly my countenance altered, I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Anthony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him: "Go,

sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me"; and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thec. Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: "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." No further would I read, nor needed I; for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.'

The spell of that name, known and loved by him from his earliest memory, had wrought its work, and from that moment Augustine was the Bhakta of Christ.

CHAPTER III

The Later Life of St. Augustine

C. 10.29. *'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.'*

Augustine's first act when he realized in that supreme moment of serene certainty that the first things had passed away and that all things were made new, was to tell Alypius and his mother of the change. Speaking of it in a letter written many years later to an old friend of his youth who had at last resolved to become

L. 257. a Christian, he uses a significant phrase: 'when I ceased to desire those things—' and the completeness of the transformation of his desires is indeed wonderful. Never again was he swayed by sexual passion, he was not even stirred by it. Only in dreams sometimes he was haunted by memories, but they were dreams which kindled no longings, 'and upon waking, I return to peace of conscience.'

C. 10.30.

His other great temptation, the love of praise, was more persistent, and throughout his whole life Augustine was on his guard against it, but for the moment it was gone. 'The expulsive power of a new affection' had driven out these former passions, and his whole nature was absorbed in his new-found joy. 'How sweet did it at once become to me to be without the sweetnesses of those toys! and what I feared to

C. 9.1.

be parted from, was now a joy to part with. For thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou true and highest sweetness. Thou castedst them forth, and for them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood, brighter than all light, though more hidden than ail depths, higher than all honour, but not to the high in their own conceits. And my tongue spake freely to Thee, my brightness, and my riches, and my health, the Lord my God.'

His plans were soon made. His betrothed bride was released, his cherished profession given up. He felt an honourable obligation to continue his work as a teacher for two or three weeks, until the approaching vacation, and therefore for that length of time he kept his purpose of forsaking the world undivulged to any outside his circle of close friends. It was a trial of patience and fortitude, he says, for all his heart was set on leisure and solitude, that he might realize his deliverance and plan out his new life.

A friend lent him a house in the country, and when the term ended he retired thither, with his mother, Alypius, and the boy Adeodatus, who was now fourteen years old. There he spent the beautiful autumn days in studying the Psalms, which he had till then disparaged, and finding in them a great deal more than the writers probably meant to say. It was his way then, and later in his preaching or commenting on passages in the Bible, to expatiate rather than to expound. He was not much concerned

to find out what the writer intended to express, but he set down the thoughts suggested to himself by the words, and made the language the vehicle of his own experience. This is his comment on the last two verses of the 4th

C. 9. 4. Psalm: '*Thou hast put gladness into my heart* and I cried out, as I read this outwardly finding it inwardly. Nor would I be multiplied with worldly goods; wasting away time and wasted by time; whereas I had in Thy eternal Simple Essence other *corn and wine and oil*. And now with a loud cry of my heart I cried out in the next verse, "O for peace," "O for the Self-Same," "O what said he?" *I will lay me down and sleep*, for who shall hinder us, when cometh to pass that saying which is written "Death is swallowed up in victory." And Thou surpassingly art the Self-Same, Who art not changed; and in Thee is rest which forgetteth all toil, for there is no other with Thee, nor are we to seek those many other things which are not what Thou art; but *Thou, Lord, alone makest us dwell in safety*. I read and kindled; nor found I what to do to those deaf and dead, of whom myself had been, a pestilent person, a bitter and blind brawler against those writings, which are honied with the honey of heaven, and light-some with Thine own light; and I was consumed with zeal at the enemies of Thy Scripture.'

Augustine resigned his Professorship, telling his students that it was now his choice to serve God. At once he began to write philosophical treatises, adjusting his former view and princi-

ples to his new convictions and experiences, and loyally avowing his faith in Christ, though Aiypius, 'the brother of my heart,' at first C. 3. 4. protested against his doing so in a work intended for a learned audience. It needed considerable moral courage, and Augustine betrays that it was not easy for him to offend convention in this way, but ten years later he recalls with a smile 'the inward goads' with which, as he C. 9. 4. says, God 'tamed his pride and lowered his high imaginations.' At this time also began his long toil of letter-writing, which was to become a great part of his work.

So the winter passed and on Easter Sunday, in the year 387, Augustine stood with Adeodatus and Aiypius in the Cathedral at Milan and received baptism at the hands of Ambrose. Augustine speaks of the relief of his mind as the assurance of forgiveness for all that was past came home to him in that rite, and as the music of Psalms and hymns 'the harmony of C. 9. 6. voices and hearts' rose around him he shed tears of joy, moved 'with the wondrous sweetness of considering the depth of Thy counsels concerning the salvation of mankind.' Church music became a great delight to him; sometimes he feared that it was a perilous delight and that the sweetness of the melodies was more dear to him than the sense of the words sung, but happily his scruples did not rob him of so great a solace. 'I fluctuate between peril of pleasure C. 10. 33. and approved wholesomeness; inclined the rather (though not as pronouncing an irrevocable

opinion) to approve of the usage of singing in the church; that so by the delight of the ears the weaker minds may rise to the feeling of devotion.'

The service of God was now to be the chief, indeed the only, concern of Augustine's life and he turned his face homewards to Africa. Now that every ambitious hope had been renounced, there was no reason why he should remain in Italy; his mother longed for home, and he also would rather serve his own people. So with his mother, his son, and a few African friends he started for Carthage. Before, however, they had left Italy, Augustine suffered one of the griefs of his life in the loss of his mother. He rises into pure poetry in those pages of the Confessions in which he writes of her last days and of her death, of his sorrow and great consolation, but for our purpose we must study only the wonderful description of that hour at Ostia, where a few days before their intended voyage, Monica and her son, looking from a window down into a garden, talked together of 'the Joy of the Lord' and meditated on the mystery of the eternal life of the saints.

c. 9. 10. 'And when our discourse was brought to that point, that the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, was in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention; we, raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection towards the "Self-Same," did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even

the very heaven whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing and discourse, and admiring of Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the Wisdom by whom all these things are made, and what have been, and what shall be, and she is not made, but is, as she hath been, and so shall she be ever; yea rather, to "have been" and "to be hereafter" are not in her, but only "to be," seeing she is eternal. For to "have been" and to "be hereafter" are not eternal. And while we were discoursing and panting after her, we slightly touched on her with the whole effort of our heart; and we sighed, and there we left bound the first fruits of the Spirit, and returned to vocal expressions of our mouth where the word has beginning and end. And what is like unto Thy Word, our Lord, who endureth in Himself without becoming old, and maketh all things new?

' We were saying then: If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth, and waters and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatever exists only in transition, since if any could hear, all these say "We made not ourselves, but

He made us that abideth for ever"— if then having uttered this, they too should be hushed, having roused only our ears to Him who made them, and he alone speak, not by them; but by Himself, that we may hear His Word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor Angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear Whom in these things we love, might hear His Very Self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom which abideth over all);—could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which now we sighed after—were not this "Enter into Thy Master's joy"?'

- C. 9. 10. 'And when shall that be?' sighed Augustine, and at that time thought that only in the life of the world to come could this supersensual joy become actual. Into that life Monica entered not many days later, but forty-three years of strenuous and varied activity lay before her son,
- C. 1. 6. 'in this dying life (shall I call it?) or living death.' Yet he was often to be visited by timeless moments of spiritual realisation which merged into one the Seen and the Unseen.
- L. 4. 2. 'And when I call God to my aid, and begin to be lifted up into Himself and into that which is most truly true, at times I am so completely filled with the realisation of the things that

abide, that I marvel that there is any need of reason to convince me of the existence of what is present to me in such reality as each man's presence is real to himself.' Or again, 'Some- c. 10. 40. times Thou dost admit me to an affection, very unusual, in my inmost soul, rising to a strange sweetness, which if it were perfected in me I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come.'

The death of Monica removed the urgency of Augustine's return to Africa and it was not until the following year that he left Italy. He then made his native town, Thagaste, his home, and after distributing his property among the poor, he strove to give all his time to study and prayer. It was not without difficulty, as we see from an indignant letter from Nebridius, who sometimes found his friend too much the friend of everyone. 'Really, my dear Augustine, are L. 5. you giving a demonstration of your fortitude and tolerance in looking after the affairs of your fellow-townsmen, and even now not getting the leisure that you pine for? I do ask, who are these individuals that break in upon a good-natured person like you? I suppose they do not know where your heart and affections are set. Have you not one among your friends, Romanianus or Lucinianus, who would tell them what it is that you love? Then they will have to listen to me. I will shout aloud and proclaim that God is your love and His service and presence your desire. I wish you would accept my invitation and come to me in the

country and be at peace there. I do not mind being called a robber by your fellow-townsmen; you love them, and they love you, too much.'

It was not long after that Nebridius died.

- c. 9. 3. Augustine writes of him, 'Not long after our conversion and regeneration by Thy baptism, being also a faithful member of the Church Catholic, and serving Thee in perfect chastity and continence amongst his people in Africa, his whole house having through him first been made Christian, Thou didst release him from the flesh; and now he lives in Abraham's bosom. Whatever that be which is signified by that bosom, there lives my Nebridius, my sweet friend and Thy child, O Lord . . . there he liveth. For what other place is there for such a soul? There he liveth whereof he asked much of me, a poor inexperienced man. Now lays he not his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth unto Thy fountain, and drinketh as much as he can receive, wisdom in proportion to his thirst, endlessly happy. Nor do I think that he is so inebriated therewith, as to forget me, seeing that Thou, Lord, Whom he drinketh, art mindful of me.'

- c. 9. 3. Yet it was hard to part with Nebridius 'a most ardent searcher out of truth,' and Augustine kept a loving memory of him all his life. A yet greater sorrow fell on him in those
- c. 9. 6. early years in the death of his only child, 'the boy Adeodatus, born after the flesh, born of my sin. Excellently hadst Thou made him. He was' (at the time of his baptism) 'not quite

fifteen, and in wit surpassed many grave and learned men. I confess unto Thee Thy gifts, O Lord my God, Creator of all, and abundantly able to reform our deformities; for I had no part in that boy, but the sin. For that we brought him up in Thy discipline, it was Thou, none else, had inspired us with it. I confess unto Thee Thy gifts. There is a book of ours entitled *The Master*; it is a dialogue between him and me. Thou knowest that all there ascribed to the person conversing with me were his ideas, in his sixteenth year. Much besides, and yet more admirable, I found in him. That talent struck awe into me. And who but Thou could be the work-master of such wonders? Soon didst Thou take his life from the earth; and I now remember him without anxiety, fearing nothing for his childhood or youth, or his whole self.'

If we compare these tranquil utterances with the anguished cry of despair over the death of the friend of his boyhood, we can see what his discovery of God had meant for Augustine. It was not that he had grown apathetic or listless. He remained until the end of his life a man of very warm affections. But now, when those dear to him died they did not vanish into the abyss of Nothingness, or even into a land of forgetfulness. Writing many years later to a Christian lady, Sapida, who had sent for his use a garment made by her for her brother but not yet completed when he died untimely, he says, 'Not dead is the love with which Timotheus loved

C. 4. 4.

L. 263. 2.

and is now loving Sapida ; it abides safe in his treasure, and is hid with Christ in God. . . .

L. 263. 4. And if it is some little consolation to you that I am wearing the garment which you had woven for him, how much greater and more certain is the consolation that he for whom it was prepared, shall then have no need of a perishable clothing, being clothed upon with incorruption and immortality.'

Bereft of the four objects of his tenderest affection, his mother, his mistress, his son, and his friend, weakened in body (for he was never very well again) and straitened in means, Augustine devoted himself to study and prayer. He retired with a few friends to a country place near Thagaste, and there formed a kind of ashram, a community of religious men, as yet unorganized and bound by no vows, which was the germ and later the model of all the Augustinian system of monastic life. We can form an idea of its customs and rules by a long letter of advice which he wrote many years later at the request of the nuns of a certain convent, of which his sister had been the Superior. The main purpose of all the detailed regulations which he counsels is the avoidance of everything that hinders prayer, whether bodily hindrances such as sloth caused by self-indulgence, or fatigue caused by a too strict asceticism, or mental hindrances such as pride, bitterness, or curiosity. In his own ashram the life seems to have been very happy. Augustine needed nothing but solitude and leisure for happiness,

and these for a time were his portion. He bent his eager mind to the study of the Bible, the greater part of which was still unknown to him, and acquired so close a familiarity with every book in it that it is hard to believe that the language of it had not mingled with his childhood's speech. The Psalms moved him almost to rapture, but his most congenial study was the writings of St. Paul, for whom he conceived an ardent personal affection. Never perhaps has that chief of bhaktas had a student and exponent so like himself, in subtlety and profundity of intellect, in ardour of feeling, in completeness of devotion.

From this congenial life of prayer and intellectual delight, which lasted about three years, Augustine was harshly summoned away by the call of duty. Much as he might desire to be hidden in his country ashram, it was inevitable that a man of his personality and renown should be known by everyone in that region, and he was much consulted by people in spiritual distress. At the end of the year 390 Augustine was asked to go to Hippo, a town near the sea at some distance from Thagaste, to give help and counsel to one who was thinking of renouncing the world. He readily went to Hippo and while there was constrained by the Bishop Valerius to accept ordination. As he describes it, it was almost a deed of violence, and he was taken by surprise. But to everyone else the only marvel was that Valerius did not in the same act appoint him as co-Bishop. The

- tears of Augustine during the ceremony of ordination were supposed by some to be caused by chagrin on this score, and it must have been hard for him when tactful brethren offered him sympathetic consolation.' His real feelings are shown in a letter written a little later to the
- L. 21. Bishop, in which he begs for time. 'First of all, I beg you, my wise and religious father, to reflect that in this life, and especially in these days of ours, there is nothing more easy, more agreeable, and more conducive to popularity, than the work of a bishop, priest or deacon, as long as it is done in a casual and men-pleasing way, but in the sight of God nothing is more wretched, dire and damnable; again, that in this life and especially in these days of ours, there is nothing more difficult, toilsome and perilous than the work of a bishop, priest or deacon, but in the sight of God there is nothing more blessed, if the warfare is waged as our Commander directs. But how to do so I learnt neither in the time of my childhood nor in my youth; and at the very time when I was beginning to learn, violence has been done to me (it must be for my sins, for I can think of no other reason) so that I have to take the place next to the foremost at the rudder when I cannot even manage an oar.

'But I think that my Lord has chosen to punish me in this manner because I used to venture, as if I had superior skill or judgment, often to blame the mistakes of seamen before I knew by experience what their work is. As

soon as I was sent into their midst I began to realize the rashness of my criticisms, though indeed I always did think the ministry a most perilous thing. This is why I burst into tears at the time of my ordination, and several brethren who noticed this and did not know the cause of my distress, in all kindness tried to console me with comforting words which had nothing to do with my grief. But I do feel it deeply and much more than I expected—not that I have come into sight of any new billows and storms such as I had never known before by observation, report, reading or imagination, but that I had never estimated aright my skill and strength for avoiding or enduring them, and I had thought not a little of these. But the Lord has laughed at me, and it is His will by bringing me to the facts themselves to show me what I really am.

'But if, as I am sure, He has done this in pity and not in judgment, now that I know my malady, I must make a thorough search for all the remedies contained in His Scriptures, and devote prayer and study to gaining for my soul strength adequate to such perilous tasks. I have not done so as yet, because I have not had time. Just at the very time of my ordination I was planning to free all my time for the study of the divine Scriptures, and I was hoping to arrange matters so as to have undisturbed leisure for that work. And to tell the truth, I never realized before, as it now tortures and crushes me to realize, how very inadequate I am for such a task.'

So he begs for time, 'at least till Easter,' 'for prayers, for studies, for tears,' and then with a sigh stepped down into the arena. He dreaded the busy and public life that was opening before him, partly because he feared the revival of his besetting ambition, the love of praise and the desire to excel, and partly because his work would leave him little leisure for the practice of prayer and contemplation which had grown so dear to him. After four years he still more reluctantly accepted the office of a Bishop, and in A.D. 395 was consecrated as the colleague of the aged Valerius, whom he in due time succeeded. Beyond this he refused to go. Hippo was an obscure little African diocese, but although Augustine soon became the most prominent man in the Christian Church he steadily refused all invitations to more conspicuous offices. He remained one among a large number of very undistinguished African Bishops, sharing the routine work of administration, attending many uninteresting councils and committees, travelling from end to end of his rustic diocese, and regarding as his first and most pressing duty the guidance of his chiefly illiterate flock. He was assiduous in preaching to them, and many of his sermons have been preserved; doctrinal, as the utterance of so keen an intellect could not fail to be; short, for they were standing and he sitting; practical, for he well understood every feature of their lives. He always assumes that every Christian to whom he speaks is leading a conscious

religious life, and the most fundamental of all his thoughts is that God is dealing personally and separately with every human soul. He often makes a parable, and yet more often he finds parables in the merest details of the Bible stories. No number, no name passes unnoticed and without its lesson; he can draw allegories from every minutest nook and cranny of the Scriptures in a way rather fatiguing for us, but very delightful to his audience. It was the fashion of the time, which spent its energies on commenting rather than on originating, and grammarians dealt with the text of Homer or Virgil very much as Augustine deals with the Bible. He explains every discrepancy, and invents a good many; he spiritualizes and allegorizes until the plain meaning of a plain statement is almost obscured, but through all shines his deep reverence and passionate love of God, and his sympathy and care for every human being that he came across. Augustine's sympathy was inexhaustible, and though he could be very severe, he could never be indifferent.

A year or two after he was made Bishop of Hippo, Augustine wrote his Confessions, so that we lose at this point our best source of knowledge about the course of his life. We see him for the last time as pictured by himself, a very happy man with many sources of delight open to him, and all these sources derived from God. We see also the deep sorrows from which so ardent a spirit could never in this life be

exempt, the sense of sin in himself and others, the anguish of sympathy, the distress of shame at the manifold discords within the Church.

- C. 10. 23. 'When I shall with my whole self cleave to Thee, I shall nowhere have sorrow or labour; and my life shall wholly live, as wholly full of Thee. But now since whom Thou fillest, Thou liftest up, because I am not full of Thee, I am a burden to myself. Lamentable joys strive with joyous sorrows; and on which side is the victory, I know not. Woe is me! Lord, have pity on me. My evil sorrows strive with my good joys, and on which side is the victory I know not. Woe is me! Lord, have pity on me, Woe is me! Lo! I hide not my wounds. Thou art the Physician, I the sick, Thou merciful, I miserable.' But the balance clearly inclines to the side of happiness and hope.
- C. 10. 36. 'Thou knowest how far Thou hast already changed me . . . who didst curb my pride with Thy fear and didst tame my neck to Thy yoke. And now I bear it and it is light to me, because so hast Thou promised, and hast made it; and verily so it was, and I knew it not when I feared to take it.'

From his letters and from what is told by others about him, we learn a little about the personal life of Augustine during the long years of his episcopate. He lived alone with a few secretaries and assistants, and was simple in all his ways. His bitterest enemies, and his controversial writings earned him some very savage opponents, could bring no charge against the

obvious purity and self-control of his daily living. His health was never good, and he suffered much from the discomforts of travelling, but he moved about his diocese a great deal. Like many other great men he was often embarrassed by unsuitable gifts from admiring visitors, and as his resolution was to live as 'a poor man and the son of poor parents' he let it be known that he would accept no gift which he could not share with the poor. But we hear too, of the charm of Augustine's unlimited hospitality, limited, indeed, by only one restriction. He had learnt from his mother a hatred of gossip, and on his dining-table he had a couplet of verse carved, to which he sometimes found it necessary to draw the attention of his guests :

Sermon
365.

'Who loves another's name to stain

He must not dine with me again.'

Augustine was abstemious in his diet, and wine had at no time of his life any attraction for him, but he confesses that he had not reached the standard of St. Paul ('whom I have loved so much') in being content with his circumstances whatever they might be. 'Behold a soldier of the heavenly camp, not the dust which we are.' But his chief temptation was the love of praise, against which he struggled manfully all his life, 'but not without receiving many a wound from my spiritual foe, when I cannot refrain from taking pleasure in the praise which is offered to me.'

C. 10.31.

L. 22.

Not many have had so much reason to fear that temptation. Augustine's letters, of which some two or three hundred are still extant,

show the range and width of his influence and the great veneration in which he was held. His correspondence must have taken up a great deal of the time which he would have more gladly spent in prayer and contemplation, but it formed a very important part of his work, and spread his thoughts over the whole Latin world. He had all the worries which beset the bishop or moderator of our own time, the inaccurate clerk who draws up an imperfect list and puts dignitaries in the wrong order of precedence, the heartless friend who sends a questionnaire, just when the days are busiest, with the intimation that the bearer can wait only till tomorrow, the leisurely ladies who like to consult the Bishop on minor points in Biblical learning, the enthusiastic little girl who wants to be a nun before she is in her teens, the family who think that their ordained brother ought to be stationed near them, though as he speaks the vernacular his obvious sphere of work is the uneducated Latinless country folk, the people who write just to express admiration, yet expect an answer, and many other familiar types. But he had other difficulties which are so remote that we can hardly realize them—the occasional lack of paper, and the continual problem of the conveyance of his letters. As there was no postal system, every letter must be personally conveyed to its address, and Augustine's far-travelling correspondence often met with delays and dangers. For instance, a very important letter to Jerome about St. Peter's conduct at Antioch

was entrusted to a traveller setting out for the Holy Land, but the bearer changed his plans and went to Italy where he read the letter to admiring throngs, and even let them take copies of it. After two years Jerome in his cell at Bethlehem received the letter of which rumours had penetrated to him through irregular channels, and the irascible saint was not pleased to find that Augustine's refutations of some of his opinions had been freely discussed by hosts of people, 'most of the Christians in Rome and throughout Italy,' before they reached him. Such vicissitudes of course enhanced the value of such letters as did arrive intact, and if a special messenger had to be employed the writer would be likely to make his message long and weighty; in fact, many of Augustine's letters might rank as pamphlets. Much of his correspondence relates to business, and much to controversy, but for our purpose the most important letters are those in which he writes to men and women about their spiritual life, and in so doing reveals his own. There is a beautiful letter to a young man Licentius, a former student of his, who has written a long poem in honour of his master. Augustine is evidently longing to correct the verses, but he tactfully puts off the schoolmaster in order to urge him to make his surrender to God. 'Give yourself to my Lord, Who is Lord of all of us, Who gave you that mind of yours. What am I but your servant in Him, and your fellow-servant under Him You do not know with what a sad

and anxious heart I have written this letter ; have pity on me, if you have ceased to have a regard for yourself.'

- L. 85. Or he writes to Paulus, who had relapsed into extravagant and worldly living. 'Just because you are my son in the Gospel of Christ Jesus, I cannot withhold from you the healing bitterness of truthful rebuke.' Or he consoles Chrisimus, who is much downcast by the troubles into which his religion has brought
- L. 244. him. 'I feel very sorry for you and I think I must try to comfort you with a letter, though I doubt not that our Lord God is speaking to your heart with better consolations, for I know how earnestly you have always heeded His word. Lift up your heart, dearest brother in Christ. Our God has not perished nor will He suffer His own to perish. But He would teach us how frail and unreal are these things which men too dearly love, so that we may free ourselves from the entangling fetters of desire, and teach all our love to run to Him Whom we need never fear to lose.' Or he sends a letter of thirty pages to Dioscorus, about whom he is very anxious. This young man, being about to go to Italy and feeling a little nervous about the learned and polite society with which he will be required to mix, asked Augustine to write out for him a number of opinions on the 'De Oratore' of Cicero and kindred topics, so that he may introduce these into his conversation and not appear unlearned and ignorant. He did not receive from the Bishop what he asked, but

instead of it, an eloquent and indeed most moving treatise on the dangers of ostentation and the excellence of humility. Augustine perhaps remembered his own early ambitions, and the days when, as he confesses, he felt a more burning shame when he had dropped the aspirate in the word 'homo' than when he had slandered a fellow human being, and his whole heart rises up to deliver his young friend from like snares. He begs Dioscorus to state any reason why, if he is ignorant and unlearned, he should not appear so, shews him how unworthy of a Christian man is any insincerity or pretence, and urges upon him the glory and beauty of humility, which by this time Augustine had come to regard as the very foundation of all knowledge of God. 'To Christ, my Dioscorus, I would have you submit yourself in complete devotion, and seek to make for yourself no other path to the achievement and possession of truth, than the path made by Him who, as God, knew the weakness of our steps. And in that path the first step is humility, and the second, humility, and the third, humility for humility must go before and with and behind every good deed that we do.' But having said this he proceeds to give him very lucid expositions of the doctrines of certain Greek philosophers, apparently forgetting that Dioscorus might find them useful for conversational purposes.

Still longer is his beautiful letter to Paulina, a widow who had asked him about the Beatific L. 118.

L. 118.

L. 147.

Vision of God. It forms indeed a short book *De Videndo Deo* (On Seeing God). Some of his many controversial letters extend to a great length, and would be very wearisome if it were not for the intensity of feeling which still gives them vitality. Having himself wandered for so many years and wasted his youth in the mazes of the Manichæan and other heresies, he looks with horror on the leaders of erring thought, as dangers to the souls of his beloved flock. He became the chief 'doctor' of the Church and has influenced Christian thought more than any theologian except St. Paul, but like St. Paul, he wrote his treatises usually at the call of some urgent crisis. Great volumes of his controversial writings remain, and preserve the memory of heresies long extinct. But the root of so many heresies, a minimising and explaining away of the sinfulness of sin which leads to shallow conceptions of God and man, still bears fruit among us from generation to generation, and the world has often sorely needed an Augustine to urge the seriousness of life, the dignity of the human soul, and the holiness of God. Augustine may be charged with many faults, but from the vice of superficiality and shallowness he is entirely free.

His controversial writings do not concern us here, but his attitude to heretics is very interesting. Above all things he longed for their conversion, and he recognized fully and often reminded others that conversion caused by fear is valueless. But he also desired to

check their influence, and very unfortunately reckoned it among the duties of a good governor to restrain heretics. This teaching of his bore bitter fruit in later centuries, and the great name of Augustine was used to authorize the persecutions wrought by men of very different spirit, but in his letters he is constantly found urging greater leniency. He would permit no bodily terror or suffering to be inflicted on heretical leaders, but he advises the confiscation of their property. Poverty would greatly diminish their power to do evil, and also it was a condition more favourable than prosperity to spiritual improvement. To reduce your adversary to poverty in order to promote his spiritual welfare may seem to us an unwarrantable act of tyranny, and certainly it is a method liable to abuse, but if any man had a right to counsel it, it was Augustine. He had felt wealth to be an almost insuperable barrier between himself and God, he had given up all his own property and was living in great simplicity and self-denial. At least it was clear that the Bishop would reap no personal advantage from the confiscation of heretical wealth.

Augustine's great books of constructive theology were not written hastily like his controversial treatises, and in them we find his maturest thought. He wrote commentaries on several parts of the Bible, many philosophical treatises, and two great works *The Trinity* and *The City of God*. The former occupied his leisure for thirty years, and it remains one

of the masterpieces of Christian doctrine. A charming story was told about this book by the monks of the Middle Ages, who enjoyed talking about St. Austin, as they affectionately called him. Very likely it is only an expansion of some parable that he may have made about his long effort to comprehend what is above comprehension, but the story faithfully reflects his reverent spirit. This is how the monks told it: 'It was so that this glorious doctor made and compiled many volumes, among which he made a book of the Trinity, in which he studied and mused sore in his mind, so far forth that on a time as he went by the sea-side in Africa, studying on the Trinity, he found by the sea-side a little child which had made a little pit in the sand, and in his hand a little spoon. And with the spoon he took out water of the large sea and poured it into the pit. And when St. Austin beheld him he marvelled, and demanded him what he did. And he answered and said "I will lade out and bring all this water of the sea into this pit." "What!" said he, "it is impossible; how may it be done, since the sea is so great and large and thy pit and spoon so little?" "Yes, forsooth" said he, "I shall lightlier and sooner draw all the water of the sea and bring it into this pit than thou shalt bring the mystery of the Trinity' and His divinity into thy little understanding as to the regard thereof, for the mystery of the Trinity is greater and larger to the comparison of thy wit and brain than is this great sea unto this

little pit." And therewith the child vanished away.'

The last, and in some respects the greatest, book of St. Augustine is the *Civitas Dei*. The English word 'City' is a rather misleading interpretation, as the Latin word 'Civitas' has no local meaning, but is the abstract and collective term of the common noun 'Citizen'. It means both citizenship, and the whole body of citizens, and also the abstract idea of the commonwealth, in fact, everything about a nation except its local habitation. But as there is no adequate English term, we must use the familiar title.

Augustine was moved to write this book by a request made by his friend Marcellinus just about the time of the capture of Rome by the Goths, A.D. 410. Marcellinus had become acquainted with Volusian, the pro-consul of Africa, a man of many gifts and high character, but not a Christian, and had formed a strong friendship with him. Marcellinus set his heart on the conversion of his friend and begged Augustine to write to him. Augustine with his customary tact and courtesy opened a correspondence with Volusian who seems to have been glad to explain himself. The pro-consul mentioned to Augustine a few speculative doubts, but presently revealed to him that the real difficulty lay in the incompatibility of the position of a high Roman official with the Christian rule of life. To him Rome must come first, and loyalty to the Empire must out-

weigh every other loyalty. This led Augustine to ponder deeply on the subject of patriotism, and to conceive the idea of a celestial fatherland, one day to be the habitation of all its exiled citizens, but even now forming the centre of their lives and claiming their first allegiance. Just then came the terrible news of the fall of Rome and the horrors of the sack of that supreme city, followed by the outcry of those who were still pagans that this incredible disaster had come upon them as a punishment for deserting the ancient gods, under whom Rome had lived in safety and glory for eight hundred years.

Augustine set himself to refute this charge, and after that to turn the thoughts of men to their true fatherland, the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He pictures good and evil as two great nations, already at war when the human race first came into existence, and sweeping rapidly through universal history he shews how humanity threw in its lot with the evil city for the most part, yet there were always some in every land whose citizenship was in heaven, how the two cities have lived and grown side by side on this earth, alien and different from each other in every respect, how the King of the heavenly city came to earth and won the decisive victory over the 'Prince of this world,' how the city of God is moving on to its ultimate and certain victory, and the city of evil to its appropriate destiny, and how every human being must range

himself in one of these two camps. It is a magnificent achievement of faith, learning, eloquence and love, and all the more wonderful when we remember that through all the years while he was writing it every month brought news of the irresistible advance of the barbarian armies and the crushing defeats of the Christian forces. The enemy moved nearer and nearer, and after over-running the south of Europe, invaded Africa.

All through the book we have glimpses of the peace and joy of Augustine's inner life. His learned and subtle arguments are continually lit up by ardent phrases: 'the unspeakable sweetness of the vision of God'; 'there is no happiness apart from that good of which it is said "It is good for me to be very near to God"'; 'the enlightenment, the blessedness of the holy city which is above the holy angels. For if we inquire whence it is, God is its Creator; or whence its wisdom, God is its light, or whence its blessedness, God is its bliss. It has its form by subsisting in Him; its enlightenment by contemplating him; its joy by abiding in Him. It is; it sees; it loves. In the eternity of God is its life; in the truth of God its light; in the goodness of God its joy.' This is his description of Bhakti, and it hardly could be bettered. 'The soul itself becomes a sacrifice when it offers itself to God, that it may be enkindled by the fire of His love, and may receive of His beauty and become pleasing to Him, losing the shape of earthly desire,

C. G. 7.
31.

C. G. 10.
6.

C. G. 11
24.

C. G. 19
6.

and being refashioned in the image of lasting loveliness.'

Augustine wrote *The City of God* at intervals through thirteen stirring years, A.D. 413-426. Then feeling himself an old man, and in constant danger from the barbarian invaders, he set himself to read through all his books, and amend them. In 428 he published his *Retractions* in which he points out all the errors of his writings, and does what he can to set them right. It was a great work of humility and sincerity, and when that was done, he wrote little more except letters. In the same year he was begged to leave Hippo, as the invaders were drawing nearer and it was feared that the city would be besieged and captured. This he refused to do. Ministers, he said, should share

L. 228. 2. the lot of their people: 'Let them either escape death together, or else let them together suffer whatever the Father of the family shall ordain

L 228. 8. for them to suffer.' Let them remain 'prepared for either lot, so that if this cup may not pass from them His will may be done who cannot will anything that is evil.'

In the early summer of the year 430 the Vandals under Genseric laid siege to Hippo, and Augustine, true to his resolution, was within the city. But in the third month of the siege he fell ill, and it became clear that he had not many days to live. He asked those about him to write in large letters on the white walls of his chamber the seven Penitential Psalms,¹

¹ Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

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so that he might read them from his bed. Then having set his affairs in order, he bade-farewell to his friends, and asked that no one should enter his room again except his doctor and his servant, as he wished to set all his thoughts on God. After ten days, on 28th August, he died.

CHAPTER IV

The Bhakti of St. Augustine

C. 4. 14. *From one who loves is another kindled.*

Augustine has many qualities in common with other bhaktas in very different countries and ages—the mystical consciousness of God, intense love of Him, and self-forgetting devotion to Him, but with the same Spirit there are diversities of gifts, and Augustine was individual in his bhakti as in everything else. Let us take up for study a few of his characteristics as we see them in his devotion—his sense of God as the Seeker rather than the Sought, his great happiness, his practical activity, his stern morality, and the concentration of his worship on God in Christ.

(a) Augustine is best known to the world by C. 1. 1. one famous sentence, 'For Thou has made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rest in Thee.' This is written on the first page of the Confessions, and the saying is almost as current as a Bible verse, well known to thousands who have read no other line of his. It expresses with beautiful simplicity the longing of the human heart for God, but also it suggests another thought which was even more present to the mind of Augustine, the longing of God for human love. 'Thou hast made us for

Thyself.' Few have ventured to meditate as profoundly as he on the deep mystery of the Divine longing for men, a longing not only for their good or their welfare, but for a personal relation to each which shall be an intense satisfaction to both. Augustine frequently dwells on the thought that every human being is in himself the object of the love of God: 'O C. 3. 11. Thou Good Omnipotent, who so carest for every one of us, as if Thou carest for him only, and so for all, as if they were but one!' If a circle is infinite, the centre is everywhere, and this realisation of the Infinity of God keeps Augustine's meditation on His Love pure and reverent. Some who have dreamt of this Divine longing have expressed it in language which, however religiously meant, has seemed to introduce into it something of the abjectness and perturbation which are so often the weakness of our human desire, but Augustine's conception is always of a high and holy Love, pure not only from passion but from sentimentality, enfolding the beloved one with a tenderness beyond our conceiving, and yet not overwhelming or crushing out the little human personality.

But whereas most saints and mystics, especially those of Augustine's intellectual type, have conceived of the religious life as a toilsome pilgrimage towards God, a desperate search for an elusive Supreme Good, which only after long pain and heart-consuming weariness blesses the seeker with the vision of Itself, Augustine thought of God as the Seeker, and himself as the

- fugitive. Again and again this thought recurs :
- c. 11. 2. 'Thou didst seek us who sought not Thee';
- c. 13. 1. 'Nor didst Thou forget us who were forgetful
- c. 10. 4. of Thee'; 'Thou wert with me, before I was with Thee.' In fact, the whole story of his conversion can be told in words like these. He uses metaphor after metaphor to show how wholly and entirely his salvation was the act of God. He thinks of himself as a deserter :
- c. 8. 5. 'But I was still under service to this earth, refusing to fight under Thy banner';
or a derelict ship :
- c. 4. 14. 'And Thou wast at the helm, but very secretly';
or a bird in the snare :
- c. 6. 6. 'Let my soul cleave to Thee, now that Thou hast freed it from the fast-holding bird-lime of death';
or a stray sheep which has fallen by night over the precipice :
- c. 3. 11. 'And Thou didst send Thy hand from above and didst draw my soul out of that profound darkness';
or an unruly patient :
- c. 6. 4. 'Refusing to be cured, resisting Thy hands';
or a sleeper with difficulty awakened :
- c. 8. 5. 'Feeling a heavy lethargy in all his limbs, deferring to shake off sleep . . . Sleep pleased me and held me master, nor had I anything to answer Thee calling to me';
or a benighted traveller :
- c. 3. 11. 'Yet didst Thou suffer me to be yet involved and re-involved in that darkness.'

But his favourite similitude, which indeed runs through the whole book, is that of a run-away child or servant who proudly seeks his own course, not knowing that all the time he is being watched and guided by silent and sorrowful love:

'It is not by feet, or change of place, that men leave Thee or return to Thee . . . in lustful, that is, in darkened affections, is the true distance from Thy face.'

'And Thy faithful mercy hovered over me afar. . . . I wandered with a stiff neck, withdrawing further from Thee, loving my own ways and not Thine, loving a vagrant liberty.'

'And behold, Thou wert close on the steps of Thy fugitives, at once God of vengeance and Fountain of mercies, turning us to Thyself by wondrous means.'

'Not as men have forsaken their Creator, hast Thou forsaken Thy creation. Let them be turned and seek Thee, and behold, Thou art there in their heart.'

'I wavered and Thou didst guide me; I wandered through the broad ways of the world, and Thou didst not forsake me.'

'For Thy hands, O my God, in the secret purpose of Thy providence did not forsake my soul. . . . and Thou didst deal with me by wondrous ways.'

'To Ambrose was I unknowingly led by Thee, that by him I might knowingly be led to Thee.'

'Then Thou, O Lord, little by little with

most tender and merciful hand, touching and composing my heart, didst persuade me.'

Ten years after his baptism he utters this wonderful cry of regret over his wasted youth, which might have been so full of good:

c. 10. 27. 'Too late have I loved Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new, too late have I loved Thee. And behold Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee; deformed I, plunging amid those fair forms which Thou hadst made. Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee. Things held me far from Thee, which unless they were in Thee, were not at all. Thou didst call, and shout, and didst burst my deafness. Thou didst flash and shine and didst scatter my blindness. Thou didst breathe odours, and I drew in my breath and I panted for Thee. I tasted, and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me and I burned for Thy peace.'

Such expressions are very frequent in the Confessions, in fact, the whole fabric of the book is shot through and through with them, but we can find them here and there in all his works. His habitual attitude toward God was wonder at His seeking and desiring Love. 'Certainly to love God is the gift of God, for He who was not loved, loved us and granted us the gift of loving Him. Even while we were displeasing Him, we were loved by Him . . . It was God who created the devoted love with which we worship Him.'

*Commen-
tary on
St. John's
Gospel,
ch. 10. 23.*

Or, as he says at the very outset of his

autobiography, 'What am I to Thee that Thou c. 1. 5.
seekest my love?'

But with all this wondering and adoring sense of the personal guardianship and guidance of God in every step of his long wanderings, Augustine never fell into the vice which mars so much that is written by bhaktas and devotees, the vice of fancying himself a special favourite of God. Certain as he was of the love and tenderness of God toward himself he was equally certain that every other human being is no less the centre of the Divine love and care. His philosophic training and habit of mind saved him from 'the fallacy of the false infinite' and he realized more clearly than most men that God is wholly everywhere, that there is neither more nor less in a love which is infinite and timeless. There is nothing on which Augustine dwells more persistently in his sermons than on the infinitude of all the attributes of God, and this habit of lofty contemplation saved him from the familiarities and cheapnesses of feeling and expression into which so affectionate a nature might have been betrayed. To him God was always 'the Most High' as well as 'the Most Loving.'

Moreover, though he waged through all the long years of his Christian life a determined but not always quite successful warfare against pride of intellect, from spiritual pride Augustine seems to have been wholly free. He had bitter memories of his early years, and he had daily experiences which left no room for spiritual

complacency. His remorseless self-analysis drew into the light all those 'inward and sinful cogitations' which most of us shrink from acknowledging, and though he faced them with courage, the sight brought its daily humiliation. He does not indeed, like some ill-balanced saints, find a perverse pleasure in tracking every feeling and impulse to a sinful source, and he is ready to recognize improvement in himself, but as his spiritual vision became stronger and clearer with years of self-controlled living, he sees himself so far below the beauty and purity to which he aspires that after all his

c. 10. 35. striving 'my one hope is Thy wonderful great mercy.' Ten years after his conversion he

c. 1. 5. prays 'Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous, repair Thou it. It has that within which must offend Thine eyes; I confess and know it. But who shall cleanse it? Or to whom should I cry save Thee? Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults, and spare Thy servant from the power of the enemy. I believe and therefore do I speak. Lord, Thou knowest, have I not confessed against myself my transgressions unto Thee, and Thou, my God, hast forgiven the iniquity of my heart? I contend not in judgment with Thee, who art the Truth; I fear to deceive myself, lest mine iniquity lie unto itself.' God is still to Augustine the Love which goes after that which is lost, and when, thirty years later, he lay dying at Hippo, saint, scholar and doctor as all men confessed

him, of all the Psalms that were so dear to him, he loved best the seven which speak most of forgiveness and redemption.

(b) Yet the bhakti of Augustine was full of joy, and this is what makes his works, especially his more intimate writings, the Confessions, his letters and his sermons, so attractive. Few great souls achieve joy, but those who do achieve it seem all to have something of the bhakta about them, and win our wistful admiration by their disregard of the minor joys which we cannot bear to lose. Augustine's life falls into two distinct parts, the first in which he had everything that life can offer—love, friendship, youth, success, wealth, fame, health, and intellectual enjoyments of many kinds, and yet he was profoundly unhappy; and the second, when he had lost some of these things and renounced others, when the cloudy and dark day was closing over the Church which he loved better than life, and yet he was a very happy man. The dividing line is clearly drawn at his conversion. 'All men know', he says in a late letter, 'that I went to Italy one man, and returned another.' Before that day of decision at Milan his eager soul had sought satisfaction for every craving, and had found disappointment waiting at the end of every path: 'I wandered c. 2. 2. further and further from Thee, into more and more fruitless seedlots of sorrows, with a proud dejectedness, and a restless weariness.' But when, under the spell of the name of Christ, he made his irrevocable choice, 'Thou didst draw

c. 1. 15. me out of all my most evil ways, to become to me a delight above all the allurements which I once pursued.' It is beautiful to see how not the heart only, but the mind and soul of Augustine found unspeakable satisfaction in God, and how every power of his found at last its congenial work.

- We remember how ardently Augustine sought,
- c. 3. 6. even from his boyhood, for truth. 'O Truth, Truth, how inwardly did even then my soul pant after Thee, when they often and diversely, and in many huge books, echoed of Thee to me, though it was but an echo. . . . I hungered and thirsted not after even those first works of Thine, but after Thee Thyself, the Truth, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' So he writes of himself in his student days, but in the last book of his autobiography
- c. 10. 24. he can speak as one who has found: 'Where I found Truth, there found I my God, the Truth itself; which since I have learnt, I have not forgotten. Since then I learnt Thee, Thou dwellest in my memory, and there do I find Thee, when I call Thee to remembrance, and delight in Thee. These be my holy delights, which Thou hast given me in Thy mercy, having
- c. 10. 25. regard to my poverty.' 'Thou art the Lord
- c. 7. 17. God of the mind,' he says, or again, 'the unchangeable and true Eternity of Truth above my changeable mind.' Or he speaks again and
- c. 10. 23. again of the joy of it: 'A happy life is loved, which is nothing else but joying in the truth, . . . Happy then will it be when, no distraction

interposing, it shall joy in that only Truth, by Whom all things are true.'

It was not abstract truth only that Augustine longed to grasp, but the truth of every-day matters, and a right judgement in our ordinary perplexities. This also he found from day to day. 'Everywhere, O Truth, dost Thou give audience to ail who ask counsel of Thee, and at once answerest all, though on manifold matters they ask Thy counsel. Clearly dost Thou answer, though all do not clearly hear. All consult Thee on what they will, though they hear not always what they will. He is Thy best servant who looks not so much to hear that from Thee which himself willeth, as rather to will that which from Thee he heareth.' So also in his later works we see his worship of Truth in the fairness and candour with which he states the views of his opponents, and in his distress when, for instance, in his famous controversy with St. Jerome, he felt that in order to maintain the glory of St. Peter the truth about his actions at Antioch was being veiled. In his letters, too, we see the great care which he took to say neither more nor less than the truth about every matter with which he is dealing. Loving truth then so earnestly, he followed it also in his bhakti, and some of his most ardent utterances are addressed to God as The Truth. c. 10. 23.

It was even so with his love of beauty. It was out of his 'inmost heart', as he says, that he wrote his first book on no other subject than c. 4. 13.

the nature of Beauty, and all through his life he was a close observer and ardent lover of everything that is beautiful. Some of the darkest pages in his theological books, in which he ponders the doubtful doom of human kind, are lighted up with flashes of the keenest enjoyment

C.G. 22. of 'the manifold and various loveliness of sky
24. and earth and sea' which he counts over in loving detail in many passages. Yet he found no lasting satisfaction in them until he could

C. 3. 6. relate them to God: 'My Father, supremely
C. 4. 10. good, Beauty of all things beautiful.' 'For whithersoever the soul of man turns itself, unless towards Thee, it is riveted upon sorrows, yea, though it is riveted on things beautiful. And yet they, out of Thee, and out of the soul, were not, unless they were from Thee; they rise, and set; and by rising they begin as it were to be; they grow, that they may be perfected, and perfected, they wax old and wither. So then when they rise and tend to be, the more quickly they grow that they may be, so much the more they haste not to be. This is the law of them. . . . For they go whither they were to go, that they might not be; and they rend the soul with pestilent longings, because she loves to be, yet loves to repose in what she loves. But in these things is no place of repose; they abide not, they flee; and who can follow them with the senses of the flesh? Yea, who can grasp them, when they are close by?'

Closely interwoven with this love of beauty was the love of love and the love of happiness

which had formerly been the torment, and now became the rapture of the soul of Augustine. 'There is a joy,' he says, 'which is not given c. 10. 22. to those who know not God, but to those who love Thee for Thine own sake, whose joy Thou Thyself art. And this is the happy life, to rejoice to Thee, of Thee, for Thee; this it is, and there is no other. For they who think there is another, pursue some other and not the true joy.'

All Augustine's writings are coloured by this joy, but it comes to fullest expression in the Confessions, of which the true subject is not the wanderings of Augustine but the Love of God. 'For love of Thy Love I do it,' he says, c. 2. 1. when asking himself why he writes all these long narrations of his life. 'I enter,' he says c. 12. 1. in another place, 'into my chamber, and sing love-songs to my God,' and there can be no more beautiful utterances of the joy of the true bhakta than the many outbursts of his wonder, love and praise. They are too numerous to transcribe, but we can listen to one or two of them.

'Not with doubting, but with assured con- c. 10. 6. sciousness, do I love Thee, Lord. Thou hast stricken my heart with Thy word, and I have loved Thee. Yea, also, heaven and earth, and all that therein is, behold, on every side they bid me love Thee; nor cease to say so unto all, that they may be without excuse. But more deeply wilt Thou have mercy on whom Thou wilt have mercy, and wilt have compassion

on whom Thou hast had compassion; else in deaf ears do the heavens and the earth speak Thy praises. But what do I love, when I love Thee? Not beauty of bodies nor the fair harmony of time, nor the brightness of the light, so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. None of these do I love, when I love my God and yet I love a kind of light and melody and fragrance and meat and embracement when I love my God—the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement of my inner man; where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not. This is it which I love when I love my God.'

- C. 1. 4. 'What art Thou then, my God? What but the Lord God? For who is Lord but the Lord? Or who is God save our God? Most highest, most good, most potent, most omnipotent; most merciful, yet most just; most hidden, yet most present; most beautiful, yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; all-renewing, and bringing age upon the proud and they know it not; ever working, yet ever at rest, still gathering, yet nothing lacking; supporting, filling and overspreading;

creating, nourishing and maturing ; seeking, yet having all things. Thou lovest without passion ; art jealous, without anxiety ; repentest, yet grieveest not ; art angry, yet serene ; changest Thy works, Thy purpose unchanged ; receivest again what Thou findest, yet didst never lose ; never in need, yet rejoicing in gains ; never covetous, yet exacting usury. Thou receivest over and above, that Thou mayest owe ; and who hath aught that is not Thine ? Thou payest debts, owing nothing ; remittest debts, losing nothing. And what have I now said, my God, my life, my holy joy ? Or what saith any man when he speaks of Thee ? Yet woe to him that speaketh not, since mute are even the most eloquent.'

Or sometimes there are brief sentences or phrases, parenthetical sighs of joy : 'Thou c. 2. 1. sweetness never failing. Thou blissful and assured sweetness.'

'Thou light of my heart, Thou bread of my c. 1. 13. inmost soul.'

'Thou fairest of all, Creator of all, Thou c. 2. 6. good God ; God, the sovereign good and my true good.'

'Nothing is more tender than Thy charity, c. 2. 6. nor is anything more healthily loved than Thy truth, bright and beautiful above all.'

'Thou art the fulness and never-failing plente- c. 2. 6. ousness of incorruptible pleasures . . . the most over-flowing Giver of all good.'

'O God, the truth and fulness of assured c. 5. 12. good and most pure peace.'

L. 96. Or the charming benediction with which he sometimes concludes his letters: 'God make thee more and more happy in Christ, my son.' His great joy over his children in the faith, which is expressed again and again in his letters is mainly this, that he has been able to bring them to happiness.

C 4. 12. (c) Yet this joyous bhakti was by no means free from duty and discipline, nor could Augustine in his great happiness forget the many whom he loved who were without this happiness. 'In God,' he says, 'be they beloved; carry unto Him along with thee what souls thou canst, and say unto them. "Him let us love, Him let us love . . . see there He is, where truth is loved. He is within the very heart, yet hath the heart strayed from Him. Go back into your hearts, ye transgressors, and cleave fast to Him that made you. Stand with Him, and ye shall stand fast. Rest in Him, and ye shall be at rest . . . Descend, that ye may ascend, and ascend to God. For ye have fallen, by ascending against Him." Tell them this, that they may weep in the valley of tears, and so carry them up with Thee to God; because out of His Spirit thou speakest thus unto them, if thou speakest, burning with the fire of charity.'

C. G. 19. Such appeals we may read in many letters written by Augustine to personal friends and acquaintances, 'We truly love our neighbours as ourselves,' he says, 'if, as far as we can, we persuade them to love God as we do.' He

begins his correspondence with the noble Volusian, proconsul of Africa,—the correspondence which was the germ of his great treatise, *The City of God*—with the sincere assurance, ‘I do not think that even the prayers of your L. 132. saintly mother can long for your welfare more than I do.’ He urges Volusian to study the Bible, gently offering his own help to elucidate difficulties, and the long letter which resulted from this offer ends with a characteristic outburst of affection in his concluding benediction, ‘May the most compassionate Omnipotence of L. 137. God guard thee, my son, and give thee safety and make thee more happy.’

Or his heart goes out after Gaius, with whom he has had one short conversation, but that so intimate that it seemed to Augustine like the intercourse of two disembodied spirits. He sends his books for him to study, praying that whatever is mistaken in them may be attributed to himself and not to the religion which he is trying to commend, and that ‘the most com- L. 19. passionate providence of our God’ will bring him into the flock of Christ.

Augustine spent much time and thought and prayer on these non-Christian friends of his, but the main activity of his life was the care of his own flock at Hippo. ‘Thy servants, my C. 10 4 brethren, Thy sons, my masters, whom with voice and heart and pen I serve.’ He travelled continually over his diocese, intervening in the affairs of every little parish that desired his help, and bringing harmony from discord and

order out of confusion. It was not always a docile congregation that he had to deal with, and he had to endure many rude and violent interruptions from heretics, with whom he was naturally not popular, but he seems to have kept an imperturbable serenity of manner. Sometimes by sheer gentleness he calmed an angry mob, and his presence of mind seems never to have deserted him. Of his own actions we hear chiefly in the earlier days of his ministry when he had to report to a superior what he had done, but we can gather a great deal also from his later letters, and from a few letters still extant which were written to him, and see how he met the problems of the flock which, as Bishop, he was set to guide. Turbulent young men, who at a word of rebuke go over with much ostentation to the heretics, ignorant peasants who dare not wholly give up superstitious practices, shallow Christians who follow the iures of worldliness, friends who have quarrelled, converts who have been disinherited, orphan girls entrusted to his guardianship, defenders of the faith whose zeal impels them to violence and crime, tender consciences deeply troubled by scruples, all these and many others come and go in his voluminous correspondence, revealing a world which is now and then startlingly like our own. Augustine takes all these matters very seriously. No problem is too small for him to ponder. He writes 'although in the midst of most tightly-binding business' a letter of thirty-two paragraphs to Casulanus, a colleague in the

ministry, on the right and wrong days for fasting, and that though his own common sense made him follow the rule of Ambrose 'whatever Church you come to, conform to its custom, only do not quarrel about it.' Even when a too scrupulous friend, Publicola, puts before him eighteen cases of conscience such as whether a Christian may use a rickshaw which has just set down a pagan coming from a temple festival, 'and the Christian knows it,' L. 47. Augustine answers at length with seriousness and gentleness. 'The troubles of your mind became my own when I learnt them from your letter, not because all these perplexities distress me as they clearly distress you, but because I am very anxious to find how to relieve you of your great anxiety.'

In addition to these duties of personal guidance, and the routine work of his office, which Augustine most punctiliously fulfilled, and many secular matters in which his people availed themselves freely of his legal knowledge and well-known sagacity, there came upon him by degrees the responsibility of the office of teacher to the whole Christian Church. Much as, for his own spiritual welfare, he desired obscurity, he could not be hid. Augustine had been a man of mark in Africa and Italy before his conversion, and it was not possible that so great a mind should influence only a small diocese. Letters and visitors came to him from all parts of the Christian world, revealing needs and dangers which no other than he could meet.

Almost all his books owed their origin to some claim of this kind, and on the writing of his books and the reading of the long treatises written by others on the same subjects he devoted most arduous toil. There is nothing slipshod or superficial in any of his many very long books, rather do they err on the side of over-elaboration and excessive fulness. The actual work of writing them must have been immense for a very busy man who was never very well. This stress of work necessarily lessened the time which he longed to spend in prayer and contemplation, and sometimes he was greatly troubled and called upon his friends for the help of their intercession. 'I beg and beseech you' he writes to the monks of a lonely island 'by the most lofty humility of Christ and by His most compassionate majesty to remember me in your sacred prayers; for you, I think, can pray with greater watchfulness and self-control than I, who am often wounded and weakened in my prayers by the mist and din of secular business.' Yet in the same letter he admonishes any of the brothers who may be summoned by the Church to some active ministry to obey, allowing neither personal vanity to cause them to accept it with too great elation, nor indolence to cause them to refuse it, avoiding, as he graphically says, 'the peak of pride and the whirlpool of sloth.' The safe course is that of the man who in the midst of action can practise contemplation, who walks in the straight way, with 'his eyes ever upon the Lord.' 'Action does not distract such a one,

nor does leisure damp his ardour; he does not chafe and he is not languid; he is not reckless, he is not despondent. These things do and the God of peace shall be with you.'

The bhakti of Augustine, indeed, full of emotion and mystic experience as it was, found its true expression also in action and service. Love and adoration sought a channel in deed as well as in worship, nor could any part of his nature be passed over in his self-dedication. His first public announcement of his conversion was the notice to his students that he had now chosen to serve God, and such service seemed to him an essential condition of life in God. 'These are Thy servants, my brethren, whom C. 10. 4. Thou wilt to be Thy sons; my masters, whom Thou commandest me to serve, if I would live with Thee, of Thee.' It was a willing service, not only because obedience to God was in itself a joy, but because Augustine was a ready lover of mankind, and full of spontaneous sympathy. Nor did he find any part of common life void of sacredness. Speaking in his commentary on the Psalms of 'God's praise all the day long' he thus explains it to the simple folk who formed his audience: 'Who has strength to praise God Ps. 35. 28. all the day long? I will tell thee, if thou wilt, how thou canst praise God all the day long. Do well whatever thou doest, and then thou hast praised God. It is by right doing that thou canst be ready to praise God all the day long.' Thus by loving reference to God in every detail

of his crowded life Augustine offered his bhakti day by day.

(d) It was perhaps this close and loving contact with humanity and its sins and sorrows that kept the moral sense of Augustine so keen and fresh. Some bhaktas who live secluded lives in surroundings where there is no glaring evidence of conspicuous iniquity, and who absorb themselves in the contemplation of Infinite Being, are apt to grow indifferent to moral issues, and scarcely trouble themselves to notice sin either in themselves or in others. But to Augustine sin was an ever present fact and, next to God, the most important fact in his life. All around him and every day there were acts and facts of sin to which he was most keenly alive, and in his own inner experience a deep consciousness of sinfulness was throughout his life almost as strong a reality as the love and pardon of God. This consciousness was not in Augustine, as in so many Christian saints, the fruit of the influence of the Bible. The fundamental characteristic of the theology of the Bible is the emphasis laid on Holiness, rather than Power or Wisdom, as the most essential attribute of Deity. We cannot conceive of any of the writers of the Bible recording such stories of the Divine as we find, for instance, in Homer; nor would the Platonic doctrine, 'if not good, not a god,' have interested the Jew, to whom it was the veriest truism. But Augustine knew little of the Bible until close upon his conversion, and it was probably to his

mother that he owed that ardent desire for goodness which never suffered him to find lasting pleasure in evil. He was often disloyal to his love of goodness, yet it was one of the deepest things in him. His outward transgressions were but few, and even in his worst days, as he says, 'amid much smoke I sent out some sparks of faithfulness,' yet the bitter remorse and shame with which he records his student days are not without justification. For Augustine was one of the clearest and sincerest of souls, and when he sinned against the light he knew exactly what he was doing. When he prayed for chastity, 'Only not yet, O Lord' he was deliberately choosing evil rather than good. He seldom tried to deceive himself and he never tried to deceive God. He never pretended that evil was good; if he sinned it was with open eyes. And thus he never stifled within himself that sense of sinfulness which is one of the conditions of beholding the Holiness of God. C 4. 2

Augustine accuses himself chiefly of two great sins, impurity and pride. The former was slain at a blow at the time of his great renunciation, but the latter far more subtle temptation troubled him all his life. It is touching to see how earnestly he contended against 'the fascination which I cannot thrust aside of the praise which is offered me.' He tried even to escape the 'dangerous honour' of the episcopate, and preaching was always a temptation. At the end of his life when L. 22. L. 23

he was famous throughout the world, he published his *Retractions* in order to draw attention to all the errors in his writings. Ten
C. 10. 36. years after his conversion he writes : ' But, O Lord, Thou alone Lord without pride, because Thou art the only true Lord, who hast no lord; hath this temptation ceased from me, or can it cease through this whole life? To wish, namely, to be feared and loved of men, for no other end but that we may have a joy therein which is no joy? A miserable life this and a foul boastfulness! Hence especially it comes that men do neither purely love nor fear Thee. And therefore dost Thou resist the proud and givest grace to the humble; yea, Thou thunderest down upon the ambitions of the world, and the foundations of the mountains tremble. Because now certain offices of human society make it necessary to be loved and feared of men, the adversary of our true blessedness layeth hard at us, everywhere spreading his snares of 'well-done, well done'; that greedily catching at them we may be taken unawares, and sever our joy from Thy truth, and set it in the deceivingness of men, and be pleased at being loved and feared.'

Love of praise was not the only temptation that assailed the inner fortress of Augustine's soul. In a chapter of one of the latest books of the *City of God* written in his old age when grosser temptations had long ceased to affect him, he writes what must surely be a revelation

of his own spiritual conflicts; 'We cannot do the things we would and extirpate all evil desire, but can only refuse consent to it, as God gives us ability, and so keep it under, vigilantly keeping watch lest a semblance of truth deceive us, lest a subtle discourse blind us, lest error involve us in darkness, lest we should take good for evil, or evil for good, lest fear should hinder us from doing what we ought, or desire precipitate us into doing what we ought not, lest the sun go down upon our wrath, lest hatred provoke us to render evil for evil, lest unseemly or immoderate grief consume us, lest an ungrateful disposition make us slow to recognize benefits received, lest calumnies fret our conscience, lest rash suspicion on our part deceive us concerning a friend, or false suspicion of us on the part of others give us too much uneasiness, lest sin reign in our mortal body to obey its desires, lest our members be used as the instruments of unrighteousness, lest the eye follow lust, lest thirst for revenge carry us away, lest sight or thought dwell too long on some evil thing that gives us pleasure, lest wicked or indecent language be willingly listened to, lest we do what is pleasant but unlawful, and lest in this warfare, filled so abundantly with toil and peril, we either hope to secure victory by our own strength, or attribute it when secured to our own strength, and not to His grace of whom the Apostle says, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ "' and in another place he

C.G.22.23.
(Dr. Marcus Dods' translation)

says, "And in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." But yet we are to know this, that however valiantly we resist our vices, and however successful we are in overcoming them, yet as long as we are in this body we have always reason to say to God: "Forgive us our debts.'" Few of these conflicts would trouble a man of average goodness, because defeat in them would be so ordinary an occurrence that he would hardly notice it, but to Augustine it was a misery to come short in any respect of the stringent demands of the Christian ideal. The more he pondered on the infinite Love of God, the more heinous appeared even the hidden sins of thought, which never came to fulfilment in action, because they revealed a dissonance in his own spirit which set him out of harmony with that Love.

From the same point of view Augustine, though he was far from being censorious in his judgement of individuals, saw so much evil in the ordinary life and ways of humanity that it seemed to him soaked through and through with sin. His habit of searching analysis rendered him quick to see deep into hidden motives, and to track out the selfishness which mars the actions even of the best of us. On his terrific insight into evil, and his heart-rending sorrow over sin is based his stern and yet most merciful theology. For God was to him One who would by no means clear the guilty, or insult our human nature by a heartless indifference as to

whether we are good or bad, but One to whom our sanctification is of infinite importance. Augustine has been much blamed for his doctrine of sin, and it is often said that he shed gloom over the Christian view of life, yet it may be questioned whether our easy exoneration of sin does not arise from views of human nature too shallow and superficial to be possible to a man of the heart and head of Augustine, and whether our thoughts of God also are as deep and reverent as his. It was part of the bhakti of Augustine that he should worship the All-Holy with tears of penitence and hourly self-discipline as well as with raptures of adoring love.

(c) But what Augustine himself would have us remember about the joyous yet exacting path of his bhakti is that it was offered not to abstract Deity, but to 'the God of my heart'—C. 9. 13. to God in Christ. All the second part of his life was an ardent devotion to Jesus Christ in whom every part of his nature found its enduring satisfaction. His great and subtle intellect revelled in the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Son of God, finding in its contemplation ever new depths of reasoned truth and ever new heights of metaphysical sublimity, relating this tremendous Event with time and eternity, with the whole system of the Universe, and with the whole history of the human race, delighting in the paradoxes and marvels of the nature of 'the God-man, as God our goal, as C.G. 11.2 man our way' yet always rejoicing most in the

c. 4.12. human comfort and tenderness of it. 'Ye seek a blessed life in the land of death; it is not there. For how should there be a blessed life where life itself is not. But our true Life came down hither, and bore our death, and slew it, out of the abundance of His own life; and He thundered, calling aloud to us to return hence to Him into the secret place. For He came forth, first into the Virgin's womb, wherein He espoused the human creation, our mortal flesh, that it might not be for ever mortal, and thence like a bridegroom He came out of His chamber, rejoicing as a giant to run his course. For He lingered not, but made haste, calling aloud by His words, deeds, death, life, descent, ascension; crying aloud to us to return to Him. And he departed from our eyes, that we might return into our heart, and there find Him. For He departed, and lo, He is here. He would not be long with us, yet left us not, for He departed thither, whence He never parted, because the world was made by Him. And in this world He was, and into this world He came to save sinners; unto Him my soul confesseth, and He healeth it, for it hath sinned against Him. O ye sons of men, how long so slow of heart?'

This aspect of his faith and love comes out of course most strongly in his commentary on St. John's Gospel, originally a series of addresses to his unlearned congregation at Hippo, but in all his works, however technical and philosophical they may be, the reference to the Divine is always to God in Christ. The

first books written after his conversion bore the impress of that holy name, and the last are full of it. We remember how Alypius 'would not at first submit to have the name of Thy only-begotten, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, inserted in my writings,' well knowing that to avow himself one with the Church which it was a mark of culture to despise would bring upon his friend the ridicule of the learned world; but Augustine could not disown, even by silence, the truth of his experience, and though he felt the ridicule, he yielded in no way to it. For it was that very name which in the crisis of his life had proved his salvation. The memory of that name, rendered dear to him by his mother's teaching, had once and again recalled his soul from mortal danger; had revealed, like the spear of Ithuriel, the evil lurking under many a fair form of deception; and finally had inspired his great renunciation. In that momentous struggle in the garden at Milan when his dearest sins clung to him with the tender appeal that he would but look back on them:—'Dost thou indeed cast us off? and from this moment shall we be no more with thee for ever? thinkest thou, thou canst live without us?'—when resolution and reluctance seemed almost to rend his life asunder, and he found no strength for such pain, then it was the name of Christ, sent to him, as he felt, from Heaven itself, that decided the battle. 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' At once his bitter loss became a glorious gain. Life was not to be a barren

C. 9. 4.

C. 8. 11

C. 8. 12.

renunciation but a loving bhakti. 'No further would I read; nor needed I.'

- Thus and thus only was the victory won. Augustine had sought salvation in other ways, and had gone far in spiritual experience of other kinds. Yet even after he knew the mystical illumination of the contemplative, and had attained to a firm faith in God as the Supreme, the Infinite, the Eternal, he had found himself wholly without strength to resist the
- c. 7. 17. temptations of the flesh: 'Yet did I not press on to enjoy my God, but was borne up to Thee by Thy beauty, and soon borne down from Thee by mine own weight, sinking with sorrow into these inferior things. That weight was
- c. 7. 17. carnal custom I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed upon. Then I sought a way of obtaining strength sufficient to enjoy Thee, but found it not, until I embraced that Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who is over all, God blessed for evermore, calling unto me and saying, "I am the way, the truth and the life," and mingling that food, which I was unable to receive, with our flesh. For the Word was made flesh, that Thy wisdom, whereby Thou createdst all things, might provide milk for our infant state. For I did not hold to my Lord Jesus Christ, I, humbled, to the Humble; nor knew I yet whereto His infirmity would guide us. For Thy Word, the Eternal

Truth, far above the higher parts of Thy Creation, raiseth up the subdued unto Itself; but in this lower world built for Itself a lowly habitation of our clay, whereby to abase from themselves such as would be subdued, and bring them over to Himself; allaying their pride and fostering their love, to the end that they might go on no further in self-confidence.' Yet now as the bhakta of Christ Augustine was strong to overcome what had for so many years seemed irresistible temptation, and, as ever new heights of purity and love opened before his view, to press on towards them with many a slip and failure, but never in dismay or despair. And looking back in this new light on all his past experience and knowledge, he came to see more and more clearly that the key to all the mysteries of our life and death is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Redemption wrought by Him.

We will leave St. Augustine where he places himself at the end of the story of his conversion, 'rejoicing with trembling in that which Thou hast given me, and bemoaning that wherein I am still imperfect; hoping that Thou wilt perfect Thy mercies in me, even to perfect peace.' c. 10. 30

'How hast Thou loved us, good Father, who sparedst not Thine only Son, but deliveredst Him up for us ungodly. How hast Thou loved us for whom He that thought it no robbery to be equal with Thee, was made subject even to the death of the cross, He alone, having power to lay down His Life and power to take it c. 10. 43

again; for us to Thee both Victor and Victim, and therefore Victor, because the Victim; for us to Thee Priest and Sacrifice, and therefore Priest because the Sacrifice; making us to Thee, of servants, sons, by being born of Thee, and serving us. Well then is my hope strong in Him, that Thou wilt heal all my infirmities, by Him Who sitteth at Thy right hand and maketh intercession for us; else should I despair. For many and great are my infirmities, many are they and great; but Thy medicine is mightier. We might imagine that Thy Word was far from any union with man, unless He had been made flesh and dwelt among us.

'Affrighted with my sins and the burden of my misery, I had cast in my heart and purposed to flee to the wilderness; but Thou forbadest me, and strengthendst me, saying, "Therefore Christ died for all, that they which live may now no longer live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them." See, Lord, I cast my care upon Thee, that I may live, and consider wondrous things out of Thy law. Thou knowest my unskilfulness and my infirmities; teach me and heal me. He, Thine only Son, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hath redeemed me with His blood. Let not the proud speak evil of me, because I meditate on my Ransom, and eat and drink, and communicate it; and, poor, desire to be satisfied from Him, amongst those that eat and are satisfied, and they who seek Him shall praise the Lord.'