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## AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY.

Augustine marks almost as great an epoch in the history of philosophy as in the history of theology. It was with him that the immediate assurance of consciousness first took its place as the source and warrant of truth. No doubt there had been a long preparation for the revolution which was wrought by his announcement of the principle of "self-assured subjectivity", as Windelband calls it, and his establishment of it in "the controlling central position of philosophic thought". But the whole preceding development will not account for the act of genius by which he actually shifted the basis of philosophy, and in so doing became "the true teacher of the middle ages", no doubt, but above and beyond that "one of the founders of modern thought".<sup>1</sup> He may himself be said to have come out of Plato, or Plotinus; but in even a truer sense out of him came Descartes and his successors.<sup>2</sup> When he urged men to cease seeking truth without them, and to turn within, since the home of truth

<sup>1</sup> Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, E. T., pp. 276, 264, 270.

<sup>2</sup> Leder, *Augustins Erkenntnistheorie*, p. 76: "If we must see in Plotinus the father of Augustine's Platonism, we may yet recognize it as an especially original service of the Church-Father, that he established over against all scepticism the first point of all certitude in self-consciousness. He found in Plotinus no guidance for this: rather by an act of genius he anticipated in it the line of thought which Descartes (1640) made in his *Meditationes* the starting point of his expositions."

is inside of man, he already placed them upon the firm footing which Descartes sought with his *cogito ergo sum*.<sup>3</sup>

If Augustine can be said to have had a philosophical master before he fell under the influence of the Neoplatonists, that master must be discerned in Cicero. And from Cicero he derived rather a burning zeal in the pursuit of truth than a definite body of philosophical tenets or even a philosophical point of view. It is a mistake to think of him as ever surrendering himself to the scepticism of the New Academy. He does indeed tell us that, in his disillusionment with Manichaeism and his increasing despair of attaining the truth, the notion sprang up within him that the so-called Academics might after all prove the best philosophers, contending as they did that everything hangs in doubt and truth cannot be comprehended by men.<sup>4</sup> It is not strange that at such moments his thoughts surged in great waves towards their teachings.<sup>5</sup> But he tells us also that he could not commit himself to them; not only because he was repelled by their heathenism,<sup>6</sup> but also because he was shocked by their scepticism.<sup>7</sup> His difficulty at the time lay, in fact, in another quarter. He found no obstacle in the attainment of certitude: but nothing but apodeictic certitude satisfied him. He entertained no doubt, for example, that seven and three

<sup>3</sup> *De vera religione*, 39: Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas.

<sup>4</sup> *Conf.* v. 10. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, viii. 20: Saepe mihi videbatur [verum] non posse inveniri, magnique fluctus cogitationum mearum in Academicorum suffragium ferebantur. He proceeds to say that so often as he was thus tempted, he reacted on considering the vivacity, sagacity, perspicacity of the human mind; he could not believe this mind so much incapable of truth as ignorant as yet of the right way of going about its discovery: thus he was led to meditate on the problem of authority. *De beata vita*, I. 4: at ubi discussos eos [Manichaeos] evasi maximo trajecto isto mari diu gubernacula mea repugnantia omnibus ventis in mediis fluctibus Academici tenuerunt.

<sup>6</sup> *Conf.* v. 14. 20: "I utterly refused to commit the healing of my soul to these philosophers, because they knew not the saving name of Christ."

<sup>7</sup> *Conf.* vi. 4. 6: "I was not so insane as to fancy that not even this"—mathematical truth—"could be comprehended."

make ten; what he demanded was the same kind and degree of certainty he had here, for everything else. In other words, he would not commit himself to any truth for which he did not have ready at hand complete demonstration.

Augustine's point of departure was therefore the precise contradictory of that of the Academics. They asserted that we can never get beyond suspense because we lack all criterion of truth. The best we can do is to say that this or that looks like truth; that it is *verisimile* or *probabile*: we can never affirm that it is truth, *verum*; though, of course, we can as little affirm that it is not truth. Lacking all *signum* we are left in utter and hopeless uncertainty. Augustine, on the contrary, in the apodeictic certainty of, say, mathematical formulas, was in possession of a sure criterion on the basis of which he could confidently assert truth. His difficulty was that he wished to apply this *signum* mechanically to every sphere of truth alike, and could content himself with no other kind of certitude. He was tempted to declare that nothing resting on less cogent grounds is known, or can be known, at all. What he needed yet was to learn that so far from the possession of apodeictic certitude for some things throwing into the shadow of doubt all for which it cannot be adduced, it provides a basis for valid assurance with respect to them too. On the basis of this *signum* we may obtain in every sphere at least the *verisimile*, the *probabile*—a sufficient approach to truth to serve all practical purposes; or rather truth itself though not truth in its purity, free from all admixture of error. In other words, in every department of investigation there is attainable real and clear, if somewhat roughly measured, knowledge. What we currently call a yard of muslin, for example, though shown by the application of a micrometer not to be an exact yard, is yet by the self-same test just as truly shown to be a yard for all the practical ends for which muslin is used. The possession of a criterion gives validity to the *verisimile*; for who can declare that anything is like the truth unless he has the truth itself in mind with which to compare it and by which to judge it?

It was by a line of reasoning something like this that Augustine overthrew the Academics when, in his retirement at Cassiciacum, in the interval between his conversion and his baptism, he undertook to lay the foundations of a positive Christian philosophy. It is absurd to talk of a *verisimile*, he urged, unless the standard, the *verum*, is in our possession. And not only is this standard, this *verum*, certainly in the possession of every man and instinctively employed by him; but no one can by any means rid himself of it. Do what we will, we cannot help knowing that the world is either one or not one;<sup>8</sup> that three times three are nine;<sup>9</sup> and the like; that is to say the principles which underlie, say for example, logic and mathematics. And in knowing these things, we know them not only to be true, but to be eternally and immutably true, quite independently of our thinking minds,—so that they would be equally true if no human minds had ever existed, and would remain true though the whole human race should perish.<sup>10</sup> With this indefectible certainty of necessary truth the mind unavoidably knows, therefore, the laws of the true, the beautiful and the good,<sup>11</sup> according to which, as its criterion, it judges all of the true, beautiful and good which is brought into observation in the experience of life. Nor can doubt be thrown upon these things by calling in question the reality of the very mind itself by which they are known, and therefore the validity of its convictions. Rather, the reality of the mind is given in the very act of knowledge: for what is not cannot act. Say even that this act is an act of doubt. If the mind did not exist, it could not even doubt.<sup>12</sup> The act of doubt itself becomes, thus, the credential of certitude. It is impossible even to doubt unless we are, and remember, and understand, and will, and think,

<sup>8</sup> *Cont. Acad.* iii. 10. 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Cont. Acad.* iii. 11. 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Cont. Acad.* iii. 11. 25: *neesse est, vel genere humano sterbente, sit verum.* Cf. *De lib. arbitr.* ii. 9. 21; *De Trinitate*, ix. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *De lib. arbitr.* ii. 8, 9, 10, 15, 16: *De Trinitate* ix. 6; viii. 3; xiv. 15.

<sup>12</sup> *De lib. arbitr.* ii. 3, 7.

and know, and judge: so that he that doubts must not and cannot doubt of these things, seeing that even if he doubts he does them.<sup>13</sup> Even he who says 'I do not know', thereby evinces not only that he exists and that he knows that he exists, but also that he knows what knowing is and that he knows that he knows it.<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to be ignorant that we are; and as this is certain, many other things are certain along with it, and the confident denial of this is only another way of demonstrating it.

What Augustine is doing in this reasoning, it will be observed, is withdrawing attention from the external world and focussing it upon the inner consciousness. There, there alone, he asserts, can truth be found. Those who seek it without, never attain to it;<sup>15</sup> it is in the inner man that it makes its home, and it can be discovered, therefore, only by those who look within.<sup>16</sup> His polemic is turned upon that Sensationalism in philosophy which had long reigned supreme in the schools, and the dominion of which he was the first to break. In this polemic, he considered himself to be building upon the New Academy, whose mordant criticism of knowledge he persuaded himself was only the negative side of a defence of an essential Platonism which they kept, in its positive side, meanwhile in reserve. In this judgment of fact he was certainly mistaken; the Academy had itself fallen into the prevalent Sensationalism and was itself, therefore, as truly as the Epicurean and Stoic schools of the time the object of his confutation.<sup>17</sup> But to the Sensationalistic maxim that 'there is nothing in the intellect which was not beforehand in the senses', by whomsoever taught and in whatsoever forms, he opposes the direct contradiction that truth is to be sought, in the first instance, in the intellect alone. As Robert Browning phrases it, "to

<sup>13</sup> *De Trinitate*, x. 10. 14.

<sup>14</sup> *De Trinitate*, x. 1. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *De vera religione*, 49: . . . veritas, ad quam nullo modo perveniunt qui foris eam quaerunt.

<sup>16</sup> *De vera religione*, 39: noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas. Cf. *Retract.* i. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Leder, *Augustins Erkenntnistheorie*, p. 35.



know rather consists in opening out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape, than in effecting entry for a light supposed to be without". In other words, Augustine came forward as a flaming Rationalist in the philosophical sense of that term; in the sense, that is, in which it describes those thinkers who hold that the "reason" is the fundamental source of knowledge; and, in opposition alike to Sensationalism and Empiricism which teach respectively that our knowledge is derived exclusively from sensation or experience (that is, sensation and reflection), contend rather that it is the "reason", acting under laws of its own, which supplies the forms of thought without which no knowledge can be obtained either by sensation or by experience.

Arnobius, his fellow African of a hundred years before, on the basis of the popular Stoicism was as flaming a Sensationalist as Augustine was a Rationalist, and it is interesting to contrast the strong expressions which the two give, each to his own point of view. Arnobius calls to the aid of his exposition the imaginary case of a man secluded from infancy to maturity in a dark cavern, guarded from every possible commerce with the external world. Such an one, he contends, would remain mentally empty; and, if confronted, not with some complicated problem, but with even the simple twice two are four, "would stand like a stock or the Marpesian rock, as the saying is, dumb and speechless", understanding nothing.<sup>18</sup> In staring contrast with Arnobius, Augustine sometimes speaks as if contact with the external world and the intrusion of sensible images into the mind were a positive hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge; and as if the mind would do its essential work better if it could do it free from what, in that case, would be conceived as the distractions of sense; as if, in a word, something like the condition in which Laura Bridgman or Helen Keller were found were the most favorable for the development of human intelligence. This exaggeration, however, is no part of his system; and its occasional sug-

<sup>18</sup> Arnobius, *Adv. Gent.* ii. 20 (American ed. of *Ante-Nicene Library*, VI. 442).

gestion serves only to throw into a high light the strength and seriousness of his Rationalism.

This Rationalism, however, it may be observed, is never pressed to the extreme of conceiving the reason as the creator of its own object. That is to say, it never passes into the Idealism which in more modern times has lain so frequently in its pathway. To Augustine the world of observation was far from being merely a "psychological phenomenon". Indeed, not only does he recognize the objectivity of the world of sense, but, with all the vigor of his contention that we must look within for truth, he insists equally on the objectivity of even the intelligible-world. Man no more creates the world of ideas he perceives within him, that the world of sense he perceives without him. In his assertion that the objects of sensible and intellectual perception alike have indubitable objectivity lies, indeed, one of the main features of Augustine's philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps we may best catch his general idea, in the distinction he made between the two modes of knowledge—sense perception and intellection—corresponding to the two worlds, sensible and intelligible—if we represent him as thinking of the human soul as existing in a double environment, with both of which it is connected by appropriate organs of perception. On the one hand, it is connected with the sensible world by the external senses; on the other hand, with the intelligible world by the *sensus intimus* which is the intellect.<sup>20</sup> Au-

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Nourrison, *La phil.*, Vol. II, p. 295: "To affirm the certitude of consciousness is, for him, to affirm in the same act the certitude of the external world. . . . It is well to take note of the sagacity with which he distinguishes the phenomenon from the being and thus exonerates the senses from the errors which are commonly attributed to them. Organs and witnesses of what passes, and not of what does not pass, of the phenomenal and not the real, they are not the judges of truth—*judicium veritatis non esse in sensibus*. It is the intellect that knows or the intellect that deceives itself. Its knowledge is certitude. No Scotchman of our day could express it better."

<sup>20</sup> *Cont. Acad.* iii. 17. 37: Platonem sensisse duos esse mundos, unum intelligibilem, in quo ipsa veritas habitaret, istum autem sensibilem, quem manifestum esse nos visu tactuque sentire. Itaque illum verum, hunc verisimilem.

gustine's notion is, essentially, that the soul, by these two modes of contact with its double environment, is enabled to read off the facts of each. His mode of statement commonly takes the form that as the sensible world impresses itself upon us through the external senses, so the intelligible world impresses itself upon us through the intellect: but we must not press the passivity of the soul to its several impressions which might seem to be implied in this mode of statement. If, now, these two worlds, the sensible and the intelligible, stood contradictorily over against each other, the soul of man lying between them and invaded by impressions from each, would be in parlous case. Such, however, is not Augustine's conception. The sensible world is not thought of by him as itself independent of the intelligible. It not only has its source in the intelligible world, but derives its whole support and direction from it; and reflects, after its own fashion, its content. It can not be perceived, therefore, save, so to speak, from the angle of the intelligible world; and in order that it may be understood, the soul must bring to its perception the principles derived from the intelligible world. In a word, the soul is caparisoned for the perception and understanding of the sensible world only by prior perception and understanding of the intelligible world. That is to say, the soul brings over from the intelligible world the forms of thought under which alone the sensible world can be received by it into a mental embrace.

This is, of course, a very developed form of Intuitionism. According to the Stoics—those Sensationalists *a outrance*—the human mind is in the first instance a *tabula rasa*, on which outer things impress themselves (*τύπωσις*). But even the Stoics could speak of truths of nature. In their most materialistic development they could find a place in their system for general ideas common to all men (*κοινὰ ἔννοια*, *communes notiones*), which they not only recognized as real, but valued as the best constituents of human knowledge. As men have practically the same environment, they explained, the sum of the impressions made by



surrounding nature upon each, is practically the same as the sum of the impressions made upon all. Hence peculiar confidence should be put in the ideas common to all men: they are the general teachings of nature, that nature life in conformity with which is the wise man's mark. "Natural ideas" are not foreign, then, to the Stoic system; but when the Stoics spoke of these ideas as "natural", they did not at all mean that they constitute a part of the nature with which man is endowed. Man was not supposed to bring them into life with him, but distinctly to acquire them in the process of living: they are impressed by nature on his soul. The transition is easy, however, from the conception of a body of ideas natural to man in this sense, to a conception of a body of ideas belonging to his nature as such, or, in other words, innate. Along with his reason, it is now said, every man possesses by nature, that is, by his constitution as man, a body of ideas: they belong to his nature as a rational being. In making this step we have definitely passed over from Sensationalism to Rationalism, and have so far approached Augustine's conception. But we have not yet reached it. The doctrine of innate ideas, strictly construed in that form, is Deistic. These ideas are ours because they have been from the beginning once for all impressed upon our nature by our Maker, who has made us thus and not otherwise,—namely so that by the action of our intellect we become aware of the principles thus made a part of our very structure. Augustine, however, was as little Deistic as Sensationalistic in his thinking, and necessarily advanced a step further to a truly Theistic Intuitionism. These ideas, he teaches, are natural to man in the sense that they inhere in his nature as such, and are not impressed on him by external nature; and they are innate in the sense that they belong to his nature from the beginning of his being. But he cannot conceive them merely as impressed on the mind, or rather built into its structure, once for all at its creation. He thinks rather of the soul as constantly dependent on God, who is no more its Creator than its Up-

holder and Director; and of its intrinsic ideas as, therefore, continuously impressed on it by God. Thus its light is God alone; and the soul, in intellection, bears the same constant relation to God the Illuminator as in ethical action it bears to God the Sanctifier. God, he is never weary of saying, in his own adaptation of a Platonic formula, is at once the Author of all being, the Light of all knowledge, and the Fountain of all good; the God of creation, of truth, of grace: or, otherwise put, the *causa subsistendi*, the *ratio intelligendi* and the *ordo vivendi*. His ontology of "innate ideas", accordingly, is that they are the immediate product in the soul of God the Illuminator, always present with the soul as its sole and indispensable Light, in which alone it perceives truth.

No doubt there is a Neoplatonic factor in this construction, and possibly also the modes of expression employed may betray a reminiscence of Stoic *τύπωσις* — with the source of the impression elevated, however, from nature to nature's God. But we must beware of pushing it out of its theistic sobriety into the regions of an essentially pantheistic mode of thought, whether developed or only implicated. Nothing could be farther from Augustine's meaning than that God, as the Universal Reason and Sole Intelligence, comes to the knowledge of the truth in us, and we in and by Him, so that our knowledge simply coalesces with His. His doctrine of creation, by which the creature is set as an objective somewhat, with powers of its own, over against God the Creator, placed him at a whole diameter's distance from the pantheistic tendencies of Plotinus, otherwise so much his master.<sup>21</sup> But neither does the "ontologism" of William of Paris and Malebranche, Fenelon and Bossuet precisely reproduce his meaning. Augustine does not teach that we contemplate immediately the Divine Being, and in Him the intelligible world, that *pleroma* of eternal and im-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Nourrison, *op cit.* II. 301. 334; Grandgeorge, *St. Augustine et le Néoplatonisme*, p. 111; Portalié in Vacant-Mangenot, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, I. 2330. *Per contra*, however, Ritschl, Loesche, etc.

mutable truths which constitutes the world of divine Ideas.<sup>22</sup> It would be much nearer his meaning to say that we see God in the eternal truths which by our *sensus intimus* we contemplate, than that we see them in Him. Undoubtedly he teaches that the soul has an immediate knowledge of God; and, in a sense, he does identify with God the intelligible world into contact with which the soul is brought by its *sensus intimus*. We should not be far from his meaning, however, if, reverting to a mode of representation we have already employed, we should say that the soul, set in its double environment, the sensible world on the one hand and the intelligible world on the other, as it knows the sensible world directly through the senses, so knows God in the intelligible world directly through the intellect. But God is not identified with the intelligible world, as it appears in the soul of man, except as its immediate author. He is in the soul of man not *substantialiter* but only *effective*; and it is precisely in this that the difficulty of the conception lies. If we may be permitted to employ theological conceptions here, we may say that Augustine's ontology of the intuition by which man attains intelligible truth, embraced especially two factors: the doctrine of the image of God, and the doctrine of dependence on God. To put it briefly, man's power of attaining truth depends, in his view, first of all upon the fact that God has made man like Himself, Whose intellect is the home of the intelligible world, the contents of which may, therefore, be reflected in the human soul; and then, secondly, that God, having so made man, has not left him, deistically, to himself, but continually reflects into his soul the contents of His own eternal and immutable mind—which are precisely those eternal and immutable truths which constitute the intelligible world. The soul is therefore in unbroken communion with God, and in the body of intelligible truths reflected into it from God, sees God. The nerve of this view, it will be observed, is the theistic conception of the constant dependence of the crea-

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Portalié as cited, p. 2335; and Storz, *Philosophie d. hl. Aug.*, p. 65 sq.

ture on God. This stands midway between the deistic conception, on the one side, that has no need of God except for the primal originating of the creature, and supposes that after that the creature's own powers suffice for all its acts; and the pantheistic view, on the other side, which substitutes the divine action for the creature's action and, having no need of a creature at all, transforms it into a mere simulacrum without reality of being or action. In the theistic view, there is postulated the creature as the product of a real creation, by which is produced a real thing with real activities of its own; and alongside of this, the real dependence of this creature for the persistence and use of all its activities on the constant action of God. Applying this conception to the problem of intellection, Augustine conceives the soul as at once active and acted upon, but as active only because acted upon. It is only in the light of God, the sun of the soul, that the soul is illuminated to see light.

There was nothing novel in the ascription of all human knowledge to the illumination of God. It was not only Numenius who declared all knowledge to be but the kindling of a little light from the great light which lightens the world.<sup>23</sup> Platonist and Stoic alike offered a metaphysical and epistemological basis for such a representation. According to the one, knowledge is recollection; and Cicero had explained this—or explained it away—as meaning that right knowledge is implanted in the soul by God at its creation, and is, therefore, inherent in it; while Plotinus' language on the subject is scarcely distinguishable from Augustine's.<sup>24</sup> According to the other, the human *logos* is but a fraction of the universal *Logos* and reproduces in its thought His normative mind. In the mere matter of forms of statement, therefore, Augustine had harbingering enough. It was, nevertheless, quite a new spirit which informed his declarations, the spirit of a pure theism, derived, not from his philosophical predecessors, but from those Scriptures

<sup>23</sup> Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* xi. 18. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *De civitate Dei*, x. 2.

which themselves also told him of the true light that lighteth every man who cometh into the world.<sup>25</sup> It was the personal God, therefore, whom he spoke of as the "Sun of the soul, by whose illumination alone can intelligible verities be perceived",<sup>26</sup> the "Light of the truth", by which alone is knowledge of the truth awakened in the soul,<sup>27</sup> or—changing the figure only—the inner Monitor and Master of the soul.<sup>28</sup> It was the personal Logos that he had in mind, through whose immanent working all things that exist exist, all things that live live, all things that understand understand. Surely if it be true even of the body that in Him we live and move and have our being,<sup>29</sup> it must much more be true of the mind, which, having been made in His likeness, lives and moves and has its being in Him in some more excellent, but of course not visible but intelligible way.<sup>30</sup> "Our illumination", he says, "is participation in that Word, that is to say, in His life, which is the light of men."<sup>31</sup>

We perceive that the outcome of this conception is that the condition of all knowledge is Revelation. Accordingly, our action in seeking knowledge is represented as essentially a consultation of God; God's action in giving us knowledge as essentially a transference of truth to us by a divine imprinting of it on the soul. That mental act which we call understanding, Augustine explains,<sup>32</sup> is performed in two ways: either by the mind or reason within itself, as when we understand that the intellect itself exists; or on occasion of a suggestion from the senses, as when we understand that matter exists: in the first of which two kinds of acts we understand through ourselves, that is, by consulting God<sup>33</sup> concerning that which is within us;

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Tract. in Joan.* II. 7; *Epist.* 120. 4; *De pecc. merit.* I. 25, 37, 48.

<sup>26</sup> *Solill.* I. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *De pecc. merit.* i. 25. 37.

<sup>28</sup> *De magistro.*

<sup>29</sup> *Epist.* 120. 4; *De Trinitate*, xiv. 12.

<sup>30</sup> *De Trinitate*, xiv. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *De Genes. ad litt.* iv. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Epist.* xiii (to Nebridius), 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Deum consulendo.*



while in the second we understand by consulting God regarding that of which intimation is given us by the body and the senses. That is to say, in brief, knowledge of the sensible and of the intelligible alike is God-given, and in both instances is to be obtained only by referring to His teaching. He adds, in another place,<sup>34</sup> that this God who is so consulted, and who, being so consulted, teaches us, is none other than Christ, who dwells in the inner man,—that is to say, “the incommutable Virtue of God, and His eternal Wisdom, which every rational soul, indeed, consults, though to each there is given only in proportion to his receptive capacity as determined by his own bad or good will”. The divine act of giving, Augustine presents by predilection under the figure of an impressing as by a seal or stamp, upon the soul. In what may be thought, perhaps, the classical passage on this subject,<sup>35</sup> he raises the question whence men obtain their knowledge of God and of the moral law. Not from memory, he answers, whether of their former existence in Adam or of any other state. Whence, then? Can we suppose that they can read off these immutable laws from their own mutable natures; these righteous laws from their own unrighteous hearts? “Where, then, do these rules stand written, whence even the unrighteous may recognize what is righteous; whence he that has not may learn what he ought to have? Where can they stand written save in the book of that Light which is called the Truth, whence every righteous law is transcribed, and transferred into the heart of the man who works righteousness, not by a process of transportation, but by a process of imprinting, as the device from a ring while it passes over into the wax, yet does not leave the ring.” What the soul receives, therefore, is not the ring itself with its device; certainly not the device in the ring; but the device as impressed upon it from the ring, and the ring only in and through the device. The care which is taken here to represent the process as a trans-

<sup>34</sup> *De magistro*, II.

<sup>35</sup> *De Trinitate*, xiv. 15. 21.

ference of the laws without transfusion of the substance may be said to be the characteristic feature of this passage, as it is of the entire teaching of Augustine on the topic. The figure itself is in repeated use by him, and always with the same implication. Nowhere does he permit the reader to suppose either that God in His substance invades the soul, or that the soul sees in God the ideas which constitute the intelligible world: although he insists steadily that these ideas are the ideas that are in God and that he who sees them, therefore, so far sees God—but in a glass darkly. In a word, he preserves the distinctness of the human soul at the same time that he discovers in the intelligible world open to the soul a point of contact with God; and in the soul's perception of the intelligibles a perception at the same time of God, whose existence thus becomes to the soul as intuitively certain as is its own.

The effect of such an ascription of all human knowledge to a revelation from God, is naturally greatly to increase the assurance with which truth is embraced. The ultimate ground of our certitude becomes our confidence in God. In the last analysis, God is our surety for the validity of our knowledge; and that, not merely remotely, as the author of our faculties of knowing, but also immediately as the author of our every act of knowing, and of the truth which is known. We must guard, indeed, against supposing that, in Augustine's view, the human mind is passive in the acquisition of knowledge, or that the acquisition of knowledge is unconditioned by the nature or state of the acquiring soul. We have already had occasion to quote passages in which the contrary is asserted, but we must now emphasise it with some energy. We have been contemplating thus far only Augustine's ontology of knowledge: that we may be sure that we understand him aright we need to attend also to his expositions of its mode. The fundamental principle which rules his thought here may be brought into relation with his favorite figure, if we bear in mind that an impression from a seal is conditioned not only by the device

on the seal from which the transference is made, but also by the nature and state of the wax into which it is made—which “takes” the impression, as we say. Suppose, for example, that the wax is not of a quality, or is not in a condition, to take or to retain with exactness or with clearness the device which is impressed upon it? Augustine accordingly insists that, although “every rational mind consults the eternal wisdom”, that is to say, by virtue of its very rationality is a recipient of impressions from the divine world of ideas, and thus has the acquisition of truth opened to it, or even, rather, thrust upon it: yet this truth is “actually laid open to it (‘unfolded to it,’ *panditur*) in each case, only so far as it is able to lay hold of it (‘receive it’, ‘take it’, *capere*) by reason of (*propter*) its own will, whether evil or good”.<sup>36</sup> In the interests of this point of view, Augustine made, in effect, a distinction between ideas, conceptions and perceptions. The ideas, which are reflections from the divine mind are always shining into the souls of men, unchangeable in the midst of men’s multiform changes, whether these changes are due to their natural development from infancy to maturity, and on to old age, or to any other accident of life. But the perception of these ideas by the differing souls of men, or by the same soul in its varying stages or states, and, much more, the conceptions built up upon the foundation of these perceptions by the differing souls, or by the same soul in its varying states—obviously these are very different matters. In these things the soul itself comes into play, and

<sup>36</sup> *De magistro*, II; cf. also *De Trinitate*, xiv. 15. 21, *ad finem*; *In Psalmos* iv. 8, *med. et fin.* Knowledge, therefore, with Augustine, is conditioned by the will; though we must be careful not to take the term ‘will’ in too narrow a sense—as if it always must mean in Augustine the faculty of determination. It is, rather, quite frequently the whole voluntary nature; and what Augustine is really teaching is that the ethical state of the soul conditions knowledge. See the whole subject discussed from different points of view by W. Kahl, *Die Lehre vom Primat des Willens bei Augustinus, Duns Scotus und Descartes*, 1886, and O. Zänker, *Der Primat des Willens vor dem Intellekt bei Augustin*, 1907. The literature of the subject is cited by these writers.

the result will differ as soul differs from soul, or the soul in one of its states differs from itself in another of its states. If the condition of all knowledge, then, is revelation, and therefore all knowledge is in its source divine; yet it is equally true that the qualification of all knowledge is rooted in the human nature that knows, and in the specific state of the human being whose particular knowledge it is. It is in this fact that the varying degrees of purity in which knowledge is acquired by men find their explanation.

The underlying conception here is the very fruitful one that knowledge is not a function of the intellect merely but involves the whole man. There is nothing on which Augustine more strenuously insists; as indeed there is nothing upon which from his psychological or ethical point of view it became him more strenuously to insist. His psychological insight was too clear, and his analysis too profound, for him to lose sight of the simplicity of the soul and its consequent engagement as a whole in all its acts; and the demands of his ethical nature were too clamant and his religious sense too lively to permit him to forget for an instant the determining effect upon every movement of the soul of the influences proceeding from them. Accordingly he does not content himself with declaring that no one can hope to see the truth without giving to philosophy his whole self.<sup>37</sup> Applying this conception in detail, he insists that God accords the truth only to those who seek it *pie, caste et diligenter*,<sup>38</sup> and urges therefore to a strenuous and devout pursuit of it, because it is only those who so seek whom God aids,<sup>39</sup> and the vision of the truth belongs only to those who live well, pray well and labor well.<sup>40</sup> The conception includes more than a contention that for the actual framing of knowledge there is required no less than the action of

<sup>37</sup> *Contr. Acad.* ii. 3. 8: ipsum verum non videbis, nisi in philosophia totus intraveris.

<sup>38</sup> *De quant. animae*, xiv. 24.

<sup>39</sup> *De vera religione*, x. 20: intende igitur diligenter et pie, quantum potes; tales enim adjuvat Deus.

<sup>40</sup> *De ordine*, ii. 19, 51.

God reflecting truth into the soul, an action of the soul's own in embracing this truth, and prior to that a preparation of the soul for embracing it. It seems to be further implied that the several orders of truth need different kinds or at least degrees of preparation for their reception. In proportion as we rise in the scale of knowledge, in that proportion embracing the truth becomes difficult and the preparation of the soul arduous. To attain the knowledge of God, which stands at the apex of achievement, demands therefore a very special purgation. Drawing near to Him does not mean journeying through space, for He is everywhere; it means entering into that purity and virtue in which He dwells.<sup>41</sup> "O God," he prays, "whom no one finds who is not fully purged."<sup>42</sup> The influence of his Neoplatonic teachers is here very apparent, and is further manifested in a tendency to represent the purgation of the soul for the higher knowledge as consisting largely in its emancipation from sense. With him as with them knowledge of the truth is constantly spoken of as hanging essentially upon the escape of the soul from entanglement with the sensible.<sup>43</sup> This, as we have seen, is a corollary of his Rationalism and was perhaps inevitable with his training. But these expressions which might be almost exactly matched in Plotinus, have in Augustine nevertheless an indefinitely deeper implication than in his Neoplatonic predecessors. With him the purely intellectualistic bearing which they have with them, has

<sup>41</sup> *De doetr. Christ.* i. 10. 10: "The soul must be purified that it may have power to perceive that light and to rest in it when it is perceived"; this purification is journeying to God, for it is not by change of place that we draw near to Him who is everywhere, but by becoming pure and virtuous. Cf. *De Trinitate*, iv. 18. 24: Sinful men need cleansing to be fitted to see eternal things; *De agone Christiano*, xiii. 14: A vicious life cannot see that pure and sincere and changeless life.

<sup>42</sup> *Solill.* i. 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Contr. Acad.* ii. 2: "It is philosophy which now that I have attained the leisure for which I have longed, nourishes me and comforts me. It is she who has delivered me finally from the superstitions into which I had fallen. For it is she that teaches me and teaches me truly, not to give my affections to what is perceived by the bodily eyes, to what strikes the senses, but rather to turn from it with contempt."



noticeably given way to a profoundly ethical one. Though he may still say that "the filth of the soul" "from which filth the more one is cleansed, the more readily he sees the truth", is shortly "the love of anything whatever except God and the soul";<sup>44</sup> and though, therefore, he may still relatively depreciate all knowledge other than that of God and the soul; yet after all, as he uses these terms, it is of something far more profound than the relative intellectual rank of the several objects of knowledge that he is thinking.

The implications of this general conception carried Augustine very far. Three of the corollaries which flow from it seem especially worthy of attention here. The first of these is that, the human soul being finite, it cannot hope to attain to absolutely perfect knowledge. The second is that, the human soul being subject to development, it can hope to attain to anything like adequate knowledge only by a slow process, and by means of aid from without. The third is that, the human soul in its present condition being sinful, there is a clog upon it in its aspiration to knowledge which it can never in its own strength overcome. In order that we may apprehend Augustine's thought we must therefore attend to his doctrine of mystery as lying at the heart of all our knowledge; to his doctrine of authority as the necessary pedagogue to knowledge; and to his doctrine of revelation as the palliative, and of grace as the cure, of the noetic effects of sin.

In his assertion of the certitude of human knowledge, Augustine is far from asserting that the human soul can know everything; or that it can know anything with that perfection of knowledge with which the infinite mind knows all things. It is impossible for the finite intelligence to comprehend in its mental embrace all that is the object of knowledge: it is as impossible for it to penetrate to the bottom of any object of knowledge which it embraces. For it, mystery not only surrounds the circle of knowledge illuminated by its intelligence, with a vast realm of impenetrable

<sup>44</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, 34.

darkness; mystery equally underlies all that it knows as an unfathomable abyss which it cannot plumb. We know, then, and can know, only in part: only part of what there is to know, and what we do know only in part. This is true of all our knowledge alike, whether of sensible things or of intelligible things, whether of the world without us or of the world within us, or—in the highest measure,—of the world above us, culminating in God, the mystery that surrounds whom dismays the intellect and compels us to exclaim that no knowledge can be had of Him beyond the knowledge of how ignorant we are of Him.<sup>45</sup> Of our very souls themselves, the very selves which know and which are known most intimately of all things, we know next to nothing. Augustine exhorts his somewhat bumptious young correspondent who fancied, apparently, that he knew all that was to be known of the soul, “to understand what he did not understand, lest he should understand nothing at all.”<sup>46</sup> For who knows either how the soul comes into existence, or (that impenetrable mystery), how it is related to the body? So far is Augustine from supposing, therefore, that the soul is clothed in omniscience, or that it can know unto perfection any single object of its knowledge, that he rather teaches that all our knowledge rests on mystery and runs up into mystery. What we know we know; and our certitude of that may be complete. But what we do not know surges all about us, an ocean of illimitable extent, and sinks beneath our very knowledge, a bottomless depth. We penetrate with our knowing but a very little way into the knowable before we lose ourselves in profundities which baffle all our inquiry.

The limitation which is placed upon our knowledge by our very nature as finite beings is greatly aggravated by the circumstance that we are not only finite but immature beings. We do not come into existence in the maturity of our powers; indeed, we remain throughout life, or we would better

<sup>45</sup> *De ordine* ii. 18. 47: *cujus (Dei) nulla scientia est in anima, nisi scire quomodo eum nesciat.* Cf. *De doctr. Christ.* i. 6. 6.

<sup>46</sup> *De anima et ejus origine*, iv. 11. 15.

say throughout eternity, creatures whose very characteristic is change, or, to put it at its best, ever progressing growth. At no given point in this development, of course, are we all that even we shall become. For the attainment, then, in our immaturity, of such knowledge as belongs to us as finite beings, there is obvious need of help from without. In other words, there is place for authority, and its correlate, faith. This is an ordinance of nature. Those who are first infants, then children, and only through the several stages of gradual ripening attain the maturity of their powers, will need at every step of their growth the guidance of those who are more mature than they, that they may accept on their authority, by faith, what they are not yet in a position to ascertain for themselves, by reason. And, as it is inevitable even among mature men, that some should outrun others in the attainment of knowledge; and especially that some should become particularly knowing in this or that sphere of knowledge, to which they have given unusual attention, or for which they have enjoyed uncommon facilities; there will always remain for creatures subject to change and developing progressively in their powers, not only a legitimate but a necessary place for authority on the one hand and for faith on the other. Not, of course, as if faith should, or could, supplant reason, or be set in opposition to reason. On the one hand, a right faith is always a reasonable faith; that is to say, it is accorded only to an authority which commends itself to reason as a sound authority, which it would be unreasonable not to trust. On the other hand, faith is in its idea not so much a substitute for reason as a preparation for reason; and the effort of the wise man should be to transmute his faith into knowledge, that is to say as his powers become more and more capable of the performance and opportunity offers, gradually to replace belief by sight. But in any event for such creatures as we are, our walk must largely be guided by faith, and it is only through faith that we can hope to attain to knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> For this doctrine in its highest application, cf. e. g. *De Trinitate* xv. 27. 49: "But if they think they ought to deny that these things are,

Now add the factor of sin,—sin, which enters the soul of man, already, one would think, sufficiently handicapped in attaining truth by its finiteness and its immaturity, and refracts and deflects the rays of truth reflected into it from the divine source, so rendering the right perception of the truth impossible. The finiteness of the soul only so far limits it in the attainment of truth, that, being finite, it cannot know all truth nor all that is true of what it truly knows: what it does know is truth, and so far as it is known this truth is truly known. The immaturity of the soul passes gradually away as its powers develop, and therefore imposes only a temporary check upon the attainment of truth,—determines that attainment to be a process of gradual advance instead of an instantaneous achievement. Neither the soul's finiteness, nor its mutability, accordingly, need more than warn us of the limitations of our powers and induce in us a becoming humility and patience. But the invasion of the soul by sin is a different matter. Here is a power which acts destructively upon the soul's native powers of apprehending truth, blinds the eyes of the mind, distorts its vision, fills it with illusions, so that it sees awry; and a power which so far from passing away with time and growth, batters by what it feeds on and increases in its baleful influence until it overwhelms the soul with falsehood. No merely incomplete, or as yet uncompleted, knowledge accordingly results; but just no knowledge at all, or even anti-knowledge, positive error, vanity and lies; and thus a condition is created which assuredly calls not for humility and patience, but for despair.

The question obtrudes itself whether such a doctrine does not render nugatory all of Augustine's carefully built up theory of the acquisition of knowledge. Granted that nor-

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because they, with their blind minds, cannot discern them, then those who are blind from their birth, also, ought to deny that there is a sun. The light shines in darkness, and if the darkness comprehend it not, let them first be illuminated by the gift of God, that they may be believers: and let them begin to be light in comparison with unbelievers; and when this foundation has been laid, let them look up and see what they believe, that at some time they may be able to see."

mal man may look within and find there impressed upon his very being the forms of thought by which God thinks, in the light of which he may see truth and know it to be divinely certain because certainly divine. Man as we know him is not normal man. Afflicted by the disease of sin which darkens the light that shines into him from God, clouding his vision of truth and deflecting all the activities of his mind,—who will give him true knowledge? Surely, whatever may be true of abstract man, sinful man, which is the only man we know, is on this teaching condemned to eternal nescience. Must not Augustine, on his own showing, in the case of actual man, take his place, then, among the Sceptics? It certainly is important for the understanding of Augustine's doctrine of knowledge to observe how he meets this obvious criticism.

Of the form in which the criticism itself is often urged, we may find a very instructive example in the formulation of it by Mr. John Owen, who, as an outcome of the very line of reasoning which we have suggested, formally classes Augustine not only among the Sceptics, but among the Sceptics of the worst order. Simple Scepticism, he tells us, affects the basis of knowledge only; Augustine's variety of Scepticism undermines the foundations not only of truth but also of morals. For, according to Augustine, he continues,—

“By the disobedience of its ancestor the majority of the whole human race has become totally incapacitated for knowing or doing what is right and good. The faculties of every man, both of soul and body, have become perverted and misleading. It is needless to dwell on the theological aspects of this momentous doctrine; our present concern is with its philosophical bearings. We here see, as I have already suggested, the Augustinian theology in intimate relationship with Skepticism. With one voice the Greek Skeptics had declared the senses to be untrustworthy, the reason to be perverted, all the natural powers of man to be insufficient to attain knowledge, and precisely the same conclusions were arrived at by Augustine with the portentous extension of the incapacity to all right and good action. The



latter fact renders, in my opinion, Augustine's theological Skepticism much more mischievous than any amount of mere speculative theoretical unbelief could possibly have been. . . . That man with all his efforts is unable to attain truth may conceivably be an unavoidable necessity of the only possible *modus operandi* of his faculties, and therefore the fact may not in the least detract from the beneficence of his Creator; but the moment we make his creation and fall, and perhaps his consequent eternal misery, indissoluble parts of the original intention of Omnipotence concerning him, that moment God is shorn of his attribute of goodness, man becomes the hapless victim of a caprice as unreasonable as it is irresistible, and the creation, so far as the majority of human beings is concerned, is a stupendous act of despotism and cruelty."<sup>48</sup>

We have required to quote so much of Mr. Owen's remarks in order to place his representation fully before us; and we require to say this much to exonerate ourselves from the suspicion of having quoted so much merely in order that we might stultify Mr. Owen's profession of concerning himself solely with the philosophical bearings of Augustine's doctrine of original sin. In point of fact he concerns himself with little except its theological aspects. After having barely remarked that it has philosophical bearings, he lapses at once into an assault on the doctrine on the ground that it contradicts the beneficence of God and indeed transmutes the good God into a cruel demon. We must refuse to be led off from our proper subject by this impertinent display of the *odium theologicum*; and we take note here accordingly merely of Mr. Owen's philosophical criticism that Augustine's doctrine of original sin brings him into intimate relations with Greek Scepticism.

Apparently what Mr. Owen's means to suggest is that Augustine reached "precisely the same conclusions" with the Greek Sceptics, and differed from them only in the grounds upon which he based these conclusions. They contended that human faculties are, as such, incapable of ascertaining truth; he, that human faculties have been so injured

<sup>48</sup> John Owen, *Evenings with the Sceptics*, vol. II. p. 196.

by sin as to have become incapable of ascertaining truth. That there is a sense in which this representation is perfectly just, is obvious. Augustine did hold that the native depravity of man has nœtic as well as thelematic and ethical effects: and that sinful man, as such, is therefore precluded by his sinfulness from that perception of truth which can be only *pie et caste* attained. To him it was therefore axiomatic that the natural man is incapable of attaining to true knowledge, at least in its highest reaches,—those reaches in which the deflection of sin would be most apparent. But in his hatred of Augustine doctrine of original sin, Mr. Owen has failed to observe that Augustine did not leave matters at that point. Where he differs by a whole diameter from the Sceptics is that he knows a remedy for the dreadful condition in which human nature finds itself. When the Sceptics declared that it belongs to human nature as such to be incapable of knowledge, there was an end of the matter. The condition of man is hopeless: he actually lacks faculty for knowing. Augustine's contention, on the contrary, is that it is knowledge, not nescience, which belongs to human nature as such. And if he finds human nature in a state in which it cannot fulfil its destiny of knowing, he knows how it may be recovered to itself and to the capacity for knowledge which properly belongs to it. In other words, the sinful condition of human nature is viewed by Augustine as abnormal; and all the results of this sinfulness as abnormalities which may be and are to be overcome. That Mr. Owen says nothing at this point of the provisions for overcoming these abnormalities cannot be set down to the credit of his account of Augustine's teaching.

At another point of Mr. Owen's discussion, no doubt, there does occur some suggestion of these provisions, though certainly a very insufficient one. He remarks<sup>49</sup> that "from the earliest history of Christianity the Sceptical argument had been employed, for evidential purposes, as an *à priori* justification of Divine Revelation both in its ethical and

<sup>49</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 190.

intellectual acceptance." And he supports this by remarking further that "by the early Christian Fathers the confessions of ignorance, limitation, &c., on the part of Greek Skeptics were put forward to show the necessity of super-human knowledge." Even this suggestion is introduced, however, not to palliate but to accentuate Augustine's fault,—not to point so much to the remedy which he offered for the nœtic effects of sin, as to the excess of his "depreciation of human nature." Augustine had so low an opinion "of the intellectual imbecility of humanity", it seems, that he readily accepted the dogma "of the natural depravity of man" "as a complete solution of what would otherwise have been an enigma" to him. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to perceive that the postulation of a divine revelation comes in upon the conception of the sin-born "imbecility of humanity" as a mitigation of its otherwise hopeless condition. The proclamation of the provision of a divine revelation, if on the one hand it implies a need for it, on the other hand asserts a remedy for that need. Nor does the assertion of divine revelation cover the whole provision which Augustine offers for the removal of the natural incapacities of sinful man. He did not confine himself to pointing out a mitigation for the symptom; he sought and found also a remedy for the disease. If the nœtic effects of sin might be neutralized by divine revelation, sin itself might be removed by divine grace. It is certainly grossly unfair to Augustine's teaching as to man's condition to focus attention upon the disease under which he holds that man suffers, and withdraw it entirely from the remedy which he asserts has been provided for this disease.

We must not, then, be misled into supposing Augustine to teach, even by remote implication, that man is hopelessly sunk in nescience or even in sin. Perfectly true as this is of his teaching of the condition of man considered in himself alone and so far as his own powers are concerned, it is considerably less than half the truth of Augustine's teaching of the condition of man. It means, no doubt, that Augus-

tine, as he looked upon the virtues of the heathen as little more than *splendida vitia*, so looked upon the philosophy of the heathen as very much a farrago of nonsense. What a multitude of philosophers there have been, he exclaimed, in effect, and almost more opinions than philosophers! Who can find any two of them who perfectly agree? Varro enumerates not less than two hundred and eighty-eight possible sects. It would be easier to find a needle in a haystack than truth among these professional purveyors of truth.<sup>50</sup> But then Augustine knew something better than heathen thought to which to direct one in search of truth, as he knew something better than heathen ethics to which to direct one in search of holiness. His great word was Revelation; and behind and above and all through Revelation, there was the greater word still, Grace. No doubt this means that he transferred dependence for truth, as for holiness, from man to God. He did distrust human nature as he found it. He did consider it in its own strength incapable of any good thing, and equally of any right thought. He did cast men back for all good on God's grace, for all truth on God's teaching. So far writers like Mr. Owen are quite right. Augustine did believe in the ingrained depravity of man in his present manifestation on earth; he did believe that this depravity renders him morally incapable and intellectually imbecile, if this somewhat exaggerated language pleases us. But he believed also in the goodness of God; and he believed that this good God has intervened with His grace to cure man's moral inability, and with His revelation to rescue man from his intellectual imbecility.

Nor was this doctrine of Revelation and Grace as remedies for man's sinful incapacities and condition a mechanical intrusion of an alien idea into Augustine's general conception. It rather stands in the most direct analogy alike with his whole conception of man's relation to God and with his particular view of man's natural needs and the natural provision for their satisfaction. Even had man not been

<sup>50</sup> See the *City of God*, xviii. 41.

sinful, Augustine would never have allowed that he was in a position of himself, apart from God, to do any good or to attain any truth. That would have seemed to him a crass Deism, of which he would have been incapable. Even sinless man would have been to him absolutely dependent on God, the Author of all being, the Light of all knowledge, the Source of all good. We have seen him openly teaching that man as man can see light only in the Light; that all truth is the reflection into the soul of the truth that is in God; in a word, that the condition of all knowledge for dependent creatures is revelation, in the wider sense of that word. When now he teaches that revelation in a narrower sense and a more objective form, is the condition of all right knowledge of higher things for sinful man,—a revelation which is an integral part of a scheme of grace for the recovery of sinful man, not only from the effects of his sin but from his sin itself,—he is speaking in close analogy with his fundamental theistic conception of the universe. He is but throwing sinful man back afresh on the God on whom men in all states and conditions are absolutely dependent.

Similarly, the provision which Augustine makes, in revelation, to meet the sin-bred inability of men to attain right knowledge, is only an extension in a right line of the provision he discovered for meeting man's natural weakness growing out of his finiteness, and especially out of his only gradually attained maturity. In that case, we remember, he pointed to authority as the remedy for as yet ineffective reason. The child is naturally dependent on the authority of its elders, who offer to its faith the truth which its reason is as yet incapable of discovering or authenticating for itself. In every sphere of life we remain dependent on the authority of those who are in this or that or the other department of knowledge better instructed than we; and he who will be taught nothing, but insists on following his reason alone, is soon at the end of living in this world. Revelation plays precisely the same rôle for the mind darkened by sin. The heavenly Father intervenes to meet the needs of sin-blinded



souls by offering to their faith, on the authority of God, the truth which they are as sinners incapable of ascertaining for themselves. This is the essence of Augustine's doctrine of revelation. Of course the condition of man as sinner determines as well the nature of the truths he needs to know as the manner in which alone he can come to the knowledge of them: the whole content of revelation is determined by the needs of those to whom it is made. But that may be left to one side here. What we are at present especially concerned with is that the need of revelation and the provision of revelation for sinful man stand in perfect analogy with the need and provision of instruction for, say, the immature child. The principle which governs in both cases is, not that reason is superceded by something better, but that, in default of reason due to special circumstances, provision is taken to supply the lack of reason, until reason may come to its rights. The lame man is supplied with a crutch until his lameness is healed. Here we have in brief Augustine's whole doctrine of revelation.

Clear and reasonable, however, as is Augustine's doctrine of revelation as the remedy for man's sin-bred disability to know aright, it seems to be very difficult for some writers to believe that it could have been a reality to him. It is not rare, therefore, to hear it intimated that he passed all his days under the torture of gnawing doubt, and flung himself upon the authority of the church as some sort of palliation of his wearing despair. His permanent state of mind regarding Christianity, we are told, is much that which is exhibited in a certain class of Romish controversial literature, in which after every other support for human trust has been sedulously removed we are ultimately invited to take refuge in the authority of the Church as the sole haven of peace. This representation is given expression, as well as elsewhere, in some remarks of Professor Adolf Harnack's, when he comes, in his *History of Dogma*, to deal with Augustine's attitude to the authority of the Church.<sup>51</sup> Here we are told

<sup>51</sup> English translation, vol. V. p. 79.

that Augustine had become convinced, in his conflict with himself, "of the badness of human nature," and had been left by Manichæism "in complete doubt as to the foundations and truth of the Christian faith." And then:—

"His confidence in the rationality of Christian truth had been shaken to the very depths, and it was never restored. In other words, as an individual thinker he never gained the subjective certitude that Christian truth (and as such everything contained in the two Testaments had to be regarded) was clear, consistent and demonstrable. When he threw himself into the arms of the Catholic Church, he was perfectly conscious that he needed its authority not to sink in scepticism or nihilism."

Dr. Harnack is too good a scholar to enunciate a historical judgment utterly without elements of truth. There are elements of truth of great importance even in this judgment, far from the mark as is the application which is made of them; and there are even points of great interest in the use which Dr. Harnack makes of these elements of truth. It is certainly true that in his experience with the Manichæans Augustine learned to distrust unaided reason as the source of religious truth; and discovered that there is a legitimate place for authority in religion. The Manichæans had promised him a purely rational religion; he found on testing it that what they gave him was a mass of irrationalities; and on feeling out for himself he discovered that unaided reason was inadequate to the task of meeting all the needs of man. There is truth, therefore, in saying that he once for all discarded reason as the sole instrument for the acquisition of truth in the religious sphere, and cast himself on instruction as the single hope of the soul in its longing after truth. But the sense in which this is true of Augustine is indefinitely different from the sense it takes upon itself in Dr. Harnack's representation. Beneath Dr. Harnack's representation there lies Dr. Harnack's own conception not only of the place of authority in religion, but of the nature of the Christian religion and its relation to authority, and of the nature of the particular source of author-

ity to which he conceives that Augustine fled in his need, and of the rationality of Augustine's act in taking refuge with it. His whole statement, therefore, leaves the impression that Augustine in despair of reason renounced rationality, and gave himself over to an unreasoned authority for guidance; and never again recovered, we will not say objective rationality in his religious views, but even subjective confidence. The very interesting defence of authority in religion—from the historical point of view at least, if not from the intrinsic—with which Dr. Harnack closes his discussion<sup>52</sup> does nothing to modify this impression. It remains the gist of his exposition that Augustine took refuge in authority, because he despaired of reason, and therefore his attitude towards Christianity remained throughout life that of an irrationalist.

Nothing, however, could be less true than this of Augustine's real attitude. His appeal to authority was in his own mind not a desertion of reason but an advance towards reason. He sought truth through authority only because it became clear to him that this was the rational road to truth. It was thus not as an irrationalist, but as a rationalist, that he made his appeal to authority. His breach with Manichæism and his gradual establishment in Christian truth, in other words, was on this side of it merely the discovery that the Christian religion is not a natural religion and is therefore not either excogitable or immediately demonstrable by reason working solely on natural grounds; but is rather a revealed religion and therefore requires in the first instance to be told to us. It is thus in the last analysis, supernaturalism as versus naturalism that he turns to;<sup>53</sup> and this is far from the same thing as irrationality as versus rationality—except, indeed, on the silent assumption that the supernatural is an absurdity, an assumption which was

<sup>52</sup> Pp. 82-83.

<sup>53</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, 29: "Therefore this so vast difficulty, since our inquiry is about religion, God alone can remedy: nor, indeed, unless we believe both that He is, and that He helps men's minds, ought we even to inquire of the true religion itself."

decidedly not Augustine's. In the sixth book of the *Confessions* he recounts to us the several steps by which he rose from the pure naturalism which had hitherto held him to this Christian supernaturalism. His disillusionment with Manichæism did not at once deliver him from his naturalistic point of view. He had found the tenets of the Manichæans irrational. But his rejection of them as such, did not at once entail the adoption of another set of tenets as rational. His sad experience with them operated rather to make him chary of committing himself to any other body of conclusions whatever. He remained in principle a naturalist *à outrance*. He demanded the apodeictic certainty of mathematical demonstration for conviction; that is to say, he still depended for the discovery of truth upon immediate rational demonstration alone. This alone seemed to him adequate evidence upon which one could safely venture. All this time, says he, he was restraining his heart from believing anything, and thus in avoiding the precipice was strangling his soul: what he was demanding was that he should be made as certain of things unseen as that seven and three make ten.<sup>54</sup> He goes on to remark that a cure for his distress lay open before him in faith (*credendo*), had he chosen to take that road, since thus the sight of his mind might have been purged for vision of the truth. But as yet he could not enter that path. It was not long, however, before it began to invite his feet, slowly but surely. He could not avoid perceiving after a while that it is the path of nature. He reflected upon the host of things which he accepted on testimony. He reminded himself that in it lay the foundation of all history: and that life itself would soon come to a standstill if we refused to act on the credit of others. He meditated further upon the strength of the conviction which testimony produces when its validity and adequacy are beyond question. As the great place which faith fills in common life thus became more and more clear to him, he could not escape the query why it should not serve a similar end

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<sup>54</sup> *Confessiones*, vi. 4. 6.

in higher things. The principle of faith and its correlate authority, having once been recognized, it became indeed only a question of time before it should take its proper place in these higher concerns also. And, then, it was only a question of fact whether there existed in the world any adequate authority to guide men into the truth. Thus, says he, the Lord drew him on little by little, with a hand of infinite gentleness and mercy, and composing his heart gradually convinced him that in the Scriptures He had given to men an authority to which their faith is due, and through which they may attain by faith that knowledge of divine things to which they are as yet unable to rise through reason. "And also," he adds, "since we are too weak to search out the truth by mere (*liquida*) reason, and therefore need the authority of Holy Scriptures, I began to believe God never would have given such surpassing authority to those Scriptures throughout the whole world except that He wished to be believed through them and to be sought by their means."<sup>55</sup> There is depicted for us in this vital narrative, no despairing act of renunciation in which Augustine offered up his intellect a sacrifice upon the altar of faith, and sought peace from insatiable doubt in an arbitrary authority to which by an effort of sheer will he submits. What we see is a gradual advance under the leading of reason itself to a rational theory of authority in religion, on the basis of which rational certitude may be enjoyed in the midst of the weakness of this life.

What has been thus incidentally brought before us, it will be perceived, is Augustine's doctrine of faith and reason. The relations of faith and reason, as thus outlined, remained to him always a matter of sincere and reasoned conviction. We may read them so stated in the books *Against the Academics* and in the books *On the Predestination of the Saints* alike. It will be enough for our purpose, however, to observe how he deals with the matter in two or three treatises which are devoted expressly to elucidating certain

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* c. 8.



aspects of it. Take for example the treatises *On the Profit of Believing* (391) and *On Faith in Things Not Seen* (400), which were written not very far apart in time and in very similar circumstances. In both of these treatises he begins by setting himself sharply in opposition to the Sensationalists, "who fancy," says he,<sup>56</sup> "that there is nothing else than what they perceive by those five well-known reporters of the body," and "essay to measure the unsearchable resources of truth" by "the deceitful rule" of the "impressions (*plagas*) and images they have received from these"; whom, in a word, "folly has so made subject to their carnal eyes that whatsoever they see not through them they think they are not to believe."<sup>57</sup> From this starting-point, in both alike, however, the advance is made at once to the defence of faith as a valid form of conviction, with respect not only to things not perceived by the bodily senses, but also to those lying beyond the reach of the intellect itself.<sup>58</sup> And in both alike the stress of the argument is laid upon the naturalness of faith and its indispensableness in the common life of men.<sup>59</sup> Why should that act of faith which lies at the very basis of human intercourse be excluded from the sphere of religion,—especially in the case of one, say, of weak intelligence? Must a man have no religion because he is incapable of excogitating one for himself?<sup>60</sup> Certainly we must not confound faith with credulity: nobody asks that Christ should be believed in without due evidence that he is worthy of being believed in.<sup>61</sup> But, on the other hand, it is just as certain that we shall not attain to any real religion without faith. Say you are determined to have a religion which you can demonstrate. The very search for it presupposes a precedent faith that there is a God and that he cares for us; for surely no one will seek God, or inquire

<sup>56</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, I.

<sup>57</sup> *De fide rerum quae non vid.* I.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 2 sq.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 4; *De util. cred.* 23.

<sup>60</sup> *De util. cred.* 24.

<sup>61</sup> *De fide rer. q. non vid.* 5: cf. *De utilitate credendi*, 22sq., and 25, where the necessary distinctions are drawn.

how we should serve Him, without so much to go on.<sup>62</sup> And where and how will you seek? Perchance you will inquire the way of those who are wise? Who are the wise? How will you determine who are wise in such things? In the manifold disagreements of pretenders to wisdom, it will require a wise man to select the really wise. We are caught in a fatal circle here; we must needs be wise beforehand in order to discriminate wisdom.<sup>63</sup> There is but one outlet; and that outlet is, shortly, revelation. For revelation is a thing which can be validated by appropriate evidence even to those who have not yet attained wisdom; and which, when once trusted on its appropriate grounds, gradually leads us into that wisdom which before was unobtainable. Thus, to man unable to see the truth, a justified authority steps in to fit him to see it; and it is authority alone which can bring such wisdom.<sup>64</sup> This is the reason the Lord has chosen this method of dealing with us. Bringing us a medicine destined to heal our corrupted condition, "he procured authority by miraculous works, acquired faith by authority, drew together numbers by faith, gained antiquity by numbers, confirmed religion by antiquity: so that not only the supremely inept novelty of heresy in its deceitful working, but even the inveterate error of heathenism in its violent antagonism can never root up this religion in any way whatever."<sup>65</sup> Here we have Augustine's golden chain. Miracles, authority, faith, numbers, antiquity, an absolutely established religion: that is the sequence, travelling along which men arrive at a secure conviction which nothing can shake.

We may hear him argue the question with even more specific application to the Christian religion in a notable letter which he wrote about 410 to an eminent courtier and scholar.<sup>66</sup> "The minds of men," he tells us here, "are

<sup>62</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 32 *ad fin.*

<sup>66</sup> *Epist.* 118 (to Dioscorus), 5. 32-33.

blinded by the pollutions of sin and the lust of the flesh"; they are therefore lost in the mazes of discussion and are unable to discover the truth of things by reason. Therefore, that men may have the truth, Christ came—the Truth Itself, in union with a man,—to instruct them in truth. Thus men are given the truth through faith, in order that "by instruction in salutary truth they may escape from their perplexities into the atmosphere of pure and simple truth." That is to say, we are introduced to truth by Christ's authority, so that, thus receiving it by faith, we may then be able to defend it by reason. "The perfection of method in training disciples," we read, "is, that those who are weak should be encouraged to enter the citadel of authority, in order that, when they have been safely placed there, the conflict necessary for their defence may be maintained by the most strenuous use of reason." "Thus," he adds, "the whole supremacy of authority and light of reason for regenerating and reforming the human race has been made to reside in the one saving Name, and in His one Church." For Christ has "both secured the Church in the citadel of authority. . . . and supplied it with the abundant armor of equally invincible reason." The former He has done by means of the "highly celebrated ecumenical councils, and the Apostolic sees themselves";—which is as much as to say, apparently, that the authority of the Church finds expression through these organs. And the latter He has done "by means of a few men of pious learning and unfeigned spirituality";—that is to say, apparently, these are the organs through which the inherent rationality of Church teaching evinces itself. The entire sense seems, then, to be that what is taught by the Church on authority, through the appropriate organs of authority, is equally defended by the Church by reason, through the appropriate organs of reason. The Church as the pillar and ground of the truth commends it to faith; the Church, giving a reason for the faith that is in it, defends it to reason. The Doctor,<sup>67</sup> in other words, is as truly a

<sup>67</sup> On the "Doctor" in the early church, see Smith and Cheatham, *Dict. of Christ. Antiquities*, 1876, vol. I. p. 570a; and Harnack, in his

manifestation of the Church's inherent life as the Bishop himself: reasoning is as inamissibly her function as authoritative definition. Here is certainly an elevation of authority, properly grounded, as a source of conviction; an elevation of faith, properly placed, as a mode of conviction. But here is no depreciation of demonstration and reason to make way for authority and faith. On the contrary, the two are placed side by side, as joint methods and organs for attaining truth; and the contention is merely that to each its own sphere belongs into which the other cannot intrude.

It has seemed most convenient to present in the first instance Augustine's entire doctrine of faith and reason in concrete form, and in its application to the main problem to which he applied it. But having in this way caught a glimpse of it as a whole and in its ultimate bearings, it seems desirable to pause and to glance in some detail at the main elements which enter into it.

Let us first look at the doctrine in its most general aspects. The fact of primary importance to note here is that with Augustine faith and reason are never conceived as antagonists, contradictories, but always as coadjutants, coöperating to a common end. The thing sought is truth: what Augustine has discovered is that there are two modes of mental action by which truth may be laid hold of. It may be grasped by faith, or it may be grasped by reason. "No one doubts," he tells us, "that we are impelled to the acquisition of knowledge by a double impulse,—of authority and of reason."<sup>68</sup> And, though we may be so constituted as eagerly to desire "to apprehend what is true not only by faith but by the understanding";<sup>69</sup> and may, therefore, give to reason the primacy in rank, yet we are bound to acknowledge for faith a priority in time.<sup>70</sup> Granted that faith may seem to be a mode of conviction more suitable for the ignor-

larger edition of the *Didaché*, 1884, pp. 131 sq; and in his *Expansion of Christianity*, E. T. vol. I. pp. 444 sq.

<sup>68</sup> *Contr. Acad.* iii. 20. 43, *ad fin.*; cf. *De ordine* ii. 9. 26, *ad init.*

<sup>69</sup> *Contr. Acad.* l. c.

<sup>70</sup> *De ordine*, l. c.

ant multitude than for the instructed few; yet there is no one who does not begin by being ignorant, and there are many things great and good which we could never attain were the door not opened to us by faith.<sup>71</sup> Life is too short to attempt to solve every question for ourselves, even of those which are capable of being solved. We must be content to accept many things on faith and leave difficulties to be dealt with afterwards, or never to be dealt with.<sup>72</sup> And surely it is the height of folly, because of insoluble difficulties, to "permit to escape from our hands things which are altogether certain."<sup>73</sup> What is it but pride—which is the destruction of all true knowledge—that leads us to demand that we shall, as we say, "understand everything"?

Not, of course, as if faith should be lightly or irrationally accorded. If there is a sense in which faith precedes reason, there is equally a sense in which reason precedes faith. That mental act which we call faith is one possible only to rational creatures;<sup>74</sup> and of course we act as rational creatures in performing it. "If, then, "Augustine argues, "it is rational that, with respect to some great concerns which we find ourselves unable to comprehend, faith should precede reason; there can be no question but that the amount of reason which leads us to accord this faith, whatever that amount may be, is itself anterior to faith."<sup>75</sup> Faith is by no means blind: it has eyes of its own with which, before it completes itself in giving that assent which, when added to thinking, constitutes it believing,<sup>76</sup> it must needs see both that to which it assents, and that on the ground of which it assents

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Epist.* 170 (to Deogratias; A. D. 408 or 406) c. 38: sunt enim innumerabiles [quaestiones] quae non sunt finiendae ante fidem, ne finiatur vita sine fide.

<sup>73</sup> *De musica*, vi. 5. 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Epist.* 120 (to Consentius): etiam credere non possumus, nisi rationales animas haberemus.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *De praedest. sancti*, 2: "Believing is nothing else than cum assensione cogitare"; *Enchirid.* 20: "But if assent is taken away, faith too falls; for sine assensione nihil creditur".



to it. As we cannot believe without knowing what it is to which we accord our faith, so we cannot believe without perceiving good grounds for according our faith. "No one believes anything unless he has before thought it worthy of belief."<sup>77</sup> Reason, therefore, can never be "wholly lacking to faith, because it belongs to it to consider to whom faith should be given."<sup>78</sup> This function of reason, by which it considers to what men or writings it is right to accord faith is then precedent to faith; though faith is precedent to reason in the sense that, an adequate ground of credit having been established by reason, conviction must at once form itself without waiting for comprehension to become perfect.

Our knowledge thus embraces two classes of things; things seen and things believed. The difference between them is this: "with respect to things we have seen or see, we are our own witnesses; but with respect to those which we believe, we are moved to faith by other witnesses."<sup>79</sup> The distinction which Augustine erects between faith and reason, that is to say, is briefly that faith is distinctively that conviction of truth which is founded on testimony as over against that conviction which is founded on sight.<sup>80</sup> All the corollaries which flow from this distinction were present to his mind. He is found, for example, pointing out that all so-called knowledge itself rests on faith, so that in the deepest sense an act of faith precedes all knowledge. And on the other hand—and it is this point which is of most present interest to us—that all faith presupposes reason, and is so far from an irrational act that an unreasonable faith, a faith not founded in a reasonable authority demanding credit on reasonable grounds, is no faith at all, but mere "credulity", while what is thus unwarrantedly believed is

<sup>77</sup> *De praedest. sanctt.* ii. 5.

<sup>78</sup> *De vera religione*, xxiv. 45, also 46.

<sup>79</sup> *Epist.* 147. 3. 8.

<sup>80</sup> *Epist.* 147. 3. 7; *Eighty-Three Questions*, Quaest. 54. In *Retract.* i. 104. 3 he allows that in such distinctions he is employing the word 'knowledge' in a strict rather than a popular sense: in common speech we say 'we know' even what rests on testimony.

mere "opinion."<sup>81</sup> As distinguished from knowledge on the one hand and credulity on the other, faith is that act of assent which is founded on adequate testimony; and the form of conviction which is so called may be free from all doubt whatsoever.<sup>82</sup> So far is faith thus from being a cloak for inextinguishable doubt, that doubt is inconsistent with it and is excluded just in proportion to the firmness of the grounding of faith, or, we may better say, just in proportion as faith fulfils its own idea. Its distinction from knowledge does not turn on the strength of the conviction it describes, but on the ground of this conviction. We know by sight; we believe on testimony.

We turn now to the application of this abstract doctrine of faith to the problem of the Christian religion. In this instance the testimony on which faith rests,—on the basis of which that conviction we call faith is formed—Augustine supposed to be the testimony of God Himself. The grounds on which he accepted as such what he took to be a revelation from God may be assailed as insufficient; and the channels through which he considered that what he took to be a revelation from God asserts its authority over us, may be subject to criticism. But we can scarcely refuse to recognize the formal cogency of his reasoning. If it can be established that God, condescending to our weakness, has given us a revelation, then, undoubtedly, that revelation becomes an adequate authority upon which our faith may securely rest; and, as rational beings, we must accept as true what it commends to us as such, even though our reason flags in its attempts even to comprehend it, and utterly fails to supply an immediate rational demonstration of its truth. Here, above everywhere else, faith obviously must precede reason, and prepare the way for reason. It is here accordingly that Augustine's insistence on the priority of faith to reason culminates. It is with this application in mind that he repeats

<sup>81</sup> *De utilitate credendi*, 11; *De mendac.* 3.

<sup>82</sup> *De mendac.* 3: ille qui credit, sensit se ignorare quod credit; quamvis de re quae se ignorare novit, omnino non dubitet; sic enim firme credit. Qui autem opinatur, putat se scire, quod nescit.

most assiduously that "before we understand, it behooves us to believe";<sup>83</sup> that "faith is the starting-point of knowledge";<sup>84</sup> that we "believe that we may know, not know that we may believe."<sup>85</sup> Least of all, in this highest application of faith, does he mean that this faith does not itself rest upon reason, in the sense that it is accorded to an authority which is not justified to reason on valid grounds.<sup>86</sup> What he means is rather that the particular truths commended to us on the authority of a revelation from God, validated as such by appropriate evidence, are to be accepted as truths on that authority, prior to the action of our reason upon them either by way of an attempt fully to comprehend them, or by way of an attempt to justify them severally to our logical reason; and that this act of faith is in the nature of the case a preparation for these efforts of reason. The order of nature is, in other words, first the validation of a revelation as such on its appropriate grounds; secondly, the acceptance by faith of the contents of this revelation on the sole ground of its authority; and thirdly, the comprehension by the intellect of the contents of the revelation and the justification of them severally to reason so far as that may prove to be possible to us. This order of procedure Augustine defends against the Manichæans—who were the philosophic naturalists in vogue at the time—from every conceivable point of view, and with endlessly varied arguments. The gist of the whole, however, is simply that when a revelation has been validated as such, we owe to the truths commended to us by it immediate credit, on the sole authority of the revelation itself, and neither need nor are entitled to wait until each of these truths is separately validated to us on the grounds of reason before we give our assent to it. In a word, the rational ground on which we accept each truth is the proof that the authority by which it is commended to us is adequate, and not a particular verdict of reason immedi-

<sup>83</sup> *De Trinitate* viii. 5-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 1. 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Tract. in Joann.* xi. 9.

<sup>86</sup> *E. g., Epist.* 120. 1. 3 (as quoted above).

ately passed upon each several truth. The particular verdict of reason on each several truth must wait on the act of faith by which we honor the general verdict of reason on the validity of the authority; and it may wait endlessly without invalidating or weakening the strength of conviction which we accord to the deliverances of a revelation which has been really validated to us as such.

We may revert, of course, to the prior question, whether the assumed revelation on the authority of which faith is yielded has been soundly validated as such to reason. It is at this point that criticism of Augustine's system of faith becomes possible; and it is at this point that such criticism becomes sharp. We are told that Augustine accepted an alleged revelation on insufficient evidence; and that it is this fact which justifies the suspicion that his acceptance of it and the subjection of his reason to its authority were acts of violence done to his intellect in despair of ever attaining a solid basis in reason for religious conviction. It is quite possible to confuse in such a concrete judgment a number of suggestions, which we should discriminate if we are to form an estimate of the value of the criticism offered. We shall need to ask, for example, if what it is intended to suggest is that the evidence in existence for the reality of the revelation which Augustine accepted as a true revelation from God is insufficient to validate it; or only that the evidence which was actually before Augustine's mind and on which he personally depended in reaching his decision was insufficient. In the latter case we shall need to ask further if what is meant is that the evidence actually before Augustine's mind would be insufficient to convince us—seems to us in itself insufficient to command credit; or that it was actually insufficient to convince Augustine, so that, despite his protestations of conviction, he remained in reality unconvinced and at heart an actual sceptic all his days. It is the last of these propositions, it will be remembered, that Dr. Harnack affirms; although he does not keep it as rigorously separate from the others as would seem desirable. It is surely one

thing to say that Augustine is open to criticism for giving credit to the Evidences of Christianity and recognizing the revelatory character of the Christian system; and quite another thing to say that Augustine is open to criticism for the particular conception he entertained of the Christian evidences,—the selection he makes of the special items of evidence upon which he personally relies for the validation of the Christian system as a revealed religion; and still quite another thing to suggest that Augustine is open to criticism for his inaccessibility to the evidences of the Christian system as a revelation from God, and for remaining therefore all his life a doubter of the intellect, finding only a precarious peace for his distracted soul in an act of submission to an external authority arbitrarily yielded to in defiance of insatiable scepticism.

It can scarcely be expected that the whole body of the Christian evidences should be subjected to a new critical examination merely because a writer not himself able to look upon them as supplying a satisfactory proof of the Divine origin of the Christian religion, blames Augustine for placing upon them a value beyond that which he is himself able to accord. We must be prepared to find those who resist the force of this evidence themselves, despising those who yield to it as superstitious, or even accusing them of intellectual dishonesty. It surely is enough at this point simply to recognize that this not unnatural tendency of the naturalistic mind is not without its influence upon the proneness in some quarters to speak of Augustine as making a sacrifice of his intellect in throwing himself upon authority in matters of religion. One thing is perfectly clear: if Augustine made such a sacrifice he was himself completely unconscious of doing so. He nowhere betrays the state of mind which is here attributed to him. He speaks always in terms of the most complete conviction of the truth of the Christian religion, and rests himself with entire confidence upon the evidences which appealed to him. To go behind his obviously sincere asseverations of security of mind and



heart, because we are conscious that, in his place, we should have felt less secure, is to push the biographer's (and critic's) privilege of "imputing himself to his victim" to an unwarrantable extreme. Whatever we may feel Augustine ought to have done; whatever we may feel we, in his place, should have done; it certainly is a matter of historical fact that Augustine confidently accepted the Christian revelation as a genuine revelation, and found for his faith in it abundant justification. No fact in his mental history is more patent, or call it flagrant if you will. When in the closing words of his first Christian composition,<sup>87</sup> in the very act of consecrating himself to a life-long search of truth, he declares that "he certainly would never more give up the authority of Christ, because no stronger could be found," he speaks out of an unmistakably sincere conviction. And the note thus struck so far from fading away swells steadily to the end. Clearly the restless heart had found at last its rest: and rest is the characteristic of his Christian life. A sceptic, intellectual or moral, may be found in any man rather than in Augustine. He who in his despair as, in the crumbling of his former beliefs, he almost gave up hope of ever attaining assurance, yet could not fall in with the Academics because he still knew some things to be indisputably true, and only began to wonder whether the right way to truth was known to man—certainly could not lose his confidence after he had discovered the Way and established himself in it.

It remains a matter of interest of course to determine the nature of the grounds on which Augustine was convinced, or sought to convince others, of the truth of the Christian religion. To do so with any fulness would be, however, to write a section of the history of Apologetics, and would find its importance in that connection. We need not go so far afield in seeking to apprehend Augustine's doctrine of authority in religion. What is of primary importance here

<sup>87</sup> *Cont. Acad.* iii. 20. 43. It was the common sentiment of the men of the time: Paulinus of Nola says: *Plurima quaesivi, per singula quaeque cucurri, Sed nihil inveni melius quam credere Christo.*

is merely to ascertain in a simple manner his conception of the sources, nature and seat of this authority and the mode of its validation to men. In the next number of this REVIEW we shall seek to do this with as much completeness as is requisite for our purpose.

*Princeton.*

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

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## AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY.

In a former number of this REVIEW<sup>1</sup> we attempted to give a general exposition of Augustine's doctrine of knowledge and authority, which naturally ran up into some account of his doctrine of authority in religion. The more detailed study of this specific subject we were forced, however, to postpone to another occasion. We wish now to take up this topic and to make as clear as possible Augustine's teaching concerning it.

The cardinal facts to bear in mind are that, to speak broadly, with Augustine the idea of Authority coalesces with that of Revelation, the idea of Revelation with that of Apostolicity, and the idea of Apostolicity with that of Scripture. With him therefore the whole question of authority in religion is summed up in the questions whether there is a revelation from God in existence, where that revelation is to be found, and how it is validated to and made the possession of men: while the master-key to these problems lies in the one word apostolicity. Whatever is apostolic is authoritative, because behind the apostles lies the authority of Christ, who chose, appointed and endowed the apostles to be the founders of His Church; and Christ's authority is the authority of God, whose Son and Revelation

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<sup>1</sup> THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, July, 1907, pp. 353-397.

He is. The great depository of the apostolic revelation is the Holy Scriptures, and these Scriptures become thus to Augustine the supreme proximate seat of authority in religion. The line of descent is, therefore, briefly, God, Christ, the Apostles, the Scriptures,—the Scriptures being conceived as the embodied revelation of God, clothed with His authority as His inspired word, given to us by His accredited messengers, the apostles. Let us see how Augustine expresses himself on each of these points in turn.

On the actual authority of Scripture he certainly expresses himself in no wavering terms. The Holy Scriptures, he tells us, have been “established upon the supreme and heavenly pinnacle of authority”<sup>2</sup> and should therefore always be read “in assurance and security as to their truth”<sup>3</sup> and all their statements accepted as absolutely trustworthy.<sup>4</sup> To them alone among books had he learned to defer this respect and honor,—most firmly to believe that no one of their authors has erred in any respect in writing:<sup>5</sup> for of these books of the prophets and apostles it would be wicked<sup>6</sup> to have any doubt as to their entire freedom from error.<sup>7</sup> “To these canonical Scriptures only”, he repeats,<sup>8</sup> “does he owe that implicit subjection so to follow them alone as to admit no suspicion whatever that their writers could have erred in them in any possible respect, or could possibly have gone wrong in anything.” The accumulated emphases in such passages, no more than fairly represent the strength of Augustine’s conviction that, as he puts it in another place, “it is to the canonical Scriptures alone that he owes unhesi-

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 82 (to Jerome), ii. 5: sanctam scripturam in summo et caelesti auctoritatis culmine collocatam.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: de veritate ejus certus et securus legam.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: veraciter discam.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: i. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Nefarium.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: ad. fin.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*: iii. 24: sicut paulo ante dixi, tantum modo scripturis canonicis hanc ingenuam debeam servitutem, qua eas solas ita sequar, ut conscriptores earum nihil in eis omnino erasse, nihil fallaciter posuisse dubitem.

tating assent."<sup>9</sup> It is this contention accordingly in its most positive form which he opposes endlessly to the Manichæans in his long controversy with them. He points out to Faustus, for example, that a sharp line of demarcation is drawn between the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments and all later writings, precisely in point of authority. The authority of the canonical books, "confirmed from the time of the apostles by the successions of the bishops and the propagations of the churches, has been established in so lofty a position, that every faithful and pious mind submits to it". Other writings on the contrary, of what sort soever they may be, may be read "not with necessity of believing but with liberty of judgment". The same truth may indeed be found in some of these which is found in Scripture, but never the same authority, seeing that none of them can be compared with "the most sacred excellence of the canonical Scriptures". From what is said by other books we may accordingly withhold belief, unless indeed it is demonstrated "either by sound reason or by this canonical authority itself"; but "in this canonical eminence of the Holy Scriptures, even though it be but a single prophet, or apostle, or evangelist that is shown to have placed anything in his Scriptures, by this confirmation of the canon we are not permitted to doubt that it is true".<sup>10</sup> Similarly when writing to the Donatist Cresconius,<sup>11</sup> he refuses to treat even Cyprian as indefectible. "For", says he, "we do no injury to Cyprian when we distinguish his books—whatever they may be—from the canonical authority of the divine Scriptures. For not without reason has there been constituted with such wholesome vigilance that ecclesiastical canon to which belong the assured books of the prophets and apostles, on which we do not dare to pass any judgment at all, and according to which we judge with freedom all other writings whether of believers or of unbelievers". In a word, Augustine defends the absolute authority of every word of

<sup>9</sup> *De natura et gratia*, lxi. 71: sine ulla recusatione consensus.

<sup>10</sup> *Contra Faustum Man.*, xi. 5.

<sup>11</sup> ii. 31, 39.



Scripture and insists that to treat any word of it as unauthoritative is to endanger the whole. This he argues to Jerome<sup>12</sup> and over and over again to the Manichæans, culminating in a most striking passage in which he protests against that subjective dealing with the Scriptures which "makes every man's mind the judge of what in each Scripture he is to approve or disapprove". "This", he sharply declares, "is not to be subject for faith to the authority of Scripture, but to subject Scripture to ourselves: instead of approving a thing because it is read and written in the sublime authority of Scripture, it seems to us written rightly because we approve it".<sup>13</sup>

With no less emphasis Augustine traces the supreme authority which he thus accords to the Scriptures to their apostolicity. Their authority is according to him due in the first instance to the fact that they have been imposed upon the Church as its *corpus juris* by the apostles, who were the accredited agents of Christ in founding the Church. In laying this stress on the principle of apostolicity, he was, of course, only continuing the fixed tradition of the early Church. From the beginning apostolicity had been everywhere and always proclaimed as the mark of canonicity,<sup>14</sup> and apostolicity remained with him the only consciously accepted mark of canonicity.<sup>15</sup> He says expressly that "the truth of the divine Scriptures has been received into the canonical summit of authority, for this reason,—that they are commended for the building up of our faith not by anybody you please, but by the apostles themselves".<sup>16</sup> The proper proof of canonicity is to him therefore just the proof of apostolicity: and when it has been shown of a declaration that it has been made by an apostle, that is to give it

<sup>12</sup> *Ep.*, xl., 3, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Contra Faustum Man.*, xxxii. 19.

<sup>14</sup> This has recently been shown afresh by Kunze, *Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis* (1899), pp. 114 sq., 249 sq. Cf. Cramer, *Nieuwe Bijdragen*, etc., iii, 155.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kunze, as cited, p. 302.

<sup>16</sup> *Ep.* 82 (to Jerome), 7: non a quibuslibet, sed ab ipsis apostolicis, ac per hoc in canonicum auctoritatis culmen recepta.

supreme authority.<sup>17</sup> Though one declaration may be from the writings of one apostle and another “from any other apostle or prophet—such is the quality of canonical authority, that it would not be allowable to doubt of either”.<sup>18</sup> To say “canonical” writings accordingly is to add nothing to speaking of them as genuine writings of the prophets and apostles.<sup>19</sup> The genuineness of the Christian Scriptures as documents of the apostolic age is, therefore, the point of chief importance for him. “What Scriptures can ever possess weight of authority”, he asks with conviction in his voice, “if the Gospels, if the Apostolic Scriptures, do not possess it? Of what book can it ever be certain whose it is, if it be uncertain whether those Scriptures are the Apostles’, which are declared and held to be the Apostles’ by the Church propagated from those very Apostles, and manifested with so great conspicuousness through all nations?”<sup>20</sup> We are not concerned for the moment, however, with the nature of the evidence relied on to prove these books apostolical: what we are pointing out is merely that to Augustine the point of importance was that they should be apostolical, and that this carried with it their canonicity or authority. Their authority was to him rooted directly in their apostolicity.

How completely Augustine’s mind was engrossed with the principle of apostolicity as the foundation of authority is illustrated by a tendency he exhibited to treat as in some sense authoritative everything in the Church for which an apostolic origin can be inferred. The best example of this tendency is afforded by what we may call his doctrine of tradition.<sup>21</sup> This doctrine is, in brief, to the effect that

<sup>17</sup> *Contra Faustum Man.*, xi. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*: vere.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiii. 6.

<sup>21</sup> To Roman Catholic writers Augustine’s doctrine of tradition seems that of the Church of Rome. Cf. Schwane, *Dogmengeschichte der patr. Zeit*, § 89. 9 (pp. 703 sq.), and, though following Schwane closely, yet somewhat more dogmatically, Portalié in Vacant-Mangenot, *Dictionnaire de théol. Cathol.*, i. 2340. Schwane insists that Augustine

where the guidance of the Scriptures fails, the immemorial mind of the universal Church may properly be looked upon as authoritative, on the presumption that what has always been understood by the entire Church is of apostolic origin. Repeated expression is given to this position; for example, in his Anti-Donatist treatise *On Baptism* (c. 400) where he is seeking to defend the validity of heretical baptism and is embarrassed by Cyprian's rejection of it on the plea that Scripture is silent on the subject. Cyprian's principle, "that we should go back to the fountain, that is to apostolical tradition, and thence turn the channel of truth to our own times" he of course heartily accepts;<sup>22</sup> he seeks only to turn it against Cyprian. "Let it be allowed", he says, that the "apostles have given no injunctions" on this point—that is to say, in the canonical Scriptures. It is not impossible, nevertheless, that the custom (*consuetudo*) prevalent in the Church may be rooted in apostolical tradition. For "there are many things which are held by the universal Church and are *on that account* (*per hoc*) fairly (*bene*) believed to be precepts of the apostles, although they are not found written", *i. e.*, in the Scriptures:<sup>23</sup> or, as it is put in an earlier point, "there are many things which are not found in the letters of the apostles, nor yet in the councils of their followers, which yet *because they have been preserved throughout the whole church* (*per universam ecclesiam*) are believed to have been handed down and commended by them".<sup>24</sup>

Even when thus arguing for the apostolicity of tradition, however, Augustine never forgets the superior authority of

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joins oral Apostolic tradition to Scripture as necessary both for its completeness and for its interpretation, and that with reference to doctrine as well as usages; yet admits that to Augustine the Scriptures occupy the first place in authority and contain all things necessary to salvation, and that with adequate clearness; and that only the Scriptures are inspired and infallible (cf. loc. cit. p. 233 sq.). Probably even this is assigning to tradition a much greater rôle than Augustine gave it, particularly with reference to doctrine.

<sup>22</sup> *De Bapt. contra Donat.*, v. 26, 37.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 7. 12; cf. iv. 6. 9.

Scripture. Perhaps the most instructive passage in this point of view is one in which he is investigating the value of baptism of infants. After appealing to the tradition of the universal Church he proceeds as follows: "And if anyone seeks a divine authority in this matter—although what is held by the universal Church, and that not as a thing instituted by councils but as of primitive inheritance (*nec conciliis institutum sed semper retentum est*) is most properly (*rectissime*) believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority,—we are able in any case (*tamen*) to form a true conjecture of the value of the sacrament of baptism in the case of infants from the circumcision of the flesh . . ."<sup>25</sup> Here, in the very act of vindicating apostolicity, and therefore authority, for universal primitive custom, language is employed which seems to betray that Augustine was wont to conceive "divine authority" (*auctoritas divina*) the peculiar property of Scripture. In another Anti-Donatist treatise—the work against the grammarian Cresconius (c. 406)<sup>26</sup>—we read somewhat similarly that "although no doubt no example" of the custom under discussion "is adduced from the canonical Scriptures, the truth of these Scriptures is nevertheless held by us in this matter, since what we do is the *placitum* of the universal Church, which is commended by the authority of these very Scriptures; and accordingly since the Holy Scriptures cannot deceive, whoever is afraid of being led astray by the obscurity of this question should consult with respect to it that Church which without any ambiguity is pointed out by the Holy Scriptures".

This care in preserving the superior right of Scripture is not to be accounted for as due to the exigencies of the controversy with the Donatists. It reappears in more formal form in purely didactic teaching,—in a reply, for instance, which Augustine made to a series of questions addressed to him by a correspondent on matters of ritual observance.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 24. 31.

<sup>26</sup> *Opus cit.* i. 23. 39.

<sup>27</sup> *Epp.*, 54 and 55 (to Januarius,—the 40th of that name in Smith and Wace,—about 400).

Here Augustine distinguishes carefully between three varieties of such observances: those prescribed by Scripture, those commended by the practice of the universal Church, those of merely local usage. When an observance is prescribed by the authority of divine Scripture, no doubt can be admitted but that we must do precisely as we read.<sup>28</sup> Similarly also only insane insolence would doubt that we ought to follow the practice of the whole Church, throughout the world.<sup>29</sup> In matters of varying usage in different parts of the Church, on the other hand, we must beware of erecting our own custom into a guide, and should conform ourselves freely to the custom that obtains in the Church where we may chance from time to time to be,—in short, follow Ambrose's wise rule of "doing when we are in Rome as the Romans do".<sup>30</sup> There is nothing that Augustine deprecates more than the arbitrary multiplication of ordinances, by which, he says, the state of Christians which God wished to be free—appointing to them only a few sacraments and those easy of observance—is assimilated to the burdensomeness of Judaism. He could wish therefore that all ordinances should be unhesitatingly abolished which are neither prescribed by the authority of the Holy Scriptures, nor have been appointed by the councils of bishops, nor have been confirmed by the custom of the universal Church<sup>31</sup>—in which sentence the selection of the terms so that "authority" is ascribed to Scripture alone is not unwitting.

Elsewhere, no doubt, Augustine uses the term "authority" more loosely of the other sources of "custom" also. This is true, for example, of the opening paragraphs of these very letters. Here he carefully draws out the three-fold distinction among ordinances, which he applies throughout. The fundamental principle of the discussion on which he

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<sup>28</sup> *Ep.* 54, v. 6: non sit dubitandum quin ita facere debeamus ut legimus.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; quid tota per orbem frequentat ecclesia.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 3, where a pleasant anecdote is told of Ambrose's advice to Monnica to follow his example in this.

<sup>31</sup> *Epist.* 55, xix. 35; cf. xiv. 27, where the "authority" of the divine Scriptures and the "consent" of the whole Church are brought together.



is about to enter, he tells us, is that our Lord Jesus Christ has subjected us to an easy yoke and a light burden, laying upon us only few sacraments and those not difficult of observance. He then adds: "But with respect to those not written but traditional matters to which we hold, observed as they are throughout the whole world, what we are to understand is that they are retained as commended and instituted by the Apostles themselves, or by plenary councils, the authority of which in the Church is very useful".<sup>32</sup> The term "authority" happens to be employed here only of what the context tells us is the least weighty of the three "authorities" to the observances commended by which we should yield obedience: the Scriptures, universal primitive custom arguing apostolic appointment, and conciliary enactment. We may look somewhat roughly, perhaps, upon these three "authorities" as representing to Augustine respectively the authority of "Scripture", the authority of "tradition", and the authority of "the Church"; and if so, then these three "authorities"—the Scriptures, Tradition, the Church—took rank in his mind in that order. First and above all is the "authority" of Scripture, which is just the infallible Word of God, whose every word is to be believed and every precept obeyed just as it stands written. Then comes the "authority" of immemorial universal tradition, on the presumption that just because it is immemorially universal it may, or must, be apostolic; and if apostolic then also of divine appointment. Last of all comes the "authority" of the Church itself, for which no claim is made of divine infallibility, since that is an attribute of Scripture alone,—nor even of such constructive apostolicity as may be presumed of immemorial tradition; but only of righteous jurisdiction and Spirit-led wisdom. Neither the individual bishop, nor any body of bishops assembled in council, up to the whole number in the plenary or ecumenical council, though each

<sup>32</sup> *Epist.* 54. 1: illa autem quae non scripta sed tradita custodimus, quae quidem toto terrarum orbe servantur, datur intelligi, vel ab ipsis apostolis, vel plenariis conciliis, quorum est in ecclesia saluberrima auctoritas commendata atque statuta retineri.

and all are clothed with authority appropriate to the place and function of each, is safeguarded from error, or elevated above subsequent criticism and correction. This high altitude of indefectible infallibility is attained by Scripture alone.<sup>33</sup>

An appropriate authority is granted of course to bishops, each in his proper sphere: but no one of them is free from error or exempt from testing and correction by the Holy Scriptures. Its own appropriate authority belongs similarly to councils of every grade: but no one of them can claim to have seen truth simply and seen it whole. If the Donatists appealed to Cyprian and his council, for example, Augustine, while ready to yield to Cyprian all the deference that was his due, did not hesitate to declare roundly, "The authority of Cyprian has no terrors for me",<sup>34</sup> and to assert that no council is exempt from error.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Reuter, *Augustin. Studien*, p. 329: "There is not, to my knowledge, to be found in Augustine, any statement giving unambiguous expression to this notion [of the infallibility of the Church]. We read, *Contra Cresconium* ii. 33. 39, 'Since Holy Scripture cannot err'; but I have sought in vain for any declaration corresponding to this with reference to the Church. The assertion, 'Outside the Church, there is no salvation' is nowhere complemented by this other one, 'The Church cannot err.'" Reuter proceeds to say that, although this precise formula does not occur, yet "important premisses of it" may be found in the Anti-Manichæan treatises; but here opinions may lawfully differ. On what follows in the text Reuter, pp. 328 sq., 333 sq., may be profitably consulted; cf. also Schmidt, in Liebner's *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* (1861), vi. 197-255, esp. 234 sq.

<sup>34</sup> *De Bapt. contr. Donat.* ii. 1. 2: non me terret auctoritas Cypriani. This does not mean, of course, that he denies all authority to Cyprian; but only that he knows the limits of Cyprian's authority. So, when he says, *De Bapt.* iii. 3. 5. *med*: "No authority (nulla auctoritas), clearly, deters me from seeking the truth", he is not proclaiming an abstract indefeasable liberty in seeking the truth, as A. Dorner (*Augustinus*, p. 236) appears to suppose (cf. Reuter, *op. cit.* 335, note 4), but means only to say that Cyprian expressly leaves the path open and does not interpose his authority (whatever that may amount to) to shut off free investigation. Accordingly, he repeats at the end of the paragraph more explicitly: "We have then liberty of investigation conceded to us by Cyprian's own moderate and truthful declaration." The assertion of a zeal for truth which takes precedence of all else, apparently wrongly attributed to this passage, may be more justly found in the remark

For, he explains at length,<sup>35</sup> no one "is ignorant that the Holy Canonical Scriptures, as well of the Old as of the New Testament, are contained within their own determined (*certis*) limits, and that they are so set above all later letters of bishops that with respect to them it is not possible to doubt or to dispute whether anything that stands written in them is true or right, while all the letters of bishops which, since the closing of the canon have been written or are being written, are open to confutation, either by the wiser discourses of some one who happens to be more skilled in the particular matter, or by the weightier authority or more learned prudence of other bishops, or by councils,—if there chances to be anything in them that deviates from the truth." And as little is anyone ignorant "that the councils themselves which are held in the several regions and provinces must without any evasion yield to the authority of plenary councils which are assembled from the whole Christian world; and that even the earlier plenary councils themselves are corrected by later ones, when by some actual trial, what was closed has been opened, and what was hidden has come to light". We perceive accordingly that the limiting phrases in the famous passages in which Augustine declares the Holy Scriptures the sole infallible authority in the world are by no means otiose. He means just what he says when he writes to Jerome, "For I confess to your charity that I have learned to defer this respect and honor to those Scriptural books only (*solis*) which are now called canonical, that I believe most firmly that no one of those authors has erred in any respect in writing",<sup>36</sup> or again when he says in another place, "In the writings of such authors"—that is to say Catholic writers—"I feel myself free to use my own judgment, since I owe unhesitating assent to *nothing*

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which occurs in the *Contra. Ep. Man. Fund.* iv. 5, to the effect that "if the truth is so clearly proved as to leave no possibility of doubt, it takes precedence of all things which keep me in the Catholic Church". Cf. Schmidt, as cited above.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 3. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ep.* 82, 3.

*but the canonical Scriptures*".<sup>37</sup> A presumptive apostolicity may lend to the immemorial customs of the universal Church an authority which only arrogance can resist; and to the Church which was founded by the apostles, and made by them a depository of the tradition of truth, a high deference is due in all its deliverances: but to the Scriptures alone belongs supreme authority because to them alone belongs an apostolicity which coalesces with their entire fabric. They alone present us with what we may perhaps call "fixed apostolicity".

The ground of this conception of apostolicity as the principle of divine authority lies ultimately in the relation in which the apostles stood to Christ. The apostles, as Christ's accredited agents, empowered by His Spirit for their work, are, in effect, Christ Himself speaking. This idea underlies the entirety of Augustine's reasoning, and is very fully developed in a striking passage which occurs at the close of the first book of the *Harmony of the Gospels*.<sup>38</sup> He tells us here that our Lord, "who sent the prophets before His own descent, also despatched the apostles after His ascension. . . . Therefore, since these disciples have written matters which He declared and spoke to them, it ought not by any means to be said that He has written nothing Himself; for the truth is that His members have accomplished only that which they became acquainted with by the repeated statements of the Head. For all that He was minded to give for our perusal on the subject of His own doings and saying, He commanded to be written by those disciples, whom He thus used as if they were His own hands. Whoever apprehends this correspondence of unity and this concordant service of the members, all in harmony in the discharge of diverse offices under the Head, will receive the account which he gets in the Gospel through the narrative constructed by the disciples, in the same kind of spirit in which he might look upon the actual hand of the Lord Himself,

<sup>37</sup> *De natura et gratia*, lxi. 71.

<sup>38</sup> *De consensu Evang.* i. 35. 54.

which he bore in that body that He made His own, were he to see it engaged in the act of writing". Apostolicity therefore spells authority because it also spells inspiration: what the apostles have given the Church as its law is the inspired Word of God. The canonical Scriptures are accordingly "the august pen of the Spirit" of God;<sup>39</sup> and in reading them we are, through the words written by their human authors, learning "the will of God in accordance with which we believe these men to have spoken",<sup>40</sup> seeing that it is "the Holy Spirit who with admirable wisdom and care for our welfare has arranged the Holy Scriptures" in all their details,<sup>41</sup> and has spoken in them in perfect foresight of all our needs and perplexities.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly Augustine makes the Lord declare to him, "O man, verily what my Scripture says, I say"; and this is the reason that we may be assured that the Scripture is true,—because it is He that is true, or rather the Truth Itself, who has given it forth.<sup>43</sup> Thus the circle of the authority of the Scriptures completes itself. The Scriptures occupy the pinnacle of authority because they are the Word of God, just God's congealed speech to us. We know them to be such because they have been given to us as such by the apostles who were appointed and empowered precisely for the task of establishing the Church of God on earth, and who are therefore the vehicles for the transmission to us of the will of God and the Word which embodies that will.

But have the Scriptures which we have and which have acquired canonical authority in the Church, really been given to us by the apostles as the Word of God? How shall we assure ourselves of these Scriptures that they possess that

<sup>39</sup> *Conf.* vii. 21. 27: venerabilem stilum Spiritus Tui.

<sup>40</sup> *De Doctr. Christ.*, ii. 5. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 27. 38: "assuredly the Holy Spirit who through him [the human author] spoke these words, foresaw that this interpretation would occur to the reader. . . ."

<sup>43</sup> *Conf.* xiii. 29. 44: O homo, nempe quod Scriptura mea dicit, ego dico. . . . O Domine, nonne ista Scriptura tua vera est, quoniam tu verax et veritas edidisti eam?



apostolicity which lends to them their revelatory character and makes them our supreme authority? The answer returned by Augustine to this question has been most variously conceived, and indeed, out of the several interpretations given it, heterogeneous traditions of his teaching have grown up as discordant at the extremes as the formal principles of Romanism and Protestantism. If we could content ourselves with a simple concrete statement, it doubtless would not be far astray to say briefly that Augustine received the Scriptures as apostolic at the hands of the Church; and that this is the meaning of his famous declaration, "I would not believe the Gospel except I were moved thereto by the authority of the Catholic Church". But the question at once arises whether this appeal to the Church is for conclusive testimony or for authoritative decision. Divergent interpretations at once intervene, and we find ourselves therefore little advanced by our concrete response. The precise question that is raised by these divergent interpretations is whether Augustine validated to himself the Scriptures as apostolic in origin and therefore the revealed Word of God by appropriate evidence, more or less fully drawn out and more or less wisely marshalled; or declined all argument and cut the knot by resting on the sheer enactment of the contemporary Church. In the latter case Augustine would appear as the protagonist of the Romish principle of the supreme authority of the Church, subordinating even the Scriptures to this living authority. In the former he would appear as the forerunner of the Protestant doctrine of the supreme authority of Scripture.

The proper evidence of the apostolicity of the canonical Scriptures is, of course, historical. Apostolicity is a historical conception and its actuality can be established only on historical evidence. When Augustine declares of Scripture that it owes its authority to its apostolicity, he would seem, therefore, already to have committed himself to dependence for the validation of the authority of Scripture upon historical evidence. Many others than the Romanists,

however, have found Augustine defective in his teaching or at least in his practice at this point. Neander remarks that Augustine having been brought by Manichæism into doubt as to which were the true documents of the Christian religion, and not being prepared for a historical investigation to determine the truth of the matter, had nothing left him but to fall back upon the tradition of the Church;<sup>44</sup> and this opinion is echoed by Reuter,<sup>45</sup> and sharpened by Harnack.<sup>46</sup> It is to be observed, however, that, when we have suggested that Augustine's dependence was placed wholly on the "tradition of the Church",<sup>47</sup> as Neander phrases it, we have not removed the ground of his conviction out of the sphere of historical judgments. To say 'tradition' is indeed only to say 'history' over again. And the question at this point is not whether the historical evidence which Augustine rested upon was good historical evidence, but whether he rested upon historical evidence at all, rather than upon the bare authority of the contemporary Church. It will be useful to recall here Augustine's discussion of 'tradition' to which we have just had occasion to advert. We will remember that he expressly distinguishes between 'tradition' and 'Scripture', and decisively subordinates the authority of 'tradition' to that of 'Scripture'. It would certainly be incongruous to suppose him to be at the same moment basing the superior authority of Scripture on the inferior authority of tradition,—in any other sense than that in which fact is based upon its appropriate evidence. We should bear in mind, moreover, that his appeal to 'tradition' was in the instances brought before us distinctly of the nature of an appeal to testimony, and as such was distinctly discriminated from an appeal to the 'Church', speaking, say, through a bishop or a council, and as distinctly preferred to it. His purpose was to validate certain customs prevalent in the Church as

<sup>44</sup> *Katholismus und Protestantismus* (1863), p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> *Augustin. Studien*, p. 491, note 1.

<sup>46</sup> *History of Dogma*, v. p. 80; cf. Loofs, *Leitfaden*, etc.

<sup>47</sup> die Ueberlieferung der Kirche.

incumbent on all. This he does, not directly by asserting as sufficient the authority of the contemporary Church, as if the Church was as such clothed with the right to determine the practice of its adherents by a mere *ipse dixit*. He proceeds, rather, indirectly, by seeking to establish the apostolicity of these customs by an appeal to the immemorial universality of their tradition in the Church. Obviously 'tradition' is treated here not as authority, but as evidence; and the "authority" thus validated by tradition is treated as superior to the "authority" of the contemporary Church speaking through whatever channels. It certainly would be incongruous to suppose that he was nevertheless consciously basing the authority of Scripture, which was to him superior to that of even tradition, on the bare authority of the Church, which he defines to be inferior to either. His appeal to the 'Church', as by its 'authority' moving men to believe the 'gospel' can scarcely be understood otherwise, therefore, than as a broad statement that the Scriptures are validated as apostolic and therefore authoritative in some way by the Church. What is meant, when this is made specific, is, obviously, that the testimony of the whole Church, borne unbrokenly from the beginning, to the apostolicity of the canonical Scriptures is conclusive of the fact.

In his appeals to the 'Church' after this fashion Augustine certainly had in mind the Church as a whole, as extended through both space and time; and his fundamental contention is that the testimony of this Church is of decisive weight to the origin of her Scriptures in apostolic gift, and therefore to the authority of the Scriptures as an inspired revelation of the divine will. Such an appeal is distinctly of the nature of an appeal to historical testimony. But the nature of this appeal would not be essentially altered were we to omit consideration of the extension of the Church in time and focus attention on its extension in space alone, as many suppose Augustine to have done. To appeal to the testimony of the universal Church is to adduce historical evidence. Even if we do not accord such weight

to this evidence as was obviously accorded to it by Augustine, this difference in our estimate of its conclusiveness should not blind us to its nature. We may smile if we will at the easiness of Augustine's historical conscience, and wonder that he could content himself with testimony so untested. But we ought to recognize that in so doing we are criticising his sense of historical values, not disproving that his resort to the Church was precisely for testimony.

Nor is it very difficult to do serious injustice to Augustine's sense of historical values in a matter of this kind. It is very much a matter of times and seasons. An appeal to the testimony of the universal Church at the close of the nineteenth or at the opening of the twentieth century is not altogether without historical value. But we must not fail to bear in mind that an appeal to the testimony of the universal Church at the close of the fourth or the opening of the fifth century is something very different from an appeal to its testimony at the close of the nineteenth or the opening of the twentieth century. Certainly the testimony of the universal Church at the close of the first or the opening of the second century is still treated in wide circles, as in such a thing as the apostolic gift of the Scriptures, conclusive. And it is not an easy matter accurately to estimate exactly the rate at which the value of this testimony decreases with the lapse of time. Are we so sure that its value had depreciated by the close of the fourth century to such an extent as to render an appeal to the Church as witness-bearer, at that period, absurd? The Church to which the Scriptures were committed by the apostolic college, by whom it was founded and supplied with its *corpus juris*,—is not this Church the proper witness to the apostolicity of the Scriptures it has received from the hands of its apostolic founders? And is it strange that it has always been appealed to to bear its testimony to this fact? No doubt, as time passed and the years intervening between the commission of the Scriptures to the Church and its witness-bearing to them increased, this testimony became ever weaker as

testimony. And no doubt as it became weaker as testimony it naturally took to itself more and more the character of arbitrary authentication. No doubt, further, it was by this slow transmutation of testimony into authentication that the Romish conception of Scripture as dependent upon the Church for its authentication gradually came into being. And no doubt still further the change was wrought practically before it was effected theoretically. Men came practically to rest upon the authority of the Church for the accrediting of Scripture, before they recognized that what they received from the Church was anything more than testimony. The theoretic recognition came inevitably, however, in time. So soon as the defect in the testimony of the Church arising from the lapse of time began to be observed, men were either impelled to cure the defect by an appeal to the Church of the past, that is to say by a historical investigation; or else tempted to rest satisfied with the authority of the living Church. The latter course as the line of easiest resistance, falling in, moreover, as it did, with the increasingly high estimate placed on the Church as mediatrix of religion, was inevitably ultimately taken; and the Romish doctrine resulted. Let it be allowed that in this outline we have a true sketch of the drift of thought through the Patristic Church. It still is not obvious that this development had proceeded so far by the close of the fourth century that Augustine's appeal to the 'Church' to authenticate the 'Gospel' must be understood as an appeal to the authority strictly so called rather than to the testimony of the Church. On the face of it, it does not seem intrinsically absurd to suppose that Augustine may still at that date have made his appeal to the Church with his mind set upon testimony. And when we come to scrutinize the actual appeals which he made, it seems clear enough that his mind rested on testimony.

Perhaps there is no better way to bring the fact clearly before us than to note the passages quoted by the Romish expositors with a view to supporting their view that Aug-



Augustine based the authority of the Scriptures immediately upon the dogmatic authority of the Church. Thus, for example, Professor E. Portalié writes as follows:<sup>48</sup>

“Above Scripture and tradition is the living authority of the Church. It alone guarantees to us the Scriptures, according to the celebrated declaration in the treatise *Against the Epistle of Manichæus called Fundamental*, v. 6: ‘I indeed would not believe the Gospel except the authority of the Catholic Church moved me’. Compare *Against Faustus the Manichæan* XXII. 79; XXVIII. 2.”

We reserve for the moment comment on “the celebrated declaration” from the *Contra Epist. Man. Fund.* and content ourselves with observing that if it indeed implies that Augustine based the authority of Scripture on that of the “living” Church, it receives no support from the companion passages cited. They certainly appeal to the “historical” Church, that is to say adduce the testimony of the Church extended in time rather than the bare authority of the Church extended in space. So clear is this in the latter case<sup>49</sup> that Augustine in it sets the testimony of the Manichæans to the genuineness of their founder’s writings side by side, as the same in kind, with the testimony of the Church to the genuineness of the Apostolic writings. I believe, he says, that the book you produce is really Manichæus’, because from the days of Manichæus until to-day it has been kept in continuous possession and estimation as his, in the society of the Manichæans: similarly you must believe that the book we produce as Matthew’s is his on the same kind of testimony in the Church. To the fixed succession of bishops among the Christians is assigned no different kind of authority than is allowed to the fixed succession of presiding officers among the Manichæans; in both alike this succession is adduced merely as a safeguard for trustworthy transmission. No doubt Augustine represents the testimony of the Church as indefinitely more worthy of credit than that of the Manichæans, but this is a different matter:

<sup>48</sup> Vacant-Mangenot, *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, i. 2341.

<sup>49</sup> *Contra Faustum Manichæum*, xxviii, 2.

*gradus non mutant speciem*. Similarly, in the former citation<sup>50</sup> Augustine's appeal is not specifically to the Church of his time, but to the "holy and learned men" who were living in the time of the writers—real or alleged—of the books in question, who, he says, would be in position to know the truth of the matter. Nothing can be clearer in this case either, than that the point of Augustine's argument turns on the validity of the testimony of the Church, not on the dogmatic authority of the Church.

The note struck by these passages is sustained in all Augustine's discussions of the matter and sometimes swells to an even clearer tone. Take for instance the *argumentum ad absurdum* with which he plies Faustus<sup>51</sup> to the effect that we can never be assured of the authorship of any book "if we doubt the apostolic origin of those books which are attributed to the apostles by the Church which the apostles themselves founded, and which occupies so conspicuous a place in all lands". Clearly the appeal to the Church here is for testimony, not for authorization, as is evidenced very plainly in the sequel. For Augustine goes on to contrast the hardness of the Manichæans in attempting to doubt the apostolicity of books so attested, with their equal hardness in accepting as apostolic books brought forward solely by heretics, the founders of whose sect lived long after the days of the apostles; and then adduces parallels from classical authors. There are, he tells us, spurious books, in circulation under the name of Hippocrates, known to be spurious among other things from the circumstance "that they were not recognized as his at the time when his authorship of his genuine productions was determined". And who doubts the genuineness of these latter? Would not a denial of it be greeted with derision—"simply because there is a succession of testimonies to these books from the time of Hippocrates to the present day, which makes it unreasonable either now or hereafter to have any doubt on the subject". Is it not by this continuity of the chain of evidence

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii. 79.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiii. 6

that any book is authenticated—Plato’s, Aristotle’s, Cicero’s, Varro’s—or any of the Christian authors’—“the belief becoming more certain as it becomes more general, up to our own day”? Is not the very principle of authentication this: the transmission of information from contemporaries through successive generations? How then can anyone be so blinded by passion as “to deny the ability of the Church of the apostles—a community of brethren as numerous as they were faithful—to transmit their writings unaltered to posterity, as the original seats of the apostles have been occupied by a continuous succession of bishops to the present day?” Are we to deal with the apostolic writings differently from the natural dealing we accord day by day to ordinary ones,—whether of profane or religious authors?<sup>52</sup>

The matter is not different when at an earlier place in the same treatise<sup>53</sup> he takes up much the same point on which he is arguing in the famous passage “I would not believe the Gospel, etc.”. When Manichæus calls himself an apostle, he says, it is a shameless falsehood, “for it is well known that this heresy began not only after Tertullian, but after Cyprian”. And what evidence can Manichæus or Faustus bring forward, which will satisfy anyone not inclined to believe either their books or themselves? “Will Faustus take our apostles as witnesses? Unless he can find some apostles in life, he must read their writings: and these are all against him. . . . He cannot pretend that their writings have been tampered with; for that would be to attack the credit of his own witnesses. Or if he produces his own manuscripts of the apostolic writings, he must also obtain

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *ibid.* xxii. 19: “Why not rather submit to the authority of the Gospel which is so well-founded, so confirmed, so generally acknowledged and admired, and which has an unbroken series of testimonies from the Apostles down to our own day, that you may have an intelligent belief?” Cf. also xi. 2, xiii. 4, xxxiii. 6 and 9. Because Augustine was deeply impressed by the catholicity of the Church’s testimony (as e. g., *De morr. eccles. cath.* xxix. 61) is no reason why we should fail to see that he is equally impressed by its continuity,—that is, by its historical character.

<sup>53</sup> xiii. 4. 5.

for them the authority of the Churches founded by the apostles themselves, by showing that they have been preserved and transmitted by their sanction. It will be difficult for a man to make me believe him on the evidence of writings which derive their authority from his own word, which I do not believe. . . . The authority of our books, which is confirmed by the agreement of so many nations, supported by a succession of apostles, bishops, and councils, is against you. Your books have no authority, for it is an authority maintained by only a few and these the worshippers of an untruthful God and Christ. . . . The established authority of the Scriptures must outweigh every other: for it derives new confirmation from the progress of events which happen, as Scripture proves, in fulfilment of the predictions made so long before their occurrence." Of course this is a piece of polemic argumentation, not a historical investigation: but the gist of the polemic is simply that the Scriptures of the Christians owe their authority to a valid historical vindication of them as of apostolic origin, while the Scriptures of the Manichæans lack all authority because they lack such a validation. Augustine does not think of such a thing as simply opposing the authority of the Church to the Manichæan contentions; and much less of course does he take a roundabout way to the same result, by opposing to them the authority of Scriptures which owe all their authority to the mere *ipse dixit* of the Church. If he speaks of authority as given to sacred books only "through the Churches of Christ", it is clear that this does not mean that these churches communicate to these Scriptures an authority inherent in the Churches, but only that it is by their testimony that that supreme authority which belongs to the Scriptures from their apostolic origin is vindicated to them, as indeed it is confirmed to them by other testimonies also, those, to wit, of miracles and fulfilled prophesy and the consent of the nations and the succession of apostles, bishops, and councils, to confine ourselves to items enumerated here. Surely it cannot be doubted that here also Augustine's appeal to the

Church as authenticating the Scriptures is to the Church as a witness, not as an authorizer.

It is natural to turn from this passage immediately to the closely related one in the treatise *Against Manichæus' Epistle called Fundamental*, in which the famous words, 'I would not believe the Gospel, etc.', occur. If the passage which we have just had before us is rather a piece of sharp polemics than a historical investigation, much more this. Augustine proposes here to join argument with the Manichæans on the pure merits of the question at issue between them. He wishes to approach the consideration of their claims as would a stranger who was for the first time hearing their Gospel: and as they promise nothing less than demonstration he demands that they give him nothing less than demonstration before asking of him assent.<sup>54</sup> He warns them that he is held to the Catholic Church by many bonds, which it will be hard to loosen: so that their task of convincing him on the ground of pure reason will not be an easy one. He has found a very pure wisdom in the Catholic Church—not indeed attained to in this life by more than a few spiritual men, while the rest walk by faith, but nevertheless shining steadily forth for all who have eyes to see it. He has been deeply impressed by the wide extension of the Church. The authority it exercises,—“inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, augmented by love, established by antiquity”—has very strongly moved him. The unbroken succession of rulers in the Church possesses for him a great weight of evidence. He confesses that the very name of 'Catholic'—retained unchallenged amid so many heresies,—has affected him deeply. What have the Manichæans to offer him which would justify him in setting aside these and such inducements to remain a Catholic? Nothing but the “promise of the truth” (*sola veritatis pollicitatio*). The “promise” of the truth, observe: not “the truth” itself. If the latter,—why, Augustine gives up the contest at once. For he allows without dispute, that if they give him truth itself—so clearly

<sup>54</sup> *Contra Epist. Manich. Fundam.* iii. 3.



the truth that it cannot be doubted,—*that* is something that is to be preferred to all these things which he has enumerated as holding him in the Catholic Church,—these and all other things that can be imagined as holding him there. For nothing is so good as truth. But he persistently demands that there must be something more than a “promise” of truth before he can separate himself from the Catholic Church,—or rather, as he puts it, before he can be moved “from that faith which binds his soul with ties so many and so strong to the Christian religion”. It is, then, we perceive, strict demonstration which Augustine is asking of the Manichæans, and he conducts the argument on that basis.

Turning at once to Manichæus’s *Fundamental Epistle* as a succinct depository of nearly all which the Manichæans believe, he quotes its opening sentence: “Manichæus, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the providence of God the Father”. There he stops immediately to demand proof,—proof, remember, not mere assertion. You have promised me truth, he says,—demonstrated truth: and this is what you give me. Now, I tell you shortly, I do not believe it. Will you prove it to me: or will you, in defiance of the whole claim of the Manichæans, that they ask faith of no man save on the ground of demonstration, simply demand of me belief without clear and sound proof? If you propose proof, I will wait for it. Perhaps you will turn to the Gospel and seek there a testimony to Manichæus. But suppose I do not believe the Gospel? Are you to depend for your proof—you who differentiate yourselves from Christians in this, that while they demand faith, you offer them demonstration and ask belief of nothing until you have demonstrated it,—are *you* to depend for your proof on this very faith of the Christians? For observe, my faith in the Gospel rests on the authority of the Catholic Church. And moreover, I find myself in this quandary: the same Church that tells me to believe the Gospel tells me not to believe Manichæus. Choose, then, which you will. If I am to believe the Catholics, then I cannot believe Manichæus—for they tell me not

to. If I am not to believe the Catholics, then, you cannot use the Gospel, because, it was out of the preaching of the Catholics that I have been brought to believe the Gospel. Or if you say I am to believe them in this one matter and not in the other—I am scarcely so foolish as to put my faith thus at your arbitrary disposal, to believe or not believe as you dictate, on no assigned ground. It was agreed that you should not ask faith from me without clear proof—according to your universal boast that you demand no belief without precedent demonstration. It is clear, then, that to render such a proof you must not appeal to the Gospel. “If you hold to the Gospel, I will hold to those by whose teaching I have come to believe the Gospel; by their instructions I will put no credit in you whatever. And if by any chance you should be able to find anything really clear as to the apostolicity of Manichæus you will weaken the authority of the Catholics for me, since they instruct me not to believe you; and this authority having been weakened I shall no longer be able to believe the Gospel for it was through them that I came to believe it.” The upshot of it is that if no clear proof of Manichæus’ apostleship is to be found in the Gospel, I shall credit the Catholics rather than you; while if there is such to be found in the Gospel I shall believe neither them nor you. Where then is your demonstration of the apostleship of Manichæus—that I should believe it? Of course I do not mean I do not believe the Gospel. I do believe it, and believing it I find no way of believing you. You can point out neither in it nor in any other book faith in which I confess, anything about this absurd apostleship of Manichæus. But it is certainly evident that your promise to demonstrate to me your tenets signally fails in this case on any supposition.

This is Augustine’s argument in this famous passage. Undoubtedly the exact interpretation of its implications with respect to the seat of authority in Christianity is attended with considerable difficulty. And it is not altogether strange that the Romanists have seized upon it as subordi-

nating the 'Gospel' to the 'Church': nor even that they have been followed in this, not merely by extreme rationalists predisposed to every interpretation of a Patristic writer which tends to support their notion that the clothing of Scripture with absolute authority was a late and unhistorical dogmatic development,<sup>55</sup> but also by many scholars intent only upon doing complete justice to Augustine's opinions.<sup>56</sup> There are serious difficulties, however, in the way of this interpretation of the passage. One of them is that it would in that case be out of accord with the entirety of Augustine's teaching elsewhere. It is quite true that elsewhere also he speaks of the authority of the Church, and even establishes the Church on the "summit of authority". But in all such passages he speaks obviously of the Church rather as the instrument of the spread of the saving truth than as the foundation on which the truth rests,—in a word as the vehicle rather than the seat of authority.<sup>57</sup> And in general, as we have already seen, Augustine's allusions to the Church as "the pillar and ground of the truth" throw the stress on its function of witness-bearing to the truth rather than found the truth on its bare *ipse dixit*. It is scarcely likely that he has spoken in a contrary sense in our present passage. We must not permit it to fall out of sight that Augustine's point of view in this passage is that of one repelling the Manichæan claim of strict demonstration of the truth of their teaching. His rejoinder amounts to saying that they cannot ground a demonstration upon a Gospel accepted only on faith. The contrast at this point is not between the weakness of the basis on which they accept their tenets and the incomparable weight of the authority of the Church on which Christians accept the 'Gospel'. On the contrary, the contrast is between the great-

<sup>55</sup> Cf. e. g. H. J. Holtzmann, *Kanon und Tradition* (1859), pp. 2, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. e. g. Harnack, *Hist. Dog.* v. 80; Loofs, *Leitfaden d. DG.*; Dorner, *Augustinus*; Kunze, *Glaubenslehre*, etc.

<sup>57</sup> Portalié, as cited, 2413, adduces in proof that Augustine places the Church "above even Scripture and tradition", *De utilitate credendi* xvii. 35, comparing *Ep.* 118, 32.

ness of their claims to demonstration and the weakness of its basis—nothing but the ‘Gospel’ which is accepted on “authority” not on “demonstration”—on “faith” not on “reason”,—in effect, on “testimony”, not on “sight”. In a word, the “authority of the Church” is adduced here not as superlatively great—so great that, in the face of it, the Manichæan claims must fall away let them be grounded in what they may; but rather as incongruously inadequate to support the weight the Manichæan must put on it if he is to build up his structure of demonstration. The Manichæan undertakes a demonstration, scorning a faith that rests on authority: and then actually wishes to rest that demonstration on a premise which has no other basis than a faith that rests on authority. He cannot *demonstrate* that Manichæus was an Apostle of Christ on the testimony of a ‘Gospel’ which itself is accepted on the *authority* of the Catholic Church: ‘authority’ being used here in its contrast with ‘reason’, not with ‘testimony’, and in pursuance of Augustine’s general contention that all religious truth must begin with faith on authority and not with demonstration on reason. This being the case, so far is the passage from predicating that Augustine esteemed the ‘authority’ of the Church as ‘the highest of all’ as the Romish contention insists,<sup>58</sup> that its very gist is that the testimony of the Church is capable of establishing only that form of conviction known as ‘faith’ and therefore falls hopelessly short of ‘demonstration’.

Such being the case we cannot be surprised that in all ages there has been exhibited a tendency among those more or less emancipated from the Romish tradition to deny that even this famous passage asserts the supreme authority of the contemporary Church. Striking instances may be found for example in William Occam<sup>59</sup> and Marsilius of

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Portalié, as cited, 2413 and 2341.

<sup>59</sup> Occam explains that the *ecclesia quae majoris auctoritatis est quam evangelista, est illa ecclesia cujus auctor evangelii pars esse agnoscitur* (Goldasti mon. tom. i. fol. 402). That is to say, he understands the Church here as projected through time, and as including even Jesus

Padua<sup>60</sup> in the fourteenth century and in John Wessel<sup>61</sup> in the fifteenth: and examples are not wanting throughout the whole period of papal domination.<sup>62</sup> Of course the early Protestant controversialists take their place in this series. With them the matter was even less than with William Occam and Marsilius a merely academical question. In their revolt from the dogmatic authority of the Church and their appeal to the Scriptures alone as the sole source and norm of divine truth, they were met by the citation of this passage from Augustine. As on its theological side the Reformation was precisely an 'Augustinian' revival, the adduction of Augustine's authority in behalf of the subjection of Scripture to the Church, was particularly galling to them and amounted to a charge that they were passing beyond the limits of all established Christianity. They were indeed in no danger, in casting off the authority of the Church, of replacing it with the authority of any single father. Doubtless Luther spoke a little more brusquely than was the wont of the Reformers, in the well-known assertion: "Augustine often erred; he cannot be trusted: though he was good and holy, yet he, as well as other fathers, was wanting in the true faith". But the essential opinion here expressed was the settled judgment of all the Reformers and is by no means inconsistent with their high admiration of Augustine or with their sincere deference to him. The

Himself: the historical not the contemporary Church. But he takes "authority" strictly. Cf. Neander, *Hist. of Church*, E. T. v. 40.

<sup>60</sup> Marsilius explains: Dicit autem Augustinus pro tanto se credere evangelio propter ecclesiae catholicae auctoritatem, quia suae credulitatis initium inde sumpsit, quam Spiritu Sancto dirigi novit: fides enim quandoque incipit ex auditu,—in which he anticipates the general Protestant position. Cf. (quite fully) Neander, E. T. v. 27-28.

<sup>61</sup> *De Potestate ecclesiastica* (*Opp.* p. 759): "We believe in the Gospel on God's account, and on the Gospel's account in the Church and the Pope; not in the Gospel on the Church's account: wherefore that which Augustine says (*Cont. Epist. Man. Fund.* c. 6, etc.), concerning the Gospel and the Church, originis de credendo verbum est, non comparationis aut praeferentive. For the whole passage and others of like import, see Gieseler, *Ecclesiast. Hist.* iii. 5, § 153, E. T. iii. 468; and cf. Schmidt, *Jahrbücher f. d. Theol.* (1861), vi. 235.

<sup>62</sup> Cf., for example, the instances mentioned by Chamier, below.



gist of the matter is that though they looked upon Augustine as their great instructor, esteeming him indeed the greatest teacher God had as yet given His Church; and felt sure, as Luther expressed it, that "had he lived in this century, he would have been of our way of thinking"; they yet knew well that he had not lived in the sixteenth century but in the fourth and fifth and that in the midst of the marvellous purity of his teaching there were to be found some of the tares of his time growing only too richly. Ready as they were to recognize this, however, they were not inclined to admit without good reason that he had erred so sadly in so fundamental a matter as that at present before us; and they did not at all recognize that the Romanists had made good their assertion that Augustine in saying that "he would not believe the Gospel except as moved thereto by the authority of the Catholic Church" was asserting the Romish theory that the authority of the Church lies behind and above all other authorities on earth—that, as even Schwane puts it, the Church is the representative of God on earth and its authority alone can assure us of the reality of a divine revelation.

Already at the Leipzig disputation with Eck, Luther had been triumphantly confronted with this statement of Augustine's; and in his *Resolutions* on that debate he suggests that Augustine was only giving what was historically true in his own case.<sup>63</sup> Augustine had himself been led to believe the Gospel through the ministration of the Church; and he adduces this fact only that he might bring to bear upon his heretical readers the impressive testimony of the whole Church, which was, of course, of much more moving weight than his own personal witness could be. As a matter of fact, comments Luther, the Gospel does not rest on the Church, but contrariwise, the Church on the Gospel. It was not Luther's way to say his say with bated breath. This is the way he expresses his judgment in his *Table Talk*:<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See Köstlin, *Luther's Theology*, E. T. ii. 224, 255, and esp. i. 320-321.

<sup>64</sup> "Of the Fathers", near the beginning (Bohn's Ed.). Augustine's

“The Pope to serve his own turn, took hold on St. Augustine’s sentence, where he says, *evangelio non crederem*, etc. The asses could not see what occasioned Augustine to utter that sentence, whereas he spoke it against the Manichæans; as much as to say: “I believe not *you*, for you are damned heretics, but I believe and hold with the Church, the spouse of Christ”. It seemed to Luther, in other words, quite one thing to say that the credit of the Church ought to be higher than that of the Manichæans, and quite another to teach that the authority of the Church was needed to give authority to the Gospel. Perhaps the consentient opinion of the Reformers in this matter is nowhere better stated, in brief form, than in the Protestant *Objections* to the Acts of Ratisbon, which were penned by Melanchthon.<sup>65</sup> “Although therefore”, we read here, “the conservation of certain writings of the Prophets and Apostles is the singular work and benefit of God, nevertheless there must be recognized that diligence and authority of the Church, by which it has, in part testified to certain writings, in part by a spiritual judgment separated from the remaining Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures those that are unworthy and dissentient. Wherefore Augustine commends to us the authority of the primitive Church,<sup>66</sup> receives the writings that are approved by the Catholic consent of the primitive Church; (and) repudiates the later books of the Manichæans. Accordingly he says: ‘*I would not believe the Gospel except the authority of the Catholic Church moved me*’. He means that he is moved by the consentient testimony of the primitive Church, not to doubt that these books were handed down from the Apostles and are worthy of credit (*fide*)”. In a word, according to Melanchthon, Augustine is to be read as appealing to the testimony of the Church not as asserting its authority.

statement is invoked in the bull, *Exsurge Domine*, published by Leo X in 1520 against Luther.

<sup>65</sup> *Corpus Ref.* iv. 350. A French version is given in the Brunswick ed. of Calvin’s works, v. 564.

<sup>66</sup> *Auctoritatem primæ ecclesiæ.*

In the same line follow all the Reformers, and much the same mode of statement may be read, for example, in Butzer, or Calvin, or Bullinger, or Peter Martyr. "I will not now remember", writes Bullinger,<sup>67</sup> "how by manifest words the standard bearers of that see do write, that the Canonical Scripture taketh her authority of the Church, abusing the sentence of the ancient father St. Augustine, 'I would not have believed the Gospel, if the authority of the early Church had not moved me'." . . . How they abused it Peter Martyr tells us more fully:<sup>68</sup> "But they say that Augustine writes *Against the Epistola Fundamenti*, 'I would not believe the Gospel except the authority of the Church moved me'. But Augustine wished to signify by these words nothing else than that much is to be attributed to the ministry of the Church which proposes, preaches, and teaches the Gospel to believers. For who of us came to Christ or believed the Gospel except as excited by the preaching of the Gospel which is done in the Church? It cannot be inferred from this, however, that the authority of the Gospel hangs on the Church in the minds of the auditors. For if that were true, long ago the Epicureans and Turks had been persuaded . . . ." As was to be expected it was Calvin who gives us the solidest piece of reasoning upon the subject. The gist of what he says is that Augustine was not setting forth the source whence the Gospel derives its authority, but the instrument by which men may be led to recognize that authority. The unbeliever, he remarks, may well be brought to trust the Gospel by the consent of the Church; but the believer's trust in the Gospel finds its authority not in the Church, but in the Gospel itself, and this is logically prior to that of the Church, though no doubt, it may be chronologically recognized last by the inquirer. The Church may thus bring us to the Gospel and commend the Gospel to us; but when we

<sup>67</sup> *Decades*, v. 2 (Parker Soc. ed. iv, p. 67).

<sup>68</sup> *Loci Communes*, Zurich, 1580, i. 251 (iii. 3. 2).

have accepted the Gospel our confidence in it rests on something far more fundamental than the Church. Augustine, he insists, "did not have in mind to suspend the faith which we have in the Scriptures on the will and pleasure (*nutu arbitrioque*) of the Church, but only to point out, what we too confess to be true, that those who are not yet illuminated by the Spirit of God, are by reverence for the Church brought to docility so as to learn from the Gospel the faith of Christ; and that the authority of the Church is in this way an introduction, by which we are prepared for the faith of the Gospel". Augustine is perfectly right, then, he continues, to urge on the Manichæans the universal consent of the Church as a *reason* why they should come believingly to the Scriptures, but the *ground* of our faith in the Scriptures as a revelation of truth is that they are from God.<sup>69</sup>

The Protestant scholastics, of course, developed what had by their time become the traditional Protestant contention, and defended it against the assaults of the Romish controversialists. Who first invented the philological argument that Augustine uses in this sentence the imperfect for the pluperfect "in accordance with the African dialect"—so that he says, not "I would not believe the Gospel, but, historically, "I would not have believed the Gospel"—we have not had the curiosity to inquire. If we may trust the English version of the *Decades*, Bullinger already treats the tense as a pluperfect. Musculus,<sup>70</sup> who devotes a separate section of his *Locus de Sacris Scripturis* to the examination of Augustine's declaration lays great stress on this partic-

<sup>69</sup> *Institutes*, i. 7. 3. Calvin very appositely points out that Augustine in the immediately preceding context represents the proper course to be to "follow those who invite us first to believe what we are not yet able to see, that, being made able by this very faith, we may deserve to understand what we believe, our mind being now inwardly strengthened and illuminated not by men but by God Himself" (c. 5). In these words, Calvin remarks, Augustine grounds our confidence in the Gospel on the internal operation of God Himself upon our minds. Cf. below, note 88.

<sup>70</sup> *Loci Communes*, Basle, 1599, pp. 181-183 (Locus xxi).

ular point, that in it *non crederem* is used for *non credidissim*; and Musculus is generally cited by later writers upon it. This is true, for example, of both Whitaker and Chamier, who with Stillingfleet may be mentioned as offering perhaps the fullest and best discussions of the whole matter. Whitaker<sup>71</sup> devotes a whole chapter to it, and after adducing the arguments of Peter Martyr, Calvin and Musculus, affirms that "it is plain that he (Augustine) speaks of himself as an unbeliever, and informs us how he first was converted from a Manichæan to be a Catholic by listening to the voice of the Church"—in which remark he appears to us to be quite wrong. Chamier's<sup>72</sup> treatment, which also fills a whole chapter, is exceedingly elaborate. He begins by calling attention to the singularity of the passage, nothing precisely to the same effect being adducible from the whole range of Augustine's writings. Then he cites the opinions of eminent Romanists divergent from the current Romish interpretation,—those of John, Cardinal of Torre Cremara, Thomas Valden, Driedo, Gerson, who represent Augustine as assigning only a *declarative* authority to the Church, or as speaking not of the "living" but of the "historical" Church. "Augustine", says Driedo, "speaks of the Catholic Church which was from the beginning of the Christian faith": "by the Church", says Gerson, "he understands the primitive congregation of those believers who saw and heard Christ and were his witnesses". All these are good staggers towards the truth, says Chamier: but best of all is the explanation of the passage which is given by Petrus de Alliaco, himself a cardinal, "in the third article, of the first question on the first of the sentences". In the judgment of this prelate Augustine's meaning is not that the Church was to him a *principium theologicum*, by which the Gospel was theologically proved to him to be true, but only a "moving cause" by which he was led to the

<sup>71</sup> *Disp. on Holy Scripture* (1610), iii. 8 (Parker Society, E. T., p. 320).

<sup>72</sup> *Panstrat. Cathol.* (Geneva, 1626), vol. 1, pp. 195 sq. (I. i. 7. 10).



Gospel,—much “as if he had said, ‘I would not believe the Gospel unless moved thereto by the holiness of the Church, or by the miracles of Christ: in which (forms of statement) though a cause is assigned for believing the Gospel, there is no *principium prius* set forth, faith in which is the cause why the Gospel is believed’”. In a word, as it seems, Petrus de Alliaco is of the opinion that Augustine’s appeal to the Church is to its testimony rather than to its authority. This opinion, now, continues Chamier, is illustrated and confirmed by weighty considerations brought forward by Protestant writers,—whereupon he cites the arguments of Peter Martyr, Calvin, Musculus, Whitaker, and through them makes his way into a detailed discussion of the passage itself in all its terms. Rivalling Chamier’s treatment in fulness if not equalling it in distinction is that given the passage in Stillingfleet’s *Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion*,<sup>73</sup> under the three heads of (1) the nature of the controversy in which Augustine was engaged; (2) the Church by whose authority he was moved; and (3) the way and manner in which that Church’s authority moved him,—certainly a logically complete distribution of the material. The whole argument of scholastic protestatism is brought before us in its briefest but certainly not in its most attractive form, however, in the concise statement given in De Moor’s *Commentary on John Marck’s Compend*.<sup>74</sup> According to this summary: (1) The Papists in adducing this passage to support their doctrine of the primary authority of the Church deceive themselves by a two-fold fallacy,—(A) They draw a general conclusion from a particular instance: it does not follow that because Augustine did not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church, therefore no one can believe the Gospel whom the authority of the Church does not move; (B) They misunderstood Augustine, as if he were speaking of himself at the time of his writing, instead of at the time of his con-

<sup>73</sup> i. 7; *Works* (1709), iv, pp. 210 sq.

<sup>74</sup> *De Moor in J. Marck. Compend* (1761), vol. i, p. 160 (cap. ii. 37. ad fin.).

version. "For where he says, 'I would not believe were I not moved' he is employing, as the learned observe, an African mode of speech, familiar enough to Augustine, in which the imperfect form is used for the pluperfect" . . . "His meaning then is not that believers should depend on the authority of the Church, but that unbelievers should take their start from it"; and in this sense he elsewhere speaks often enough. (2) Augustine is not speaking here of *auctoritas praecipiens, juris et imperii* (injunctory authority, with a legal claim upon us for obedience) "as the Papists insist,—as if Augustine would have believed solely because the Church pronounced belief to be due": but of *auctoritas dignitatis* (the authority of observed desert), "which flows from the notable manifestations of Divine Providence observable in the Church,—such as miracles, antiquity, common consent (ch. iv.), and which may lead to faith though it is incapable of implanting it in the first instance". (3) "What is noted here, then, is the external motive of faith, but not at all the infallible *principium credendi*, which he teaches in the fourth chapter is to be sought in the truth alone. . . . And it is to be noted that the fathers elsewhere rightly hold that the Holy Scriptures are superior in authority both *in se* and *quoad nos* to the Church. . . ."

Of course it is observable enough from this survey, that the interest of the Protestant scholastics was far more in the dogmatic problem of the seat of authority in Christianity, than in the literary question of the precise meaning of Augustine's words. We must bear in mind that the citations we have made are taken not from studies in literary history but from dogmatic treatises; and that their authors approach the particular question upon which we are interrogating them from a dogmatic point of view, and in a doctrinal interest. There would be a certain unfairness in adducing these citations in a connection like the present, therefore, were there any real occasion to defend the tone in which they are couched. This is by no means the case.

We need not hesitate to recognize nevertheless at once that some of the reasoning employed by them to support their interpretation will scarcely bear scrutiny. It is a counsel of despair, for example, to represent Augustine as employing—"in accordance with the usage of the African dialect"—the imperfect in a pluperfect sense. We may readily confess that the supposition does violence to the context of the passage itself, which requires the imperfect sense; it seems clearly to be the offspring of a dogmatic need rather than of a sympathetic study of the passage. And we are afraid the same must be said of the general conception of the meaning of the passage which has probably given rise to this philological suggestion,—viz., that it is a historical statement of Augustine's own experience and means merely that he himself was led by the Church's authority to the Gospel. He is not writing his autobiography in this passage, but arguing with the Manichæans; and he is not informing them of what had been true of his own manner of conversion but confounding them by asserting what in a given case he, as a reasonable man, would do. There are elements enough of doubtful validity in the argument of the Protestant scholastics, therefore,—as there could not fail to be in the circumstances. But it is quite another question whether their general conception of the passage is not truer than that of their Romish opponents, and whether they do not adduce sound reasons enough for this general conception to support it adequately. It is a matter of common experience in every department of life,—and not least in judicial cases, where the experience has been crystallized into a maxim to the effect that it is best to announce decisions and withhold the reasons—that the decisions of men's judgment are often far better than the reasons they assign for them: and it may —haply prove true here too, that the position argued for by the Protestant scholastics is sounder than many of the arguments which they bring forward to support it.

It must be confessed, meanwhile, that modern Protestant opinion does not show so undivided a front as was the case

during the scholastic period. The majority of Protestant scholars, historical investigators as well as dogmatic systematizers, do, indeed, continue to defend the essential elements of the interpretation for which the Protestant scholastics contended; but even these ordinarily adopt a different line of argument and present the matter from a somewhat different point of view; and there are many recent Protestant scholars, and they not invariably those deeply affected by the rationalism of the day, who are inclined to revert more or less fully to the Romish interpretation. Even Dr. W. G. T. Shedd, who reproduces more of the scholastic argument than is now usual,<sup>75</sup> shows the effect of the change. Even he quotes Hagenbach<sup>76</sup> approvingly to the effect that Augustine “merely affirms” “a subjective dependence of the believer upon the authority of the Church universal, but not an objective subordination of the Bible itself to this authority”; though he proceeds to weaken “the subjective dependence of the believer upon the authority of the Church” so as to leave room for a “private judgment”. What in his view Augustine is asserting is the duty of the individual to respect the authority of the Church, because the “Church universal has an authority higher than that of any member”, and it is therefore unreasonable for the individual, or a heretical party, to “oppose its private judgment to the catholic judgment”. Or rather, what he supposes Augustine to affirm is—as he fortunately weakens the statement in the next sentence,—“the greater probability of the correctness of the Catholic mind, in comparison with the Heretical or Schismatic mind, and thereby the *authority* of the Church in relation to the individual, without dreaming, however, of affirming its absolute *infallibility*,—an attribute which he confines to the written revelation”. Augustine’s notion of “ecclesiastical authority” is by this expedient reduced to “the natural expectation of finding that the general judgment is a correct one”, coupled with “the right of private judgment;

<sup>75</sup> *Hist. of Christ. Doctr.* i. 143-150. Cf. S. Baumgarten: *Untersuchung. theol. Streitigkeiten*, iii. 2. 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Dogmengeschichte*, § 119.

the right to examine the general judgment and to perceive its correctness with his own eyes". Thus, Dr. Shedd supposes, "Augustine adopts the Protestant, and opposes the Papal theory of tradition and authority". "The Papist's method of agreeing with the catholic judgment", he explains, "is passive. He denies that the individual may intelligently verify the position of the Church for himself, because the Church is *infallible*, and consequently there is no possibility of its being in error. The individual is therefore shut up to a mechanical and passive reception of the catholic decision. The Protestant, on the other hand, though affirming the high probability that the general judgment is correct, does not assert the infallible certainty that it is. It is conceivable and possible that the Church may err. Hence the duty of the individual, while cherishing an antecedent confidence in the decisions of the Church, to examine these decisions in the light of the written word, and to convert this presumption into an intelligent perception, or else demonstrate its falsity beyond dispute. 'Neither ought I to bring forward the authority of the Nicene Council', says Augustine (*Contra Max. Arian.* II. xiv. 3), 'nor you that of Ariminum, in order to prejudge the case. I ought not to be bound (*detentum*) by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former. Under the authority of the Scriptures, not those received by particular sects, but those received by all in common, let the disputation be carried on, in respect to each and every particular' ".<sup>77</sup>

What strikes one most in these remarks of Dr. Shedd is that they begin by attributing to Augustine a doctrine of the authority of the Church universal over the individual, which forbids the individual to oppose his private judgment to the catholic judgment: proceed to vindicate to the individual a private judgment in the sense of a right to examine the general judgment that he may perceive its correctness with his own eyes,—that is to say to an active as distinguished from a merely passive agreement with the catholic judgment: and

<sup>77</sup> *Opus cit.* 148-149.



end by somehow or other supposing that this carries with it the right to disagree with and reject the catholic judgment on the basis of an individual judgment. The premise is that it is not reasonable to erect the individual judgment against the Catholic judgment: the conclusion is that it is the duty of the individual to subject the catholic judgment to his personal decisions: the connecting idea is—that the individual ought to be able to give an active and not merely a passive reception to the Catholic decision. The logic obviously halts. But it seems clear that what Dr. Shedd is striving to do is to give due validity to what he considers Augustine to assert in his famous declaration, viz., this, that the individual is subjectively under the authority of the Church; and yet at the same time to vindicate for Augustine a belief in the right of private judgment. He wishes to do justice to the conception of “authority” which he supposes Augustine to have had in mind in this expression, without doing injustice to Augustine’s obvious exercise of freedom of opinion under the sole authority of the Scriptures. It cannot be said that he has fully succeeded, although there is much that is true in his remarks, considered as an attempt to give a general account of Augustine’s estimate of the authority of the Church. But it is of no great importance for our present inquiry whether he has fully succeeded in this particular effort, or not; since, as has already been pointed out, Augustine does not seem to intend in this passage to place the individual subjectively under the “authority of the Church”; but appears to employ the term “authority” in an entirely different sense from that which it bears in such phrases,—the sense namely in which it is the synonym of “testimony” and the ground of “faith”, in distinction from the “demonstration” of “reason” which is the ground of that form of conviction which he calls “knowledge”.

From another point of view of importance Dr. Shedd’s instinct has carried him very near to the truth. We refer to the recognition that informs his discussion that Augustine

did make more of the Church and of the authority of the Church than the Protestant scholastics were quite ready to admit. It is probably the feeling that this is the case which accounts for much of the tendency among recent scholars to concede something to the Romish interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of the authority of the Church. It certainly cannot easily be denied that Augustine does declare in this passage, that the credit we accord the Gospel hangs on the credit we give the Church. In this particular passage, this no doubt means no more than that we are dependent on the Church to accredit to us the Gospel; that it is from the Church's hands and on her testimony that we receive the Gospel as apostolic and divine. But, if we raise the broader question of Augustine's attitude towards the Church in its relation to the reception of the truth it cannot be successfully contended that it was solely as a *motivum credibilitatis* that he revered the Church. To him the Church was before all else the institute of salvation, out of which there is no salvation. And although it may be difficult to find expressed in language parallel to this crisp *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, that outside of the Church there can be no right knowledge of God, it nevertheless certainly belongs to the very essence of his doctrine that outside of the Church there can be no effective knowledge of God. The Scriptures may be the supreme authority for faith, and it may be true, therefore, that wherever the Scriptures go, the salvatory truth will be objectively conveyed; but it is equally true that with Augustine this Word of truth will exert no saving power save in and through the Church.<sup>78</sup> As the Church is the sole mediatrix of grace and that not merely in the sense that it is through her offices alone that men are brought once for all to God, but also in the sense that it is through her offices only that all the saving grace that comes to men is conveyed to them,—so that we are with Christ only when we are with His body the Church, and it is only

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<sup>78</sup> The distinction between 'habere' and 'utiliter habere' or 'salubriter habere' was made to do yoeman's service as regards baptism, in the Donatist controversy.

in the Church that communion with God can be retained as well as obtained,—it follows that the Word, however well known it may be and however fully it may perform its function of making known the truth of God, profits no man spiritually save in the Church.<sup>79</sup> It seems to be implicated in this that it is part of Augustine's teaching that the revealed truth of God, deposited in the Holy Scriptures, will not profit men even intellectually so that they may come by it to know God save in communion with the Church. Certainly he would never allow that an adequate knowledge could be obtained of that truth which must be chastely and piously sought and the key to which is love—access to which is closed to all but the spiritual man—outside the limits of that Church the supreme characteristic of which is that in it and in it alone is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which He has given unto us.<sup>80</sup>

The reverence which Augustine accordingly shows to the teaching of the Church is both great and sincere. It is no meaningless form when he opens his treatise on the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*<sup>81</sup> or his great work on *The Trinity*<sup>82</sup> with a careful statement of the faith of the Church on the topics to be dealt with, to stand as a norm of teaching beyond which it would be illegitimate to go<sup>83</sup>—declaring moreover with complete simplicity, "This is my faith, too, since it is the Catholic faith".<sup>84</sup> There can be no question therefore that he accorded not merely a high value but also a real authority to the teaching of the Church, an authority which within its own limits may well be called a "dogmatic

<sup>79</sup> Cf. A. Dorner, *Augustinus*, pp. 233 sq., and H. Schmidt, in *Jahrbücher f. d. Theologie* (1861), vi. 233.

<sup>80</sup> *De unitate eccles.* ii. 2: "The members of Christ are linked together by means of love that belongs to unity, and by means of it are made one with their Head."

<sup>81</sup> *De Gen. ad Lit. imperf.* ad init. (Vienna Ed., xxviii. 460).

<sup>82</sup> *De Trinitate*, i. 4. 7.

<sup>83</sup> *De Gen. ad Lit.* i.: *catholicae fidei metas; praeter fidem catholicae disciplinae*; 2: "as the Catholic discipline commands to be believed."

<sup>84</sup> *De Trinitate*, i. 4. 7. ad fin.

authority". But it needs also to be borne in mind that the organs of this authority were not conceived by him as official but vital—those called of God in the Church to do the thinking and teaching for the Church;<sup>85</sup> that the nature of this authority is never conceived by him as absolute and irreformable but always as relative and correctible—no teaching from any source is to be accepted unhesitatingly as above critical examination except that of the Scriptures only; and that as to its source this authority is not thought of by him as original but derived, dependent upon the Scriptures upon which it rests and by which it is always to be tested and corrected. The Catholic faith as to the Trinity, for example, which is also his faith because it is the Catholic faith, is the faith that has been set forth, not by the organized Church on its own authority, but by "the Catholic expounders of the Divine Scriptures", intent upon teaching "according to the Scriptures"<sup>86</sup> and therefore only on the authority of these Scriptures. If there can be no question, therefore, that Augustine accorded a "dogmatic authority" to the Church, there can be no question either that the "dogmatic authority" he accorded to the Church was subordinated to the authority of the Scriptures, and was indeed but the representation of that authority in so to speak more tangible form. This, it is obvious, is in complete harmony with what we have already had occasion to note, in the matter of Christian observances, as to the relative authority Augustine accorded to the Scriptures, Tradition, the Church—in descending series. Only, it is to be noted that the dogmatic authority of the Church of which we are now specifically speaking expresses itself not merely, and not chiefly, through conciliar decrees, but rather through the vital faith of the people of God, first assimilated by them from the Scriptures, and then expressed for them by the appropriate organs of the expression of Christian thought,

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<sup>85</sup> *Epist.* 118, v. 32-35: "armed with the abundant weapons of reason, by means of a comparatively few devoutly learned and truly spiritual men."

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, ad initium.

which in general are the Doctors of the Church. Such being the case, there can no question be raised whether or not the Church may be conceived as the supreme seat of authority in the dogmatic sphere. In many cases the proximate seat of authority it doubtlessly is; but never the ultimate seat of authority. That belongs with Augustine ever and unvaryingly to the Holy Scriptures,<sup>87</sup> witnessed to by the Church as given to it by the apostles as the infallible Word of God, studied and expounded by the Church for its needs, and applied by it to the varying problems which confront it with the measure of authority which belongs to it as the Church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

It is, however, in a deeper sense than even this that Augustine thought of the Church in relation to the acquisition of the knowledge of the truth. With Augustine the Church as it is the mediatrix of divine grace, is also the mediatrix of divine knowledge. As such the Church holds a position of the very highest significance between the supreme seat of authority, the Holy Scriptures, and the souls of men. Only in and through the Church can a sound as well as a saving knowledge of the contents of the Scriptures be hoped for; only in and through the Church can the knowledge of God enshrined in the Holy Scriptures avail for the illumination of the intellect with true knowledge of God, no less than for the sanctification of the soul for true communion with God. But, it must be remembered that in speaking thus, Augustine is thinking of the Church not mechanically as an organized body acting through official organs, say the hierarchy, but vitally, as the *congregatio sanctorum* acting through its vital energies as a communion of love. The Church in which alone according to Augustine true knowledge of God is to be had is fundamentally

<sup>87</sup> *Epist.* 164, iii. 6, offers a typical mode of statement: "And with respect to that first man, the father of the human race, that Christ loosed him from hell almost the whole Church agrees; and it is too considered that the Church does not believe this in vain,—whencesoever it has been handed down, although the authority of the Canonical Scriptures is not expressly adducible for it (etiamsi canonicarum Scripturarum hinc expressa non proferatur auctoritas)."



conceived as the Body of Christ. And this is as much as to say that the essence of his doctrine of the authority of the Church would not be inaptly expressed by the simple and certainly to no Christian thinker unacceptable formula, that it is only in Jesus Christ that God can be rightly known. The Church of Christ is the Body of Christ, and this Body of Christ is the real subject of the true knowledge of God on earth: it is only therefore as one is a member in particular of this Body that he can share in the knowledge of God, of which it is the subject. This is the counterpart in Augustine of that doctrine of the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti* which was first formulated by Calvin and from him became the corner-stone of the Protestant doctrine of authority: and it differs from that doctrine only because and as Augustine's doctrine of "the means of grace" differs from the Protestant.<sup>88</sup>

Augustine's doctrine of the Church is a fascinating subject on which it is difficult to touch without being carried beyond the requirements of our present purpose. Perhaps enough has already been said to indicate sufficiently for the end in view the place which the Church holds in Augustine's

<sup>88</sup> On Augustine's conception of the Church as a communion of saints, see the fifth of Reuter's *Augustin. Studien*; and compare Schmidt as above cited, esp. from p. 233. On Augustine's relation to the Protestant doctrine of the "testimony of the Holy Spirit" see Pannier, *Le Témoignage du Saint-Esprit* (1893), pp. 67-68. After citing *Tract. iii. in Ep. Joan. ad Parthos*, ii. 13; *De Trinitate*, III. 1-2; *Conff.* vi. 5, and xi. 3, he adds: "There certainly is not yet here the whole of the witness of the Holy Spirit. . . . But St. Augustine has the intuition of a mysterious work which is wrought in the soul of the Christian, of an understanding of the Bible which does not come from man, but from a power external to him and superior to him; he urges the rôle which the direct correspondence between the Book and the reader must play in the foundation of Christian certitude. In this, as on so many other points, Augustine was the precursor of the Reformation, and a precursor without immediate continuers." In point of fact Augustine is just as clear as the Reformers that earthly voices assail only the ears, and that *cathedram in coelo habet qui cordia docet* (*Tract. iii. in Ep. Joan. ad Parthos*, ii. 13). He differs from them only in the place he gives the Church in communicating that grace out of which comes the preparation of the mind to understand, as well as of the heart to believe, and of the will to do.

doctrine of authority. In the sin-bred weakness of humanity, the Church mediates between the divine revelation deposited in the Holy Scriptures and the darkened mind of man; and thus becomes a paedagogue to lead men to the truth. It is in the Church that the truth is known; and this not merely in the sense that it is in the hands of the Church that the Scriptures are found, those Scriptures in which the whole Truth of God is indefectibly deposited; but also in the sense that it is in the Church alone that the mysteries of the faith, revealed in the Scriptures, are comprehended: that it is only in the participation of the graces found in her that men may hope to attain to the vision which is the possession solely of saints. The true knowledge of God belongs to the fellowship of His people, and out of it cannot be attained. And therefore, although Augustine knows of many things which bind him to the Catholic Church and the adduction of which as undeniable credentials giving confidence to those who hold to that Church, he thinks should impress any hearer,—such as the consent of peoples and nations, the just authority it enjoys among men, the unbroken succession of its rulers from the beginning, and the very name of Catholic,—yet the real thing which above all others held him to the Catholic Church was, as he was well aware, that there was to be found in it “the purest wisdom” (*sincerissima sapientia*). He needs indeed to confess that to the knowledge of this wisdom only a few spiritual men (*pauci spirituales*) attain in this life, and even they (because they are men) only very partially (*ex minima quidem parte*), though without the least uncertainty (*sine dubitatione*).<sup>89</sup> The crowd (*turba*) meanwhile walk even in the Church, by faith,—since their characteristic is, not vivacity of intellect, but simplicity in believing,—the Church performing its function to them in holding out the truth to them to be believed. So that even the crowd are made in the apprehension of faith—each according to his ability—to share in the truth of which the Church is the possessor. All

<sup>89</sup> *Contra Epist. Manich. Fund.* i. 4. 5.

the time, however, there is in the Church and in it alone for the few spiritual men both the fulness of truth to be known and the opportunity to know it. The underlying idea is clearly that for the knowledge of the truth there are requisite two things,—the revelation of the truth to be apprehended and the preparation of the heart for its apprehension: and that these two things can be found in conjunction only in the Church. Our thought reverts at once to Augustine's fundamental teaching that the remedy for the disabilities of sinful men is to be found in the two-fold provision of Revelation and Grace. In the Church these two provisions meet, and it is therefore only in the Church that the sin-born disabilities of men can be cured: and only in the Church that men, being sinful, can attain to that knowledge of divine things in which is life.

By this construction, it will not fail to be perceived, Augustine sets the Church over against the world,—or, as he would have phrased it, the glorious city of God over against the earthly city—as the sole sphere in which true knowledge (*sapientia*) is found. Thus there is introduced a certain dualism in the manifestation of human life on earth. Two classes of men are marked off, separated one from another as darkness is separated from light. In the one, at the best only broken lights can play; because it is the natural development of sin-stricken humanity alone that it can offer. In the other may be found the steady shining of that true light which shall broaden more and more to the perfect day. The dualism of this conception of human life is resolved, however, by two considerations. In observing human life in its dualistic opposition we are observing it only in its process of historic development. The dualism is constituted by the invasion of the realm of darkness by the realm of light: and it exists only so long as the conquest of the darkness by the light is incomplete. A temporary dualism is the inevitable result of the introduction of any remedial scheme which does not act immediately and all at once. In the City of God—the Church of God's saints—we perceive the pro-

gress of the correction of the sin-born disabilities of men. Again the opposition of nature and the supernatural as the principles of the opposing kingdoms, must not be pressed to an extreme. With Augustine, as we have seen, all knowledge, even that which in contrast with a higher supernatural, may rightly be called natural knowledge, is in source supernatural: all knowledge rests ultimately on revelation. The problem to him was not, therefore, how to supplant a strictly natural knowledge by a strictly supernatural knowledge: but how to restore to men the power to acquire that knowledge which we call natural—how to correct sin-bred disabilities so that the general revelation of God may be reflected purely in minds which now are blinded to its reflection by sin. For this end, a special revelation, adapted to the needs of sin-disabled minds, is called in. Special revelation is not conceived here, then, as a substitute for general revelation, but only as a preparation for its proper assimilation. The goal is still conceived as the knowledge of God by direct vision; and special revelation is presented only as spectacles through which the blind may trace out the way to the cure. The intervention of God by a special revelation works, therefore, harmoniously into the general scheme of the production of knowledge of God through general revelation. The conception is that, man being a sinner, and unable to profit by general revelation, God intervenes creatively by special revelation and grace,—by special revelation enabling him to walk meanwhile until by grace he is once more prepared to see the Light in its own light. Special revelation, given through the prophets and apostles, is embodied in the Scriptures and brought to bear on man by the Church, in which is found the grace to heal men's disabilities. The Church therefore sets up in the world a City of God in which, and in which alone, man may live free from the disabilities that clog all action in the earthly city.

If we cry out that the remedy is incomplete, the answer is that it were better to say that the cure it is working is as

yet uncompleted. So long as grace has not wrought its perfect work in our souls, there remains a dualism in all the functioning of our souls; so long as grace has not wrought its perfect work in the world there will remain a dualism in the world. But when grace has wrought its perfect work, then, as sin has been removed, the need of special revelation falls away, nay the need of all the instrumentalities by which grace is wrought falls away—the Church, the Scriptures, Christ the Mediator Himself,—and God alone suffices for the soul's requirements. The end to which all is directed and in which all issues, is not the destruction of nature but the restoration of nature: and when nature is restored, there is no longer need of the remedies. "There is nothing", says Augustine with emphasis, "that ought to detain us on the way" in our aspiration to God, in whom alone can we find our rest. And to put the sharpest possible point upon the remark he at once proceeds to apply it to our Lord Himself, who, says he, "in so far as He condescended to be our Way", wished not "to hold us",—the reference being possibly to Jno. 20<sup>17</sup>—"but rather to pass away, lest we should cling weakly to temporal things, even though they had been put on and worn by Him for our salvation, and not rather press rapidly through them and strive to attain unto Himself who has freed our nature from the bondage of temporal things and set it down at the right hand of His Father".<sup>90</sup> The whole soteriological work of our Lord, in other words, is viewed by Augustine as a means to the end of our presentation, holy, and without spot, to the Father, and therefore as destined to fall away with all means when the end is attained.<sup>91</sup> When the

<sup>90</sup> *De Doctr. Christ.* i. 34. 38.

<sup>91</sup> Th. Bret, *La Conversion de S. Augustine* (Geneva, 1900), p. 64, generalizes as follows: "We remark, however, that Augustine is affirmative only in what concerns the activity of Christ as reconciler. The rôle of eternal mediator, of perpetual friend, between the individual and God, was never clearly understood by Augustine. For him Christ came to restore man to his true condition, but, that once attained, the rôle of Saviour passed into the background. The sinner once cleansed of his sins, and placed in an atmosphere of the grace of God, found himself



Mediatorial Christ is viewed thus as instrument, of course the lower means also are so considered. Augustine, even, in a passage in the immediate neighborhood of what we have just quoted, speaks as if a stage of development might be attained even in this life in which the Scriptures, say, might fall out of use as a lame man healed would no longer need his crutch. "A man", says he,<sup>92</sup> "supported by faith, hope and love, and retaining these unshakenly, does not need the Scriptures except for instructing others". He adduces certain solitaries as examples: men in whom I Cor. 13<sup>8</sup> is already fulfilled,—who "by means of these instruments (as they are called)" have had built up within them so great an edifice of faith and love that they no longer require their aid. So clear is it that by him all the means put in action by grace to cure the sin-bred disabilities of man were strictly conceived as remedies which, just because they work a cure, provide no substitutes for nature but bring about a restoration of nature.<sup>93</sup>

Augustine's whole doctrine thus becomes a unit. Man is to find truth within himself because there God speaks to him. All knowledge rests, therefore, on a revelation of God; God impressing on the soul continually the ideas which form the intellectual world. These ideas are taken up, however, by man in perception and conception, only so far as each is able to do so: and man being a sinner is incapacitated for their reception and retention. This sinful incapacity is met in the goodness of God by revelation and grace, the sphere of both of which is the Church. The directly united with the Father without the intervention of the Son." This is only very partially correct; and its incorrectnesses touch on some important elements of Augustine's teaching. But it contains the essential matter.

<sup>92</sup> *De Doctr. Christ.* i. 34. 43.

<sup>93</sup> The general conception—but guarded from the fancy that attainment in this life can proceed so far as to be freed from the necessity of means—is among the inheritances of Augustinians until this day. Cf. e. g. A. Kuyper, *Encyc. of Sacred Theology*, E. T., pp. 368 sq.; and especially H. Bavinck, *Gereform. Dogmatiek*, i. 389 sq., where the necessary cautions are noted. The misapprehensions of Harnack (*Hist. of Dogma*, E. T., v. 99-100) will be obvious.

Church is therefore set over against the world as the new Kingdom of God in which sinful man finds restoration and in its gradual growth we observe the human race attaining its originally destined end. The time is to come when the Kingdom of God shall have overspread the earth, and when that time comes, the abnormalities having been cured, the normal knowledge of God will assert itself throughout the redeemed race of man. Here, in a single paragraph, is Augustine's whole doctrine of knowledge and authority.

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