Life of St Augustine

Possidius (c. AD 370–440)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

[Translated by Herbert Theberath Weiskotten]

LIFE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE WRITTEN BY THE BISHOP POSSIDIUS
PREFACE

Inspired by God, the Maker and Ruler of all, and mindful of my purpose wherein through the grace of the Saviour I resolved faithfully to serve the omnipotent and divine Trinity, both formerly as a layman and now as a bishop, I am eager with whatever ability and eloquence I possess, to aid in the edification of the holy and true Catholic Church of Christ the Lord, and so [have resolved] not to keep silent concerning the life and character of the most noble Bishop Augustine, predestined long ago and presented in his own time—the things that I have seen in him and heard from him. I have read and observed that this very thing was often done in times past by most devout men of the holy Catholic Mother Church. Inspired by the divine Spirit, yet using their own speech and style, they spoke and wrote like histories for the ears and eyes of those who wished to learn, and thus brought to the notice of the studious the great men who were counted worthy by the Lord's free grace both to live amid human affairs and to persevere to the end of their course. Therefore in that faith unfeigned whereby all righteous and faithful souls must serve and please the Lord of Lords, I also, the least of all His stewards, have determined, with the Lord's help, to set forth the origin, career and end of this venerable man as I have learned them from him and observed them through so many years of loving fellowship.

But I beseech the divine Majesty that by His aid I may carry out and complete this task, which I have undertaken, without sinning against the truth of the Father of Lights or seeming in any way to disappoint the loving expectation of good sons of the Church. It is not my purpose to touch on all those things which the blessed Augustine noted about himself in his books of the Confessions, telling what his life was before receiving the divine grace and what it became on his conversion. For it was his purpose that, in the words of the Apostle, "no man should believe or think him to be above that which he knew him to be or heard of him. Therefore in his practice of holy humility he deceived no one and sought not his own praise for those things he had already received, but the glory of his Lord because of the blessing of his own deliverance, and desired the prayers of his brethren for the things which

he hoped to obtain. For, as declared by the angel, though ”It is good to hide the secret of a king: yet it is honorable to reveal and confess the works of God.”

CHAPTER I. Augustine's birth, conversion and baptism

Augustine was born in the African province, in the city of Tagaste of honorable Christian parents of curial rank and was nurtured and trained under their care and attention. At their expense he was educated chiefly in secular literature, that is, was trained in all the disciplines which are called liberal. For he first taught grammar in his own town and then rhetoric at Carthage, the capitol of Africa. Subsequently [he taught] across the sea in the city of Rome and at Milan where the Emperor Valentinian the Younger had then established his court. At that time the bishopric in this city was administered by Ambrose, a priest most acceptable to God and eminent among the best of men. As he stood among the people in the church he used to listen in eager suspense to the frequent sermons of this preacher of the Word of God. Now at one time, while still a youth at Carthage, he had been carried away by the error of the Manichaeans and therefore was more eager than others to hear whether anything would be said for or against this heresy. And by the mercy of God the Deliverer who touched the heart of His bishop, it came to pass that the questions of the Law bearing on that error were solved, and so little by little Augustine was led on by the divine compassion until the heresy was driven from his soul. Straightway, established in the Catholic faith, an ardent desire was awakened in him to perfect himself in religion, and so with the coming of the holy days of Easter he received the water of baptism. And thus it happened that by divine grace he received through the great and illustrious prelate Ambrose the salutary doctrine of the Catholic Church and the divine Sacraments.

CHAPTER II. When more than thirty years of age he leaves all and takes up his profession of serving God

And soon from his inmost heart he relinquished all earthly desires, no longer seeking wife, children of the flesh, riches or worldly honors. But he determined to serve God with His saints, desiring to be in and of that little flock to which the Lord spoke, saying, ”Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not,” and so on. And that which the Lord spoke on another occasion this holy man sought to do: ”If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” He also desired to build on the foundation of faith,—not on wood, hay and stubble, but on gold, silver and precious stones. He was now more than thirty years of age, his mother alone surviving and clinging to him, exulting more in his determination to serve God than in the hope of offspring after the flesh. His father had already died before this time. He also gave notice to his pupils in rhetoric to secure another teacher, as he had resolved to serve God.

CHAPTER III. The retirement of Augustine

When he had received the grace of God, he determined, with others of his neighbors and friends who served God with him, to return to Africa to his own home and lands to which he came and in which he was settled for almost three years. He now gave up these possessions and began to live with those who had also consecrated themselves to God, in fastings and prayers and good works, meditating day and night in the Law of the Lord. And the things which God revealed to him through prayer and meditation, he taught both those present and absent in his sermons and books. Now it happened at this time that one of those whom they call "agents in affairs" who lived at Hippo Regius, a good Christian who feared God, heard of his good fame and learning. He earnestly sought to see him, declaring that he was ready to reject all the passions and allurements of this world if he were but counted worthy to hear the Word of God from his lips. When this was brought to Augustine by trustworthy report, he longed to rescue that soul from the dangers of this life and from eternal death. So of his own accord he went in haste to that famous city and when he had seen the man he spoke to him frequently and exhorted him that in so far as God had blessed him he should pay to God what he had vowed. Day after day he promised to do so, but did not fulfil this while Augustine was present. And yet surely in this case that could not have proved vain and ineffectual which divine Providence was everywhere accomplishing by means of this vessel purged unto honor, meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work.

CHAPTER IV. He is seized for the office of presbyter

Now at this time the holy Valerius was bishop in the Catholic church at Hippo. But owing to the increasing demands of ecclesiastical duty he addressed the people of God and exhorted them to provide and ordain a presbyter for the city. The Catholics, already acquainted with the life and teaching of the holy Augustine, laid hands on him—for he was standing there among the people secure and unaware of what was about to happen. For while a layman he was careful, as he told us, to withhold his presence solely from those churches which had no bishops. So they laid hands on him and, as is the custom in such cases, brought him to the bishop to be ordained, for all with common consent desired that this should be done and accomplished; and they demanded it with great zeal and clamor, while he wept freely. But some, as he himself later told us, at the time ascribed his tears to wounded pride and by way of consolation told him that while he was worthy of greater honor the office of presbyter was but little inferior to the bishopric. But the man of God, as he told us, understood with greater comprehension and mourned as he apprehended the many imminent dangers which threatened his life in the direction and government of the church, and for this reason he wept. But their desire was accomplished as they wished.

CHAPTER V. He establishes a monastery

Soon after he had been made presbyter he established a monastery within the church and began to live with the servants of God according to the manner and rule instituted by the holy apostles. The principal rule of this society was that no one should possess anything of his own, but that all things should be held in common and be distributed to each one as he had need, as Augustine had formerly done after he returned to his native home from across the sea. But the holy Valerius who ordained him, a good man fearing God, rejoiced and gave thanks to God. He said the Lord had heard the prayers which he had unceasingly poured forth that divine Providence would grant him such a man, who by his salutary teaching of the Word of God could edify the Church of the Lord. For Valerius, a Greek by birth and less versed in the Latin language and literature, saw that he himself was less useful for this end. Therefore he gave his presbyter the right of preaching the Gospel in his presence in the church and very frequently of holding public discussions—contrary to the practice and custom of the African churches. On this account some bishops found fault with him. But the venerable and prudent man knew well that this was the custom in the Eastern churches and considered only the welfare of the Church and took no notice of the words of his detractors, if only his presbyter might do that which he saw could not be accomplished by himself as bishop. Wherefore this burning and shining light was placed upon a candlestick and gave light to all who were in the house. And after the report of this had rapidly spread by reason of the good example which preceded it, some other presbyters by permission of their bishops began to preach to the people in their presence.

CHAPTER VI. The conflict of Augustine with Fortunatus, a Manichaean

Now in the city of Hippo at this time the plague of the Manichaeans had infected and permeated very many, both citizens and strangers, who were seduced and deceived by a certain presbyter of that heresy, Fortunatus by name, who lived and dwelt there. Meanwhile the Christians of Hippo, whether citizens or strangers, Catholics and even Donatists, came to the presbyter Augustine and demanded that he should meet this presbyter of the Manichaeans, whom they regarded as a learned man, and argue with him about the Law. This he in no wise refused; for, as it is written, he was ”ready to give an answer to every man that asked him a reason of the hope and faith that is toward God, and was able by sound doctrine both to exhort and refute the gainsayers. But he sought to learn whether Fortunatus were willing that this should take place. So they at once reported the matter to Fortunatus asking, urging and even demanding that he should on no account refuse. But since Fortunatus had previously known the holy Augustine at Carthage when he was still involved with himself in this same error, he was afraid to meet him. Nevertheless he was greatly urged and shamed by the insistency of his followers and promised that he would meet him face to face and enter the contest of debate. So they met at an appointed time and place, where many who were interested and crowds of the curious quickly gathered.

When the reporters' books had been opened, the discussion was begun on the first day and ended on the second. In this discussion the Manichaean teacher, as the evidence of the record proves, could neither refute the Catholic argument, nor could he prove that the sect of the Manichaeans was founded on truth. But failing in his final answer, he declared that he would refer to his superiors the arguments which he had been unable to refute, and if perchance they should not satisfy him on these matters, he would consult the welfare of his own soul. Thereupon all who had formerly regarded him as great and learned now judged that he had accomplished nothing in the defence of his own sect. Overwhelmed with confusion he left the city of Hippo soon after and returned to it no more. Thus this error was removed by that memorable man of God from the hearts of all those present or those

absent who learned what had been done; and the Catholic faith was declared and upheld as the true religion.

CHAPTER VII. The books and treatises of Augustine against the enemies of the faith are eagerly received even by the heretics themselves

In private and in public, at home and in the church, Augustine taught and preached the Word of salvation with all confidence against the African heresies, especially against the Donatists, Manichaeans and pagans both in his finished books and extemporaneous sermons, the Christians, who did not keep silent but spread it abroad wherever they could, being filled with unspeakable joy and praise. And so, with God's help, the Catholic Church in Africa began to lift its head, having for a long time lain prostrate, seduced, oppressed and overpowered, while the heretics were gaining strength, especially the rebaptizing Donatist party which comprised a large multitude of the Africans. Even the heretics themselves gathered together and with the Catholics listened most eagerly to these books and treatises which issued and flowed forth by the wonderful grace of God, filled with abundance of reason and the authority of Holy Scripture; each one also who would or could bringing reporters and taking down what was said. And thence throughout all Africa, the glorious doctrine and most sweet savor of Christ was spread abroad and made manifest, while the Church of God across the sea heard of it and also rejoiced. For as when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, so when one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

CHAPTER VIII. He is chosen bishop while Valerius is still living, and is ordained by the primate Megalius

But the blessed and aged Valerius rejoiced more than others on this account and gave thanks to God for the special blessing bestowed upon him. He began to fear, however, for such is human nature, that Augustine would be sought for the episcopal office and be taken from him by some other church which lacked a bishop. And this would have happened, had not the bishop himself, since he knew of it, taken care that he should remove to a secret place, and had thus hidden him so that he could not be found by those who sought him. But since the venerable old man still feared this and realized that he was aged and very infirm, he communicated by a secret letter with the Bishop of Carthage, the episcopal Primate, mentioning the weakness of his body and the burden of his years, and beseeching that Augustine might be ordained bishop of the church of Hippo, because he would not in that case then succeed to his office, but would be associated with him as coadjutor-bishop. And what he thus sought and desired he obtained in a satisfactory answer. Later on, accordingly, when Megalius, Bishop of Calama, and at that time primate of Numidia, had come at his request to visit the church at Hippo, unexpectedly to all the bishop Valerius made his desire known to the bishops who happened at that time to be present, and to all the clergy of Hippo and to all the people.

But while all who heard rejoiced and clamored most eagerly that this should be done and accomplished, the presbyter refused to accept the episcopate contrary to the custom of the Church, since his bishop was still living. However, when they had convinced him that this was generally done and had appealed to examples from the churches across the sea as well as in Africa, though he had been ignorant of it before, under compulsion and constraint he yielded and accepted the ordination to the higher office. Later he both said and wrote that this should not have been done in his case, namely to ordain him while his bishop was still living, because of the prohibition of the Ecumenical Council of which he learned after his

ordination ; for that which he regretted to have had done in his case he did not wish to have done to others. Therefore he endeavored to have it decreed by the councils of the bishops that the rules governing all the priests should be made known by the ordaining bishops to those about to be ordained and to those already ordained. And so it was done.

CHAPTER IX. He contends with the Donatists

As bishop he preached the Word of eternal salvation much more earnestly and fervently and with greater authority, no longer in one district only, but wherever he went in answer to requests, ready always to give an answer to every man that asked of him a reason of the faith and hope which is toward God. And the Church of the Lord flourished and grew rapidly and strongly. The Donatists in particular, who lived in Hippo and the neighboring towns, brought his addresses and writings to their bishops. And if, when they had heard these, they perchance made any reply, they were either refuted by their own followers or else their replies were brought to the holy Augustine; and when he had reviewed them patiently and calmly (and, as it is written, he worked out the salvation of men with fear and trembling, showing how they would and could refute nothing and how true and manifest is that doctrine which the Church of God holds and has understood) ; on these things he labored continually by day and by night. He even wrote private letters to prominent bishops of this error and to laymen, urging and exhorting them by the arguments which he offered that they should either abandon the error or at least enter into a discussion with him. In their distrust they were never willing even to answer him in writing, but in anger spoke furiously, privately and publicly declaring that Augustine was a seducer and deceiver of souls. They said and preached that the wolf must be killed in defence of their flock, and neither fearing God nor ashamed before men, they taught the people to believe that whoever should be able to do this would undoubtedly have all his sins forgiven of God. Meanwhile Augustine sought to make known to all their lack of confidence in their own cause, and when they met in public conferences they did not dare to debate with him.

CHAPTER X. The madness of the Circumcellions

These Donatists had in nearly all their churches an unusual kind of men, perverse and violent, going about under a profession of continency, who were called Circumcellions. They were very numerous and formed themselves into bands throughout almost all the regions of Africa. Inspired by evil teachers, in their insolent boldness and lawless temerity they never spared either their own or strangers, and in violation of right and justice deprived men of their civil rights; and unless men obeyed, they were visited with the severest losses and injuries, when armed with every kind of weapon, the Circumcellions madly overran the farms and estates and did not even hesitate to shed human blood. But while the Word of God was diligently preached, whenever any plan of peace was suggested to those who hated peace, they freely assailed whoever talked of it. And when, despite their teachings, the truth became known, those who would and could do so either openly tore themselves away from them or secretly withdrew and together with as many of their friends as they could obtain, adhered to the peace and unity of the Church. As a result, seeing that the congregations of their error were growing smaller, and being envious of the growth of the Church, these heretics were inflamed and burned with fiercest wrath and with the help of their confederates began intolerable persecutions against the unity of the Church. They made daily and nightly attacks even upon the Catholic priests and ministers and robbed them of all their possessions; and they crippled many of the servants of God by tortures. They also threw lime mixed with vinegar in the eyes of some and others they murdered. Wherefore these rebaptizing Donatists came to be hated even by their own.

CHAPTER XI. Progress of the Church through Augustine

Now as the divine teachings prospered, the clergy in the church at Hippo who had served God under and with the holy Augustine in the monastery began to be ordained. And the truth taught by the Catholic Church, the manner of life of the holy servants of God, their continence and abject poverty became more known and celebrated day by day. Then the Church, for the sake of its peace and unity, first began to demand with great eagerness bishops and clergy from the monastery which had begun to exist and grow through the efforts of that memorable man, and later obtained them. And there were about ten men, holy and venerable, continent and learned, whom the most blessed Augustine furnished in answer to our request to various churches, some of them quite prominent. And likewise these too who came from that fellowship of holy men increased the churches of the Lord, and also established monasteries, and as their zeal for the spreading of the Word of God grew, they furnished other churches with their brethren whom they promoted to the priesthood. Therefore the teaching of the salutary faith, hope and love of the Church became known through many and to many, not only throughout all parts of Africa, but even in the churches across the sea, through the books which were edited and translated into the Greek tongue. Thus by that one man, and through him to many, by the grace of God it was all brought to public knowledge. And so, as it is written, the wicked man saw it and was grieved; he gnashed with his teeth and melted away. But Thy servants, as it is said, were for peace with those who hated peace and whenever they spoke they were willingly overcome by them.

CHAPTER XII. By the error of his guide Augustine escapes an ambuscade laid for him

But several times these Circumcellions, fully armed, beset the roads even against Augustine, the servant of God, when, as it chanced, he went on request to visit, instruct and exhort the Catholic people, as he frequently did. Now it once happened that although they were out in full force, they yet failed to capture him. For through the error of his guide and yet, in fact, by the providence of God, it happened that the bishop with his companions came to his destination by a different road, and he learned later that through this error he had escaped their impious hands, and together with all he gave thanks to God, the Deliverer. And they, according to their custom, spared neither laymen nor clergy, as the public records witness.

In this connection we must not pass over in silence the things which were done and accomplished to the glory of God by the ardor of that man, so distinguished in the Church, and in his zeal for the house of God, against the rebaptizing Donatists mentioned above. When, on one occasion, one of the bishops he had furnished to the Church from his monastery and clergy visited the diocese of the church of Calama which was under his care and, for the peace of the Church, had preached against the heresy such things as he had learned, it happened that in the midst of his journey he fell into their ambuscade, and although he escaped with all his companions, the animals and baggage were taken from them and they left him grievously injured and wounded. Wherefore, in order that the progress of the peace of the Church might not be further hindered, the defender of the Church was not silent before the law. And Crispinus, who was bishop of the Donatists in the city and region of Calama, for some time well known and also a learned man, was admonished that he was liable to the fine of gold fixed by the civil laws against heretics. When he protested against the laws and was brought before the proconsul, he denied that he was a heretic. Then it became necessary, when the defender of the Church withdrew, that he should be opposed by a Catholic bishop and be convicted of being what he denied he was;

for if he had succeeded in his dissimulation, the ignorant perhaps would have believed that the heretic was a Catholic bishop, since he denied being what he was, and so a stumbling-

block might have been placed in the way of the weak because of this neglect. And since the illustrious Bishop Augustine firmly insisted on it, both the bishops of Calama met for discussion and for the third time they met in conflict concerning their different communions, while a great multitude of Christians at Carthage and throughout all Africa awaited the result of the case; and Crispinus was pronounced a heretic by proconsular and libellary sentence. But the Catholic bishop interceded with the judge in his behalf that the fine of gold should not be exacted, and the favor was obtained for him. But when he ungratefully appealed to the most clement Prince, a final answer from the Emperor was due to his appeal, and accordingly the order was issued that the Donatist heretics should have no rights in any place and that they should everywhere be held to the full force of all the laws enacted against heretics. By this order also, the judge and the officers of his court and Crispinus himself, though he had not previously been compelled to pay, were all enjoined to pay ten pounds of gold to the credit of the treasury. Immediately every effort was made by the Catholic bishops, and especially by Augustine of holy memory, that this condemnation of all should be withdrawn through the indulgence of the Emperor.

With the aid of the Lord this was accomplished. Through this vigilance and holy zeal the Church increased greatly.

CHAPTER XIII. Peace of the Church through Augustine

For all these labors for the peace of the Church the Lord gave the palm to Augustine in this life and reserved with Himself the crown of righteousness for him. And more and more by the aid of Christ, the unity of peace, that is, the fraternity of the Church of God, grew and multiplied from day to day. This was especially advanced after the conference which was held a little later at Carthage by all the Catholic bishops with these same bishops of the Donatists at the command of the most glorious and devout Emperor Honorius, who, in order to bring this about, had sent the tribune and notary Marcellinus from his own court to Africa as judge. In this conference they were completely silenced, and being convicted of error by the Catholics, were reprimanded by sentence of the judge. After their appeal these unrighteous men were condemned as heretics by the rescript of the most pious Ruler. For this reason their bishops, more than before, together with their clergy and people, enjoyed our communion, maintained the Catholic peace and endured many persecutions even to the loss of life and limb. And this good was begun and completed, as I said, by that holy man, while our fellow-bishops consented and were equally pleased.

CHAPTER XIV. Emeritus, a Donatist bishop, overcome

Yet after the conference which was held with the Donatists, there were not lacking those who declared that these bishops had not been permitted to speak fully and freely for their sect before the magistrate who heard the case, since the judge, who was of Catholic communion, favored his own Church. But is was only after they had failed and were defeated that they offered this excuse, since these heretics knew before the discussion was held that he was of the Catholic communion, and when they were summoned by him to the public debate for the purpose of discussion, they agreed to do it. Surely, if they had held him under suspicion, they could have refused to attend. Nevertheless the help of Almighty God revealed itself, for Augustine of venerable memory stopped a while later in the city of Caesarea in Mauretania to which letters from the Apostolic See constrained him to go with others of his fellow-bishops, evidently for the purpose of settling further difficulties of the Church. Thus it happened on this occasion that he met Emeritus, the Donatist bishop of that place, whom they regarded as the chief defender of their sect at the conference, and held a discussion with him publicly in the church, while the people of the different communions were present.

He challenged them by the ecclesiastical records in order that whatever perchance, as they said, Emeritus might have been able to offer in the conference and had not been permitted to offer, he might now not hesitate to say with security and without the interference or violence of any magistrate, and should not refuse to defend his own communion with all confidence in his own city and in the presence of all his fellow-townsmen. Notwithstanding this encouragement and the urgent entreaty of his parents and townsmen, he was not willing to do so, although they promised him that they would return to his communion even at the risk of their property and temporal welfare, if only he would overthrow the Catholic argument. But he was neither willing nor able to add anything more to these records except only to say: ”Those records of what was done by the bishops at Carthage contain the proof of whether we were victors or vanquished. At another time, when urged by a reporter to answer, he spoke, and then when he was silent his position became evident to all through his embarrassment, while the growing strength of the Church of God was revealed. Whoever, therefore, wishes to learn more about the diligence and labor of Augustine, of most blessed

memory, for the welfare of the Church of God, let him run through these records. He will find what sort of arguments he produced to provoke and persuade that learned, eloquent and illustrious man to state whatever he wished in defence of his sect;

and he will learn that Emeritus was defeated.

CHAPTER XV. A merchant, Firmus by name, converted by a digression in Augustine's sermon

I know also, and not I only but also my brethren and fellow-servants who were at that time living together with the holy man in the church at Hippo, that when we were seated at the table he said: "Did you take notice of my sermon in the church to-day, that both the beginning and end worked out contrary to my usual custom? For I did not explain to its conclusion the subject which I had propounded but left it in suspense. To which we replied, "Yes, we know it and remember that we wondered at it at the time. Then he said, "I suppose that perhaps the Lord wished some wanderer among the people to be taught and healed by our forgetfulness and error; for in His hands are we and all our utterances. For while I was investigating the margins of the question proposed, by a digression of speech I passed over to something else and so, without finishing or explaining the question, I ended my discourse by attacking the error of the Manichaeans, about which I had intended to say nothing in my discussion, rather than by speaking about those things which I had intended to explain.

And after this, unless I am mistaken, lo, on the next day or the day after, there came a certain merchant, Firmus by name, to the holy Augustine, who was seated in the monastery, and in our presence fell down on his knees and prostrated himself at his feet, shedding tears and asking that the priest and his holy companions intercede with the Lord for his sins. For he confessed that he had followed the sect of the Manichaeans, had lived in it for many years and so had paid out much money in vain to the Manichaeans, or rather to those whom they call the Elect; but recently by the mercy of God he had been in the church and was converted and made a Catholic by Augustine's sermons. And when the venerable Augustine and we who were with him at the time inquired diligently of the man by what thing in the sermon he had been especially satisfied, he told us and we all recalled the course of the sermon. Wondering and marvelling at the profound plan of God for the salvation of souls, we glorified and blessed His holy Name; for when He wishes and by whom He wishes and in whatever way He wishes, by those who know and those who do not know, He works the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER XV. A MERCHANT, FIRMUS BY NAME, CONVERTED BY A DIGRESSION IN AUGUSTI

And from that time on this man held fast to the manner of life of the servants of God, gave up his business as merchant and progressing among the members of the church, by the will of God he was called and constrained in another region to enter the office of presbyter, wherein he maintained and persevered in his sanctity of life. And perhaps he is still in active life across the sea.

CHAPTER XVI. The accursed and shameful practices of the Manichaeans laid bare

At Carthage also when a certain procurator of the royal house, Ursus by name, and a man of the Catholic faith, had come into an assembly of certain Manichaeans whom they call Elect, both men and women, and when they had been led away by him to the church and were examined by the bishops, they were given a hearing with formal record. Among these bishops was also Augustine, of holy memory, who knew the accursed sect better than the others did, and by disclosing their damnable blasphemies from places in the books which the Manichaeans accept he even brought them to a confession of the same. The base and unworthy things they practiced to their own great harm are revealed in the ecclesiastical records through the disclosures of those women—Elect indeed. And so by the watchfulness of the shepherds an increase was made in the Lord's flock and strong defence was maintained against the thieves and robbers.

With a certain Felix, also a member of those whom the Manichaeans call Elect, Augustine argued in public in the church at Hippo while the people were present and the reporters took down the record. After the second or third meeting the emptiness and error of the sect were exposed and that Manichaean was converted to our faith and Church, as these writings will show if they are consulted.

CHAPTER XVII. Pascentius, an Arian Count, is refuted in public debate

Moreover there was also a certain Pascentius, a Count of the royal house and an Arian, who was a most energetic collector of the taxes. By reason of the authority of his position he attacked the Catholic faith violently and persistently and by his raillery and power tormented and annoyed many of the more simple priests of God who were living by faith. Challenged by him, Augustine met him at Carthage in the presence of honored and notable men. The heretic utterly refused to have tablets and a pen at hand, as our teacher, both before and in the meeting, urgently insisted should be done. And since he refused this, saying that he was unwilling through fear of the public laws to be exposed to danger by such records, and appealed to the bystanders, the Bishop Augustine took up the discussion, because it seemed best to his fellow-bishops who were present that they should debate in private and without written records. He prophesied, however, as afterwards happened, that since there was no record in writing, after the conclusion of the conference anyone who wished could freely say that he had said what perchance he had not said or had not said what he had said. Augustine then joined in debate with him, and after stating what he believed and hearing from him what he held, by true reasoning and by producing the authority of the Scriptures he explained and proved the foundations of our faith.

And the statements of Pascentius, being supported neither by truth nor by the authority of the Holy Scriptures, were explained and refuted. And as the parties separated from each other, he became more and more angry and enraged and threw out many lies in defense of his false faith, declaring that Augustine, though praised by the voice of many, had really been defeated by him. Since this could not be kept from public notice, Augustine was compelled to write to Pascentius himself, omitting, because of the latter's fear, the names of those who had attended the conference. In these letters he faithfully set forth everything which had been said and done by both parties; and to prove these things, if they should be denied, he had ready a great multitude of witnesses, illustrious and honorable men, who had been present on that occasion. In answer to two letters directed to him, Pascentius returned but

one meager reply in which he managed to offer insults rather than to declare the opinion of his sect. This is acknowledged by those who are able and willing to read [the letter].

With a bishop of these Arians, a certain Maximinus, who came to Africa with the Goths, he held a conference at Hippo, since many illustrious men desired and requested it and were also present. And what each party asserted is recorded. If the studious will take the trouble to read the records carefully, they will surely discover what this crafty and unreasonable heresy professes in order to seduce and deceive and what the Catholic Church maintains and teaches regarding the divine Trinity. But when the heretic returned from Hippo to Carthage and because of his great loquacity in the conference asserted that he had returned victorious from the debate and lied (and as, of course, he could not be easily examined and judged by those who were ignorant of the divine Law), the venerable Augustine at a later time with his own pen made a recapitulation of the separate charges and answers of the entire conference. And although Maximinus was unable to offer any reply to the charges, nevertheless supplements were added and the things which could not be introduced and written in the short time of the conference were made clear; for the craftiness of the man led him to occupy the entire part of the day which remained with his last and by far his longest speech.

CHAPTER XVIII. Heretics of the new Pelagian sect overcome and condemned

Against the Pelagians also, new heretics of our time and skilful debaters, who wrote with an art even more subtle and noxious, and spoke whenever they could, in public and in homes—against these he labored for almost ten years, writing and publishing many books and very frequently arguing in the church with people of that error. When they perversely tried through their flattery to persuade the Apostolic See of their false doctrine, it was most positively resolved by [successive] African councils of holy bishops first to convince the venerable Innocent, the holy Pope of the city, and his successor, the holy Zosimus, that this sect ought to be abominated and condemned by the Catholic faith. And the bishops of that great See at various times censured them and cut them off from the membership of the Church, and in letters sent to the African churches of the West and to the churches of the East decreed that they should be anathamatized and shunned by all Catholics. When the most pious Emperor Honorius heard of this judgment which had been passed upon them by the Catholic Church of God, influenced by it, he in turn decreed that they should be condemned by his laws and should be regarded as heretics. Accordingly some of them returned to the bosom of the holy mother Church from which they had withdrawn. And others are still returning as the truth of the right faith shines forth and prevails against the detestable error.

The memorable man, a noble member of the Lord's body, was ever solicitous and watchful for the advantage of the universal Church. To him it was divinely granted that from the fruit of his labors he should find joy even in this life, first because unity and peace were established in the part of the Church around Hippo over which he had special jurisdiction, and then in the other parts of Africa, either by his own efforts or by others, and through priests whom he himself had furnished. Moreover, he found joy in seeing the Church of the Lord increase and multiply and in seeing the Manichaeans, Donatists, Pelagians and pagans for the most part diminishing and becoming united with the Church of God. He also delighted in the pursuit of his studies and rejoiced in all good. In kindness he bore with the

shortcomings of his brethren and mourned over the iniquities of the wicked, whether of those within the Church or of those without, always rejoicing, as I said, in the Lord's gains and sorrowing over His losses.

And so many things were dictated and published by him and so many things were discussed in the church, written down and amended, whether against various heretics or expounded from the canonical books for the edification of the holy sons of the Church, that scarcely any student would be able to read and know them all. However, lest we seem in any way to deprive those who are very eager for the truth of his word, I have determined, with the aid of God, to add also an Indiculus of these books, homilies and epistles at the end of this little work. When those who love the truth of God more than temporal riches have read this, each may choose for himself what he wishes to read. And in order to copy them let him seek them either from the library of the church of Hippo, where the more perfect copies can probably be found, or search wherever else he can, and when he has found them let him copy and preserve them and also lend them willingly to anyone who wishes to make copies.

CHAPTER XIX. Augustine as judge

According also to the teaching of the Apostle, who said: ”Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Accordingly when he was importuned by Christians or by men of any sect, he heard their cases carefully and dutifully, keeping before his eyes the remark of a certain one, who said that he preferred to hear cases between strangers rather than between friends; for of the strangers he could gain the one as a friend in whose favor the case was justly decided, whereas he would lose the one of his friends against whom judgment was passed.

Though they sometimes kept him even till meal-time and sometimes he even had to fast all day, yet he always examined these cases and passed judgment on them, considering in them the value of Christian souls—in how far each had increased or decreased in faith and good works. When opportunities occurred, he instructed both parties in the truth of. the divine Law, impressing it upon them and reminding them of the way by which they might obtain eternal life. He asked no other reward from those for whom he spent his time in this way except the Christian obedience and devotion which is due to God and man, rebuking the sinner before all, that others also might fear. He did this as one whom the Lord made ”a watchman unto the house of Israel,” preaching the Word, instant in season, out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine, and he took special pains to instruct those who were able to teach others. On request he also wrote letters to some concerning their temporal cases. But this work which took him away from better things he regarded as a kind of conscription, for his pleasure was always in the things of God or in the exhortation or conversation of intimate brotherly friendship.

CHAPTER XX. How he interceded for prisoners

We know also that when his most intimate friends asked him for letters of intercession to the civil authorities he did not give them, saying that it was wise to observe the rule of a certain sage of whom it was written that out of great regard for his own reputation he would not be responsible for his friends. But he added the remark, which was however his own, that this was a good rule because often the authority which is petitioned afterward becomes oppressive. But if, when he was asked for it, he perceived that intercession was necessary, he did it with such sincerity and tact that not only did he not appear irritating and annoying, but rather seemed admirable. For when one case of necessity arose and in his usual manner he interceded by letter with a Vicar of Africa, Macedonius by name, on behalf of a suppliant, Macedonius granted the request and sent him an answer on this wise: "I am struck with wonder at your wisdom, both in the books you have published and in this letter which you have not found it too great a burden to send me by way of intercession for those in distress. For the former writings, my venerable lord and esteemed father, possess a discernment, wisdom and holiness which leave nothing to be desired, and the latter such modesty, that unless I do as you request, I could not regard myself as remaining free from blame in the matter. You do not insist, like most men in your position, on extorting all that the suppliant asks. But what seemed to you fair to ask of a judge occupied with many cares, this you advise with a humble modesty which is most efficacious in settling difficulties among good men. Consequently I have not hesitated to grant your request as you recommended and as I had given you reason to expect."

CHAPTER XXI. His frame of mind when attending councils

Whenever he was able, Augustine attended the councils of the holy priests which were held throughout the various provinces, seeking in them not his own but the things of Jesus Christ, that the faith of the holy Catholic Church might remain inviolate or that some priests and clergy who had been justly or unjustly excommunicated might be either absolved or rejected. In the ordination of priests and clergy he thought that the agreement of the majority of Christians and the custom of the Church should be followed.

CHAPTER XXII. Augustine's use of food and clothing

His garments and foot-wear and even his bedclothing were modest yet sufficient—neither too fine nor yet too mean; for in such things men are wont either to display themselves proudly or else to degrade themselves, in either case seeking not the things which are of Jesus Christ, but their own. But Augustine, as I have said, held a middle course, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. His table was frugal and sparing, though indeed with the herbs and lentils he also had meats at times for the sake of his guests or for some of the weaker brethren; but he always had wine because he knew and taught, as the Apostle says, that "every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer." And as Augustine himself has set down in his books of the Confessions, saying: "I fear not the uncleanness of meat, but the uncleanness of lust. I know that Noah was permitted to eat every kind of flesh which was useful for food; that Elijah was refreshed by eating flesh; that John, who was gifted with marvelous abstinence, was not defiled by the creatures, that is the locusts, which became his food. I know also that Esau was ensnared by his desire for a pottage of lentils, and that David rebuked himself for his longing after water, and that our King was tempted not with meat, but with bread. And so likewise the people in the desert deserved to be condemned not because they desired meat, but because in their desire for food they murmured against God." As regards the use of wine there is the injunction of the Apostle who wrote to Timothy, saying: "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

His spoons only were silver, but the vessels in which food was served were earthen, wooden or marble; yet this was not from the compulsion of necessity, but from the choice of his own will. He always showed hospitality. At the table he loved reading and discussion rather than eating and drinking, and against that pest of human custom he had this inscription on his table: Who injures the name of an absent friend May not at this table as guest attend. Thus he warned every guest to refrain from unnecessary and harmful tales. And when some of his most intimate fellow-bishops forgot that inscription and spoke without heeding it, Augustine on one occasion became exasperated and so sternly rebuked them as to declare that either those verses would have to be removed from the table or he would

leave in the midst of the meal and retire to his chamber. Both I and the others who were at the table experienced this.

CHAPTER XXIII. His use of the church revenues

He was ever mindful of his fellow-poor and for them he spent from the same funds from which he spent for himself and all who lived with him, that is, either from the revenues from the possessions of the church or from the offerings of the faithful. And when perchance, as was frequently the case, jealousy arose among the clergy regarding these possessions, Augustine addressed the people of God, saying that he preferred to live by the contributions of God's people rather than be burdened with the care and direction of these possessions and that he was ready to give them back to them so that all the servants and ministers of God might live after the manner of which we read in the Old Testament that they were partakers of that altar which they served. But this the laity were never willing to undertake.

CHAPTER XXIV. Household affairs

The care of the church building and all its property he assigned and entrusted in turn to the more capable clergy. He never held the key nor wore his ring, but everything which was received and spent was noted down by these overseers of the house. At the end of the year the accounts were read to him that he might know how much had been received and how much spent, or what still remained to be spent. In many bills he preferred to rely on the fidelity of the overseer of the house rather than to ascertain it by testing and proving his accounts. A house or land or an estate he was never willing to buy. But if perchance anything of the kind was given to the church by someone of his own accord or if it was left as a legacy, he did not refuse it, but ordered that it be accepted. But some legacies I know he refused, not because they could not be used for the poor, but because it seemed just and right that they should rather be in the possession of the children or parents or relatives of the deceased, even though the decedents had not willed to leave these things to them. In fact one of the chief men of Hippo who was living at Carthage wished to give his property to the church at Hippo.

Retaining only the interest for himself, he sent the tablets duly attested to Augustine of holy memory, who gladly accepted his offering and congratulated him because he was mindful of his eternal salvation. But some years after this, when as it happened we were visiting in Augustine's house, lo, this benefactor sent a letter by his son and asked that the records of transfer be returned to his son, directing, however, that a hundred pieces of gold should be given to the poor. And when the holy man heard it he mourned that the man had either pretended to make a gift or had repented of his good work. In his grief of mind at this perversity he said what he could, as God put it in his heart, for the man's admonition and reproof. He immediately returned the tablets which had been sent voluntarily and not by request nor on compulsion. The money he spurned, and as in duty bound, he wrote an answer and censured and reproved the man, warning him to make his peace with God in humble repentance for his false pretences and wickedness, that he might not depart from this life under the burden of so great a sin.

He also said frequently that the church might with greater security and sa'fety accept legacies left by the dead rather than gifts from the living which might cause anxiety and loss, and furthermore that legacies themselves should be offered voluntarily rather than solicited.

He accepted nothing which was offered him in trust, but did not restrain any of the clergy who wished to accept such gifts. He was not intently concerned nor entangled in the property which the church held and possessed. Yet though following with inmost desire after the greater spiritual things, he sometimes relaxed from his contemplation of things eternal and turned to temporal affairs. But when such things had been arranged and set in order, then as though freed from consuming and annoying cares, his soul rebounded to the more intimate and lofty thoughts of the mind in which he either pondered on the discovery of divine truth or dictated some of the things already discovered or else emended some of the works which had been previously dictated and then transcribed. This he accomplished by working all day and toiling at night. He was a type of the Church on high, even as most glorious Mary, of whom it is written that she sat at the feet of the Lord and listened intently to His word; but when her sister who was cumbered about much serving, complained because she received no help, she heard the words: "Martha, Martha, Mary hath chosen that better part which shall not be taken away from her."

For new buildings he never had any desire, avoiding the entanglement of his soul in these things, since he wished always to have it free from all temporal annoyance. Nevertheless he did not restrain those who desired or constructed them, provided only they were not extravagant. Sometimes, when the money of the church failed, he announced to the Christian people that he had nothing to give to the poor. For the sake of captives and of the many who were in need he even ordered the holy vessels to be broken and melted down and to be distributed to the needy. I would not have mentioned this unless I knew that it was done contrary to the carnal judgment of some. Ambrose, of venerable memory, also said and wrote that in such extremities it should be done without any hesitancy. Sometimes too when the treasury and also the consistory, from which were supplied the things necessary for the altar, had been neglected by the faithful, Augustine would speak of it in the church and remind the people, even as he once told us the blessed Ambrose had dealt with the subject in the church when he was there.

CHAPTER XXV. Household discipline

At the same house and table together with him the clergy were regularly fed and clothed at the common expense. That no one might lightly utter an oath and thus fall into condemnation, he preached to the people in the church and instructed the members of his own household that no one should utter an oath—not even at the table. And if anyone erred in this, he lost one drink, according to the rules: for the number of cups allowed each one of those who lived and ate with him was fixed beforehand. The faults of omission and commission of which, in spite of this rule, his brethren were guilty, he duly and properly censured or countenanced them as far as was fitting and necessary; in such cases particularly teaching that no one should incline his heart to evil words or to make excuses in sins. And when anyone offered his gift at the altar and there remembered that his brother had aught against him, he should leave his offering at the altar and go to be reconciled to his brother and then come and offer his gift at the altar. But if he had anything against his brother, he should rebuke him in secret, and if he heard him he had gained his brother, but if not, he should take with him one or two others. If he held them also in contempt he should be brought before the Church. If he did not obey her, he should be to him as a heathen and a publican. This also he added, that if a brother offend and ask forgiveness, not seven times, but seventy times seven times, the offence should be forgiven him, even as each one daily asks of the Lord that his own sins be forgiven.

CHAPTER XXVI. On the companionship of women

No woman ever lived or stayed in Augustine's house, not even his own sister, though she was a widow who had long served God and lived in charge of His handmaidens even to the day of her death. Nor did he admit his brother's daughters who were likewise serving God, although the councils of holy bishops placed these persons among the exceptions. He used to say that although no evil suspicion could arise from the fact that his sister and nieces were living with him, yet since they could not be without servants and other women who would stay with them, and still others would come in from without to visit them, because of these a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall might be placed in the way of the weak. He also said that because of the presence of all those women who would live or come there, the men who happened to be visiting the bishop or some one of the clergy might either perish by human temptation or surely be most shamefully maligned by the evil suspicions of men. On this account, therefore, he said that women ought never to live in the same house with the servants of God, even the most chaste, that no occasion to fall, as has been said, nor a stumbling-block might be placed in the way of the weak by such an example. And if perchance any women requested to see him or to salute him, they never came in to him without some of the clergy as witnesses, nor did he ever speak with them alone, not even if the matter was one of secrecy.

CHAPTER XXVII. Service to the needy and sick

In his visitations he adhered to the rule set forth by the Apostle and visited only the widows and orphans in their afflictions. Yet whenever it happened that he was requested by the sick to come in person and pray to the Lord for them and lay his hand upon them, he went without delay. But the monasteries of women he visited only in extreme emergencies. Furthermore he said that in the life and habits of a man of God that rule ought to be observed which he had learned from the practice of Ambrose of holy memory, namely, never to seek a wife for another man, nor to urge anyone who desired to go to war to do so, nor to accept an invitation to a feast in his own community. He gave as his reasons for each of these that if the husband and wife should [ever] happen to quarrel with each other, they might revile him who had brought them together; but clearly, if they themselves had previously agreed to marry, the priest to whom they came ought to offer his services so that that which had been agreed upon and was pleasing to them should be confirmed or blessed; in the second case in order that no one who had been recommended to military service might blame the one who encouraged him if he suffered any ill through his own fault; and finally, lest by frequent participation in the customs peculiar to feasts his vow of temperance should be broken.

He also told us that he had heard of the very wise and godly reply of an illustrious man of blessed memory at the end of his life, and he warmly praised and extolled it. For when the venerable man lay abed in his last illness and the chief members of the church were standing around his couch, watching him as he was about to depart from this world to be with God, they were overcome with grief at the thought that the Church could be deprived of so great and glorious a prelate and of his dispensation of the Word and Sacrament of God. And when they begged him with tears that he should ask of the Lord an extension of his life he said to them: ”I have not so lived that I should be ashamed to live among you, yet I do not fear to die, for we have a Lord who is good.” And our Augustine, in his later days, used to admire and praise these well-weighed words. For he said that we must understand that Ambrose added this second saying—”I do not fear to die, for we have a Lord who is good”—so that no one might believe that from overconfidence in the purity of his own life he had first said, ”I have not so lived that I should be ashamed to live among you.” Now this he had said

in reference to that which men can judge about a fellow-man; but as for his judgment by the divine justice, he trusted rather in the Lord who is good to whom he also said in the daily prayer: ”Forgive us our trespasses.”

Moreover toward the end of his life Augustine very frequently repeated in this same connection the words of a certain fellow-bishop and very intimate friend. For when he had gone to visit him several times as he drew near to death and he had indicated by a gesture of his hand that he was soon to depart from this world, Augustine had said to him that he might still be of great benefit to the Church if he lived. But that no one should think he was captivated by a desire for this life he had answered: ”If I were never to die it would be well; but if I am ever to die, why not now?” This sentiment was much admired by Augustine and he praised him who had given voice to it—a man who feared God, indeed, but who had been born and brought up in a small town and was not much educated in the art of reading. Compare on the other hand the attitude of a certain ailing bishop of whom the holy martyr Cyprian speaks on this wise in his letter which he wrote on Mortality, saying: ”When a certain one of our colleagues and fellow-priests, wearied with infirmity and troubled at the near approach of death, prayed for an extension of his life, there stood by him as he prayed and was even now on the point of death, a youth, venerable in glory and majesty, tall of stature and with radiant countenance. And mortal eyes could scarcely have endured to look upon him as he stood there, had not he who was soon to depart from this world already had power to behold such a being. And not without a certain indignation of soul and voice the youth rebuked him and said: ’You fear to suffer, you do not wish to die; what shall I do with you?’”

CHAPTER XXVIII. The books published by Augustine just before his death

Shortly before the time of his death he revised the books which he had dictated and edited, whether those which he had dictated in the time immediately following his conversion when he was still a layman, or while he was a presbyter or a bishop. And in those works which he had dictated or written while he was as yet not so well acquainted with ecclesiastical usage and had less understanding, whatsoever he found not agreeing with the ecclesiastical rule, this he himself censured and corrected. Thus he wrote two volumes whose title is On the Revision of Books. And he sometimes complained that certain books had been carried off by some of his brethren before his careful revision, although he revised them later. Some of his books, however, he left uncompleted at the time of his death. Furthermore, in his desire to be of help to all, both those who could read many books and those who could not, he made excerpts from both the sacred Testaments, the Old and the New, of the divine commandments and prohibitions relating to the conduct of life, and with the addition of a preface, made one volume of them. He who wishes may read it and learn therefrom how obedient or disobedient he is to God. This work he desired to have called The Mirror.

But a short time after his it came about, in accordance with the divine will and command, that a great host of savage foes, Vandals and Alans, with some of the Gothic tribe interspersed, and various other peoples, armed with all kinds of weapons and well trained in warfare, came by ship from the regions of Spain across the sea and poured into Africa and overran it. And everywhere through the regions of Mauretania, even crossing over to other of our provinces and territories, raging with cruelty and barbarity, they completely devastated everything they could by their pillage, murder and varied tortures, conflagrations and other innumerable and unspeakable crimes, sparing neither sex nor age, nor even the priests or ministers of God, nor yet the ornaments or vessels of the churches nor even the buildings. Now the man of God did not believe and think as other men did regarding the causes from which this most fierce assault and devastation of the foe had arisen and come to pass. But considering these matters more deeply and profoundly and perceiving in them

above all the dangers and the death of souls (since, as it is written, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," and "An understanding heart is a worm in the bones"), more than ever tears were his meat day and night, as he passed through and endured those days of his life, now almost ended, which beyond all others were the most bitter and mournful of his old age.

For he saw cities overthrown in destruction, and the resident citizens, together with the buildings on their lands, partly annihilated by the enemy's slaughter and others driven into flight and dispersed. He saw churches stripped of priests and ministers, and holy virgins and all the monastics scattered in every direction. Here he saw some succumb to torture and others slain by the sword, while still others in captivity, losing their innocency and faith both in soul and body, received from their foes the harsh and evil treatment of slaves. He saw the hymns and praises of God perish from the churches; the church buildings in many places consumed by fire; the regular services which were due to God cease from their appointed places; the holy sacraments no longer desired, or if some one did desire them, no one could easily be found to administer them. When they gathered in flight amid the mountain forests, in the caves and caverns of the rocks or in any other kind of retreat, some were captured and put to death while others were robbed and deprived of the necessary means of sustenance so that they gradually perished of hunger. Even the bishops of the churches and the clergy who, by the help of God, did not chance to meet the foe or, if they did meet them, escaped their hands, he saw despoiled and stripped of all their goods and begging in abject poverty, nor could they all be furnished with that by which they might be relieved.

Of the innumerable churches he saw only three survive, namely those of Carthage, Hippo and Cirta, which by God's favor were not demolished. These cities too still stand, protected by human and divine aid, although after Augustine's death the city of Hippo, abandoned by its inhabitants, was burned by the enemy. Amid these calamities he was consoled by the thought of a certain wise man who said: "He is not to be thought great who thinks it strange that wood and stones should fall and mortals die."

But Augustine, being exceeding wise, daily bewailed all these events. And it increased his grief and sorrow that this same enemy also came to besiege the city of the Hippo-Regians which had so far maintained its position. With its defence at this time the late Count Boniface had been entrusted with an army of allied Goths. For almost fourteen months they shut up and besieged the city; and they even cut off its sea-coast by blockade. We ourselves with other of our fellow-bishops from the neighboring regions took refuge in this city and remained in it during the whole time of the siege. Consequently we very frequently conversed together and meditated on the awful judgments of God laid bare before our eyes, saying: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." And in our common grief, with groanings and tears, we besought the Father of mercies and the Lord of all consolation that He vouchsafe to sustain us in this tribulation.

CHAPTER XXIX. Augustine's last illness

And it chanced at one time while we were seated with him at the table and were conversing together that he said to us: "I would have you know that in this time of our misfortune I ask this of God: either that He may be pleased to free this city which is surrounded by the foe, or if something else seems good in His sight, that He make His servants brave for enduring His will, or at least that He may take me from this world unto Himself. And when he had taught us these words, together with him we all joined in a like petition to God Most High, for ourselves and for all our fellow bishops and for the others who were in this city. And lo, in the third month of the siege he succumbed to fever and began to suffer in his last illness. In truth the Lord did not deprive His servant of the reward of his prayer. For what he asked with tears and prayers for himself and the city he obtained in due time. I know also that both while he was presbyter and bishop, when asked to pray for certain demoniacs, he entreated God in prayer with many tears and the demons departed from the men. In like manner when he was sick and confined to his bed there came a certain man with a sick relative and asked him to lay his hand upon him that he might be healed.

But Augustine answered that if he had any power in such things he would surely have applied it to himself first of all; to which the stranger replied that he had had a vision and that in his dream these words had been addressed to him: "Go to the bishop Augustine that he may lay his hand upon him, and he shall be whole. Now when Augustine heard this he did not delay to do it and immediately God caused the sick man to depart from him healed.

CHAPTER XXX. Advice on the withdrawal of bishops from the churches at the approach of a foe

And now I must by no means pass over in silence the fact that when the above-mentioned enemy was threatening us, Augustine was consulted in letters by Honoratus, a holy man and our fellow-bishop of the church at Thiabe, as to whether or not the bishops or clergy should withdraw from the churches at their approach. In his reply he pointed out what was more to be feared from those destroyers of Romania. It is my desire to have that letter of his included in this account, for it is very useful, even necessary, for the proper conduct of the priests and ministers of God. "To our holy brother and fellow-bishop Honoratus, Augustine sends greeting in the Lord. 1. I thought the copy which was sent to your Grace of the letter which I wrote our brother and fellow-bishop Quodvultdeus would relieve me of this task which you have laid upon me by asking my advice as to what you ought to do amid these perils which have befallen our times. For although I wrote that letter quickly, I nevertheless believe I omitted nothing that would suffice me to say in answering and him to know who awaits my reply. For I said that those who desire to withdraw to places of safety, if they are able, should not be prevented, and that the ties of our ministry, by which the love of Christ has bound us not to desert the churches which we ought to serve, should not be broken. Here, then, are the very words which I wrote in that letter: 'If, therefore,' I said, 'our ministry is so needful to those people of God, however few, who stay where we are, that they ought not to be left without it, it remains for us to pray to the Lord: "Be thou unto us a God, a protector and a place of refuge."'

2. But this advice, as you write, is not satisfactory to you, because you fear we may be striving to act against that command and example of the Lord in which He teaches that we should flee from city to city. We recall the words which He said: 'But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye to another.' But who would believe that the Lord wished this to be done when the circumstances are such that the flocks, which He purchased with His own blood, should be abandoned by that necessary ministry without which they cannot live? Did He do this when as an infant He fled into Egypt, carried by His parents, when He had not yet

assembled any congregations which we could say were deserted by Him? When the Apostle Paul, that he might not be apprehended of his enemy, was let down through a window in a basket and escaped his hands, was any church there which was deserted when in need of his ministry? Was not that which was needful supplied by the other brethren dwelling there? Indeed it was at their request that the Apostle did this, that he might be spared to the Church, since he alone was sought by the persecutor. Therefore let the servants of Christ, the ministers of His Word and Sacrament, do as He has taught and permitted.

Let them by all means flee from city to city when some one of them in particular is sought by the persecutors, provided that the Church shall not be abandoned by the others who are not so persecuted, but that these may administer the food to their fellow-servants, who they know would otherwise be unable to live. But when the danger is common to all, that is, to bishops, clergy and laymen, let those who are in need of others not be abandoned by those of whom they are in need. Accordingly, either let them all withdraw to places of safety or else let not those who have a necessity for remaining be left by those through whom their ecclesiastical needs are supplied, so that they may either live together or suffer together whatever their Father wishes them to endure.

3. But if it should happen that some suffer more and others less, or if all suffer equally, it is evident that they suffer for others who, though they were able to escape such woes by flight, preferred to remain so as not to desert others in their time of need. In this especially is that love exemplified which the Apostle John commends, saying: 'As Christ laid down His life for us, so also ought we to lay down our lives for the brethren.' For if those who flee or those who are bound by their duties and are unable to flee—if these are taken captive and suffer anything, they of course suffer for themselves, not for the brethren. But those who suffer because they are unwilling to forsake their brethren who have need of them for their Christian welfare, these undoubtedly lay down their lives for their brethren. 4. Therefore that which we heard a certain bishop say, namely: 'If the Lord has bidden us to flee in those persecutions where we can obtain the reward of martyrdom, how much more ought we to avoid these fruitless sufferings when there is a hostile invasion of the barbarians?' is indeed true and acceptable, but only for those who are not held by the bonds of ecclesiastical duty. For when he who can escape does not flee from the onslaught of the enemy and so does not abandon the ministry of Christ, without which men could neither live a Christian life nor become Christians, he finds a greater reward of love than he who flees, not for his brethren's sake but for his own, and when taken captive does not deny Christ but suffers martyrdom.

5. But what, then, is that which you wrote in your previous letter? For you say: 'If we must remain in the churches, I do not see what will be the advantage to us or to the people, except that men should be cut down before our very eyes, women outraged, churches burned, and we ourselves perish under torture when the things we have not are demanded of us.' God, indeed, is able to hear the prayers of His children and to ward off the things which they fear; yet even so we ought not, on account of that which is uncertain, to be guilty of that which is certain, namely, neglect of our ministrations. Without these the ruin of the people is certain,

not in the things of this life, but of that other which must be cared for with incomparably greater devotion and anxiety. For if these evils were certain which we fear might come to pass in the places in which we are, all on whose account we ought to remain would have fled before us, and so we should be freed from the necessity of remaining. For there is no one who says that ministers ought to remain where there are no longer any to whom it is necessary to minister. So indeed the holy bishops fled from Spain after the people had either fallen in flight, or had been slain or consumed in the siege or scattered in captivity. But many more bishops stayed amid the multitude of these dangers, because those on whose account they remained were staying there. And if some deserted their people, this is what we say ought not to be done. For such were not led by divine authority, but were deceived by human error or constrained by fear.

6. For why do they think they should without discrimination obey the command which they read to flee from city to city, and do not tremble at the parable of the hireling who sees the wolf coming and flees because he cares not for the sheep? Why do they not endeavor so to understand these two consistent teachings of the Lord—the one, indeed, where flight is permitted or even commanded, the other where it is denounced and censured—that they be discovered not to be contrary to each other, as, in fact, they are not? And how shall this be discovered unless attention be given to that which I have discussed above, namely, that we ministers of Christ, under the stress of persecution, should flee from the places in which we are only when there are no Christians there to whom to minister, or when the necessary duties of the ministry can be performed by others who have not the same reason for flight—as the Apostle fled, let down in a basket, as I have mentioned above, when he alone was sought out by the persecutor while the others did not have any such need for flight, so that the services of the ministry were not withdrawn there nor the churches abandoned; as the holy Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, fled when the Emperor Constantius desired to apprehend him alone, while the Catholic people who remained in Alexandria were by no means deserted by the other ministers. But when the people remain and the ministers flee and the service of the ministry is withdrawn, what will this be but that damnable flight of hirelings who care not for the sheep? For the wolf shall come, not a man, but the Devil, who has very frequently induced the faithful to apostatize who were deprived of the daily ministry of the Lord's body; and not through thy knowledge, but through thine ignorance shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.

7. But as for those who are not deceived by error in this matter, but are overcome by terror, why should they not rather, with the mercy and aid of the Lord, bravely struggle against their fright, lest incomparably greater and more fearful evils come upon them? This will be the case where the love of God is aflame, not where the desire of this world smoulders. For love says: 'Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?' And love is from God. Let us pray, therefore, that this love be given of Him by whom it is commanded. And because of it let us fear that the sheep of Christ, who will die at some time by some kind of death, may be slain in heart by the sword of spiritual wickedness rather than in the body by one of iron. Let us rather fear that the inner sense may be corrupted and the purity of

faith perish than that women be forcibly defiled in body. For chastity is not destroyed in the body when the will of the sufferer does not shamefully take part in the deeds of the flesh, but without consenting endures another's violence. Rather let us fear that the living stones may be destroyed while we are absent than that the stones and wood of the earthly buildings may be burned while we are present. Rather let us fear that the members of Christ's body may be destroyed when deprived of spiritual nourishment than that the members of our body may be put to torture when overpowered by the attack of the enemy. Not that these things are not to be avoided when possible, but rather that they are to be endured when they cannot be avoided without impiety—unless, perchance, someone will maintain that the minister is not impious who withdraws his ministry which is needful for piety at the time when it is most needful.

8. Or when these dangers have reached their height and there is no possibility of flight, do we not realize how great a gathering there usually is in the church of both sexes and of every age, some clamoring for baptism, others for reconciliation, still others for acts of penance: all of them seeking consolation and the administration and distribution of the sacraments? If, then, the ministers are not at hand, how terrible is the destruction which overtakes those who depart from this world unregenerated or bound by sin! How great is the grief of their brethren in the faith who shall not have their companionship in the rest in the life eternal! Finally how great the lamentation of all and how great the blasphemy of some because of the absence of the ministers and their ministry! See what the fear of temporal evils does and how great an increase of eternal woes results. But if the ministers are present they are a help to all, according to the strength which the Lord gives them: some are baptized, others are reconciled, none are deprived of the communion of the body of the Lord, all are consoled, edified and exhorted to ask of God, who hath the power to avert all the things they fear—prepared for either issue, so that if that cup may not pass from them, His will may be done who can will no evil.

9. Surely you now see that which you wrote you did not see, namely, how great advantage Christian people may obtain if in these present evils they are not deprived of the presence of Christ's ministers, and you also see how much injury their absence does when they seek their own, not the things which are of Jesus Christ, and have not that love of which it was said: 'She seeketh not her own,' and do not imitate him who said: 'Seeking not mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' For he also would not have fled from the snares of that persecuting prince had he not wished to save himself for others who had greater need of him. Wherefore he says: 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.'

10. At this point someone perchance may say that the ministers of God ought to flee when such dangers are threatening so that they may save themselves for the benefit of the Church in more peaceful times. This is right for some when others are not lacking to provide the ministrations of the Church, that it may not be deserted by all, as we have said above that

Athanasius did. For the Catholic faith, which was defended against the Arian heretics by his voice and zeal, perceived how needful it was and how profitable it would be to have him abide in the flesh. But when the peril is common and it is more to be feared that someone may be thought to do this not from a desire of serving, but from a fear of dying, and when more harm may be done by the example of fleeing than good by the obligation of living, it should under no circumstances be done. Finally the holy David, that he might not be exposed to the dangers of battle and that the 'light of Israel,' as it is there written, should not by any chance be extinguished, withdrew when his followers demanded it, but he did not do this of his own accord or he would have had many imitators of his cowardice, who would have believed that he did it not from any consideration of the advantage of others but from the confusion of his own fear.

11. But another question arises which we ought not to slight. For if this usefulness is not to be disregarded so that some ministers should flee when any danger is imminent in order to be saved to minister to those survivors whom they might be able to find after the disaster, what should be done where all seem sure to perish unless some flee? What if the persecution should in so far be overcome as to pursue only the ministers of the Church? What shall we say? Shall the Church be forsaken by its ministers in flight that it may not be forsaken more wretchedly by them in death? But if the laymen are not persecuted to the death, they can in some way or other hide their bishops and clergy, as He shall aid, in whose control are all things, who is able by His marvelous power to save even those who do not flee. But we are inquiring what we ought to do in order that we be not adjudged as tempting God by looking for divine miracles in all things. Certainly this storm in which the danger is common to laymen and clergy is not the same as that in which the danger is common to merchants and sailors in the same ship. God forbid that this ship of ours should be prized so lightly that the sailors, and especially the pilot, ought to abandon it when it is in danger, even if they can escape by taking to a small boat or even by swimming.

For in the case of those who we fear may perish because of our desertion, it is not their temporal death we fear, which is sure to come at some time, but their eternal death which can come if we are not careful and which cannot come if we are careful. But in the common perils of this life, why should we believe that wherever there is a hostile invasion all the clergy, and not all the laymen also, are going to perish so that those for whom the clergy are necessary shall all end this life together? Or why should we not expect that as some of the laymen shall survive, so also shall some of the clergy, by whom the necessary ministry may be provided for them?

12. Yet O that the rivalry between the ministers of God were as to which of them should remain that the Church be not abandoned by the flight of all, and which of them should flee that it be not abandoned by the death of all! Such, indeed, will be the rivalry among them when both are kindled by love and both obey love. And if this argument cannot be otherwise settled, so far as I can see, those who should remain and those who should flee must be chosen by lot. For those who shall say that they ought rather to flee will either seem to

be afraid because they are unwilling to endure the threatening danger, or presumptuous in that they judge themselves more necessary to the Church to fulfill its services. Furthermore, peradventure those who are the better may choose to lay down their lives for the brethren and those will be saved by flight whose life is less useful by reason of their inferior ability in counsel and government. Nevertheless those who are good and wise will oppose those who they see ought rather to live and who yet choose to die rather than flee.

Thus, as it is written: 'The lot causeth contentions to cease and parteth between the mighty.' For in difficulties of this sort God is a better judge than men as to whether it is well to call the more gifted to the reward of martyrdom and to spare the weak or whether to make them stronger to endure the hardships and to take them out of this world whose lives cannot be of as much advantage to the Church as the lives of the others. The procedure will indeed be rather unusual if the lot has to be adopted; but if it has been used who shall presume to call it into question? Who, except he be ignorant or envious, will not praise it with fitting commendation? But if this method is not found satisfactory on the ground that no instance of such a procedure occurs, let no one by his flight cause the ministration of the Church, especially needful and due amid such great perils, to cease. Let no one regard his own person, so that if he seem to excel in some grace, he should on this account say he is more deserving of life and therefore of flight. For whoever thinks this doubtless pleases himself; but whoever also says this, displeases all.

13. To be sure there are those who believe that when the bishops and clergy do not flee amid such dangers but remain, they deceive the people, since the people do not flee because they see their bishops remaining. But it is easy to avoid this accusation or reproach by speaking to the people and saying: 'Be not deceived because we do not flee from this place. For we are remaining here not for our own sakes but rather for yours that we may not fail to provide you with whatever we know to be needful for your salvation which is in Christ. If, therefore, you wish to flee you will free us from the bonds by which we are held.' This I think should be said when it seems truly expedient to withdraw to places of greater safety. And when such words have been heard and all or some shall have said: 'We are in His power whose wrath no one escapes, wheresoever he may go, and whose mercy he can find, wheresoever he may be who does not wish to go elsewhere, whether prevented by certain obligations or unwilling to seek places of uncertain refuge, thus not ending but merely transfering the dangers,'—surely they must not be forsaken by the Christian ministry. But if the people prefer to leave when they have heard this, the ministers are not bound to stay who were remaining on their account, because there are no longer any persons there for whose sake they ought still to remain.

14. Accordingly, whoever flees under such circumstances that the necessary ministry of the Church is not lacking because of his flight, does as the Lord commands or permits. But whoever so flees that he deprives the flock of Christ of that nourishment from which it has its spiritual life, is an hireling who sees the wolf coming and flees because he cares not for the sheep. These things, since I believe them, my brother most beloved, have I written to

you in truth and love unfeigned because you have asked my advice, but I make no objection to a better opinion if you find one. Nevertheless we can find nothing better to do in these dangers than to pray to the Lord our God that He have mercy upon us. And some wise and holy men, with the help of God, have been enabled to will and to do this much, namely not to desert the churches, and in the face of detraction not to waver in maintaining their purpose."

CHAPTER XXXI. Death and burial

Now the holy man in his long life given of God for the benefit and happiness of the holy Church (for he lived seventy-six years, almost forty of which he spent as a priest or bishop), in private conversations frequently told us that even after baptism had been received exemplary Christians and priests ought not depart from this life without fitting and appropriate repentance. And this he himself did in his last illness of which he died. For he commanded that the shortest penitential Psalms of David should be copied for him, and during the days of his sickness as he lay in bed he would look at these sheets as they hung upon the wall and read them; and he wept freely and constantly. And that his attention might not be interrupted by anyone, about ten days before he departed from the body he asked of us who were present that no one should come in to him, except only at the hours in which the physicians came to examine him or when nourishment was brought to him. This, accordingly, was observed and done, and he had all that time free for prayer. Up to the very moment of his last illness he preached the Word of God in the church incessantly, vigorously and powerfully, with a clear mind and sound judgment. With all the members of his body intact, with sight and hearing unimpaired, while we stood by and watched and prayed, ”he slept with his fathers,” as it is written, ”well-nourished in a good old age.

And in our presence, after a service was offered to God for the peaceful repose of his body, he was buried. He made no will, because as a poor man of God he had nothing from which to make it. He repeatedly ordered that the library of the church and all the books should be carefully preserved for future generations. Whatever the church had in the way of possessions or ornaments he left in charge of his presbyter, who had the care of the church building under his direction. Neither in life nor death did he treat his relatives according to the general custom, whether they observed his manner of life or not. But while he was still living, whenever there was need he gave to them the same as he gave others, not that they should have riches, but that they might not be in want, or at least might be less in want. Pie left to the Church a fully sufficient body of clergy and monasteries of men and women with their continent overseers, together with the library and books containing treatises of his own and of other holy men. By the help of God, one may find therein how great he was in the Church and therein the faithful may always find him living. Wherefore also a secular poet, who directed that a monument be erected to himself in a public place after his death, composed this as an inscription, saying:

Wouldst know that poets live again, O traveller, after death? These words thou readest, lo, I speak! Thy voice is but my breath. From his writing assuredly it is manifest that this priest, beloved and acceptable to God, lived uprightly and soberly in the faith, hope and love of the Catholic Church in so far as he was permitted to see it by the light of truth, and those who read his works on divine subjects profit thereby. But I believe that they were able to derive greater good from him who heard and saw him as he spoke in person in the church, and especially those who knew well his manner of life among men. For not only was he a "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old," and one of those merchants who "when he had found the pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it," but he was also one of those of whom it is written: "So speak ye and so do," and of whom the Saviour said: "Whosoever shall so do and teach men, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Now I earnestly ask your grace who read these words, you who bless the Lord, that with me you give thanks to God Almighty, who gave me understanding to desire and power to bring these things to the knowledge of men near and far, of present and of future time; and I ask that you pray with me and for me, that as by the grace of God I have lived with this man, who is now dead, on terms of intimate and delightful friendship, with no bitter disagreement, for almost forty years, I may also continue to emulate and imitate him in this world and may enjoy with him the promises of God Almighty in the world to come. Amen. This text was transcribed by Roger Pearse, 2008. This file and all material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Scanned from H.T.Weiskotten, Sancti Augustini Vita scripta a Possidio Episcopo.

Translator's introduction

SANCTI AUGUSTINI VITA SCRIPTA A POSSIDIO EPISCOPO
EDITED WITH REVISED TEXT, INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND AN ENGLISH VERSION BY HERBERT T. WEISKOTTEN A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Princeton University in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS PRINCETON LONDON; HUMPHREY MILFORD OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 1919 Accepted by the Department of Classics, 1918. Published 1919. Printed in the United States of America. SANCTI AUGUSTINI VITA SCRIPTA A POSSIDIO EPISCOPO EDITED WITH REVISED TEXT, INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND AN ENGLISH VERSION ERRATA. p. 24, I 7, For substitution read substitutions, p. 32,1. 8, col. 2, Insert 1188. p. 32, 1. 21, col. 3, Insert 51v-62. p. 38,1. 25, For Inspirante 60, 23, read Inspirante... .60, 23. p. 42, 1. 33, For 24 medullis read 21 medullis. p. 44, next to last line For congitando read cogitando. p. 50,1. 31, For pententes read petentes p. 64,1. 26, For 2 multa read 1 multe. p. 100,1. 28, For 7 Et erat read 1 Et erat

p. 102,1. 27, For dicideret read decideret. p. in, next to last line, For his read this. p. 134, last line, For Virg. read Verg. p. 142,1. 31, For disinit read desinit. p. 142, t 33, For tracatus read tractatus. p, 152,1. 14, For participal read participial. p. 158,1. 11, For consessive read concessive. p. 164, Omit note on dicebant____quia. [Blank]

PREFACE
I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Dean A. F. West for his constant help and guidance in the preparation of this edition. It was begun at his suggestion and has been continually under his direction. I am further indebted to Professor J. H. Westcott for assistance on certain law terms, to Professor Duane Reed Stuart for his thorough criticisms, especially of the text, and also to Professor P. van den Ven and Dr. R. J. Deferrari for valuable suggestions in the reconstruction of the text. Owing to war conditions abroad it was impracticable to examine the MSS. of the Vita in the libraries where they are deposited. Accordingly ten of the older MSS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Vatican were secured in photostatic copies, under the supervision of M. Henri Omont, Conservateur des Manuscrits, and of the late Director Jesse Benedict Carter and Professor Albert W. Van Buren of the American Academy in Rome. Thanks are also due to Mr, Gordon W. Thayer, Librarian of the J. G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library, for providing me with

notices of certain MSS. of the Vita from catalogues otherwise unavailable. The map was prepared by my friend Dr. W. E. Cockfield on the basis of the map in Volume VIII of the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.

H. T. W. Princeton, New Jersey, June 11, 1918. [Blank]

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INTRODUCTION

Sources for the life of Augustine. Our knowledge of the life of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is derived from two main sources: (1) Augustine's own Confessiones, covering the period up to the time of his conversion in 387 and setting forth chiefly the history of his spiritual development, and (2) the Vita Augustini of Possidius, covering the time from Augustine's conversion to his death in 430 and containing a record of his daily life and activities. Outside of these two main sources many references also occur in his other writings, chiefly in the Epistles. Early Life.

Aurelius Augustinus was born at Tagaste in Numidia on November 13, 354, about seven years after Chrysostom and fourteen after Jerome and Ambrose. After spending a free and careless boyhood at Tagaste, he pursued the usual course of grammar and rhetoric at Madaura and Carthage and afterward taught for a short time in his native town. In 374 he returned to Carthage and taught rhetoric for nine years. During this period he became deeply interested in Manichaeanism, merely as an auditor, however, and not as one of the electi. It was here he met the famous Manichaean teacher Faustus from whom he expected much, but soon found that, despite his gorgeous rhetoric, he was unable to answer any searching questions. Dissatisfied with his life at Carthage and seeking a larger career, he went to Rome. Moreover he had heard that the students of Rome were better behaved than those at Carthage. Among the latter were those known as eversores, who went about in groups, broke into classes, overthrew the benches and provoked disorder in general. So in spite of the tearful entreaties of his mother Monica, he evaded her and by night secretly took ship for Italy. However, when he arrived in Rome he soon discovered that while his students kept better order, they had a custom which was to prove most annoying to him. For after they had attended his classes a while they would go off to another teacher and

leave their fees unpaid. Accordingly when the way was opened for him to teach in Milan he went there without delay.

By this time he had abandoned Manichaeanism and was taken for a short time with the scepticism of the New Academy. In Milan he soon became engrossed in studying Neo-Platonism and also came under the influence of Ambrose, Bishop of that city. After a memorable moral and intellectual struggle he was converted to the Christian faith and baptized by Ambrose at Easter 387. He then returned to Tagaste, travelling with his mother who died on the way at Ostia. On arriving at Tagaste he lived in seclusion till he was made presbyter in the church at Hippo in 391. At this point the narrative of Possidius begins. Family. Augustine's father Patricius was a man of curial rank in rather humble circumstances. He was of a somewhat coarse and sensual temper, given to occasional fits of anger, but generally easy-going. He was anxious that his son should distinguish himself as a lawyer and even borrowed money to enable him to study at Carthage. Aside from this, however, Patricius seems to have paid little heed to his welfare and training. He had not been a Christian up to the time of his son's departure for Carthage, but through the influence of his wife Monica became a catechumen about the year 370 and was baptized shortly before his death in the following year.

Monica, the mother of Augustine, is forever revered in Christian history. Augustine was not ignorant of her religion, for she had trained him in his childhood, but it soon slipped from his memory when he went away to school. From this time to his conversion in 387, while he was trying one philosophy after another, Monica did not cease to hope and pray that her son would yet become a Christian, though she was at one time unwilling to have him with her in the house because of his outspoken contempt for the Christian faith. He says that she wept more bitterly over his spiritual death than other mothers over the bodily death of their children. When, in spite of her entreaties, he stole away and took ship for Italy, she would not leave him but followed all the way to Milan, where she constantly attended the sermons of the statesman-bishop Ambrose. With Augustine's conversion her mission on earth was ended and she saw nothing of his later far-reaching influence, for she died at Ostia in the fall of that same year. Augustine's tribute to his mother is one of the most perfect and touching in literature.

Augustine was not the only child. He had a brother, Navigius and one sister referred to in his letter to the nuns.Possidius also mentions her. Though her name is not known, tradition gives it as Perpetua. Whether Augustine had any other brothers or sisters is not certain. His natural son Adeodatus, born about 372, gave promise of marked ability, but died in his youth. He was baptized with his father in 387. The names of several other relatives outside the circle of his immediate family appear in his writings. In the De Beata Vita i 6 he speaks of two cousins, Lastidianus and Rusticus, who took part in the discussions at Cassiciacum and in Serm. CCCLVI 3 he mentions, without naming him, a nephew who was a subdiaconus. Ep. LII is written to another cousin, Severinus, urging him to leave the Donatists and return to the Catholic Church. Besides these Possidius writes of fratris sui

filiae in Chapter XXVI—a phrase, which also seems to prove that Augustine had only one brother.

Friends. In speaking of Augustine's friends we mean only the most intimate. They are to be found in two groups, the earlier at the Villa of Cassiciacum, near Milan, to which Augustine and his friends retired during the months immediately preceding his baptism, and the later group at Hippo. Chief among these friends was his fellow-townsman and life-long companion Alypius, who accompanied him through the years of uncertainty at Carthage and Milan and faithfully reflected each of Augustine's changes of faith. After living with Augustine in the monastery at Hippo for several years, he became bishop of his native town Tagaste. The group at Cassiciacum was small and most intimate, consisting of Monica, who not infrequently took part in the debate, Adeodatus, Navigius, Alypius., the two cousins Lastidianus and Rusticus mentioned above, and two pupils, Trygetius and Licentius, a son of his former patron Romanianus. They spent the time studying and discussing questions of religion and philosophy. The other circle of friends which calls for special mention is found in the monastery at Hippo. Here Possidius and others first appear in Augustine's life. Their intimate manner of life is described by Possidius and even more satisfactorily in two of Augustine's sermons.

The monastery. This monastery which had its beginning at Tagaste and was later established at Hippo when Augustine became presbyter there, was the first one in North Africa and the parent of the other North African monasteries. Possidius states that the bishops who went out from this monastery at Hippo followed their master's example and established other monasteries in their episcopal sees. Augustine's original purpose had been merely to withdraw from the world with a few friends and have time for undisturbed meditation and prayer. He pursued this kind of life for almost three years at Tagaste (388-391) until he was forcibly ordained presbyter at Hippo. After that he continued his purpose, but adapting it to circumstances, made the monastery rather a school for the training of the clergy. His conception of the kind of life the clergy should lead is clearly set forth in two of his sermons. He also established a monastery for women over which his sister presided, and after her death in 423 wrote them a letter to settle their differences and to guide them in the conduct of life.

Life of Possidius. In reviewing the life of Possidius, the first fact to be noted is that, apart from his relations with Augustine, he is practically unknown. He first appears as one of the group of intimate friends whom Augustine gathered around him in the monastery at Hippo and is mentioned only once after Augustine's death. Possidius himself states at the very close of the Vita that he had lived with Augustine on terms of intimate friendship for "almost forty years." Augustine was made Presbyter at Hippo in 391 and "soon after" established his monastery. As this was thirty-nine years before Augustine's death, Possidius must have become connected with the monastery at the very beginning or soon after. Where he came from and how he came to enter the monastery must remain matters of conjecture, but it seems fair to suppose that he came from Hippo or the immediate neighborhood.

The date of Possidius's birth, also, may be arrived at only approximately. As he was still living and performing his episcopal duties seven years after the death of Augustine,who lived to be seventy-six, he was in all likelihood younger than his teacher and friend. When he entered the monastery, therefore, he was probably not over thirty, as Augustine was then thirty-five. Moreover he was probably at least twenty, in view of the fact that he soon became Augustine's intimate friend. This would accordingly fix the date of his birth somewhere between the years 360 and 370.

In 397, probably within a short time after the death of Megalius, Bishop of Calama and Primate of Numidia, Possidius succeeded to this episcopate, though not to the primacy, as that was an office of seniority, not of locality, in the African Church. From this time till his activities were temporarily checked by the invasion of the Vandals, he seems to have led a not unusual life for a North African bishop of the fifth century, journeying to the various parts of his diocese, attending councils and defending the Church against the attacks of heretics. About the year 403 Possidius made two attempts to arrange a public discussion with Crispinus, the Donatist bishop of Calama, which the latter each time avoided. A few days after the second refusal, while Possidius was travelling through his diocese, another Crispinus, a Donatist presbyter and perhaps a relative of the bishop Crispinus, attacked him, setting fire to the house in which he took refuge. As the bishop Crispinus did not even reprove his presbyter for this unprovoked attack, the Catholics took the matter into court and Crispinus, the bishop, was fined. Through the intervention of Possidius this fine was not exacted. Nevertheless Crispinus was not satisfied and carried his appeal to the Emperor Honorius. Thereupon, as Augustine had likewise narrowly escaped an ambuscade laid for him by the Donatists not long before, a council which met at Carthage in 404 decided to appeal to the Emperor for protection. In 405, accordingly, Honorius issued an edict renewing the laws of Theodosius against heretics, directing furthermore that Crispinus should be fined ten pounds of gold and that the judge and court should suffer the same penalty for not having collected the fine before. This fine, however, through the intercession of Possidius, was likewise remitted.

In 407 Possidius and Augustine, with five other bishops, were appointed as a committee to decide some ecclesiastical question, but no further record has been preserved. In the following year, during a riot brought about by the celebrations of the pagans, Possidius narrowly escaped with his life. On November 15, 407, Honorius had made the public celebration of heathen rites and festivals illegal. On June 1, 408, however, which was the pagan feast-day, as Augustine relates,in violation of this law the pagans of Calama performed their rites and marched past the Christian church. As no one interfered and as the insult could not be tolerated, the clergy attempted to stop the celebration, but were driven back into the church and assailed with stones. Possidius did not allow this to pass unnoticed and carried the case before the proper authorities who promised to exact the penalty imposed by the law. About June 9, however, before anything had been done, the pagans again attacked the church with stones. On the following day, accordingly, Possidius and his people took the matter to court but were refused admittance. A few hours later the church was a third time besieged, and

not being satisfied with the damage they could do with stones, the pagans tried to burn the buildings together with the people in them. One man was killed and Possidius escaped only by hiding in a narrow crevice while the pagans roamed about in search of him.

According to Augustine they were much disappointed, since their chief desire was to do away with the bishop. The uproar was finally quieted by a stranger who seemed to have gained some influence with them. Through his efforts the captives were set free and much plunder returned. Augustine himself journeyed to Calama to comfort the people and to admonish and, if possible, convert the pagans, but evidently without much success. An edict issued by Honorius in November of the same year, directing that the images and altars of the pagans be destroyed and their temples be confiscated for public use, was no doubt provoked by this disturbance.

To this period belong Possidius's two journeys to Italy. Though only one is generally mentioned, there were evidently two. The first was occasioned by the recent pagan uprising and took place after July 408 and before March 27, 409. This date is made clear by a letter of Augustine in which he says that on March 27 he received an answer to a letter he had written about eight months before, when Possidius had not yet embarked on his voyage. From this letter it would also appear that Possidius was expected to return shortly, for Augustine suggests that possibly the citizens of Calama had heard a rumor that Possidius had obtained authority to punish them more severely (severius) , though no such report had as yet reached him. The other visit to the imperial court was on an embassy appointed by a council which met at Carthage on July 1, 410.The purpose of this embassy was to secure the renewal of the laws against the Donatists which had been temporarily suspended. Possidius and his colleagues seem to have accomplished their purpose, for in August 410 Honorius issued a decree warning heretics and pagans not to hold public meetings and declaring confiscation of property or even death as the penalty for violation of the law.

At the great Collatio of 411 between the Catholics and Donatists assembled at Carthage by order of the Emperor, Possidius played a rather prominent part. Two hundred and eighty-six Catholic bishops were present. From this number seven were chosen to carry on the discussion, among whom were Augustine, Possidius and Alypius, although the debate was carried on almost entirely by Augustine. Possidius appears at two other councils. At that of Milevum in 416 he joined with other bishops in signing a letter, written probably by Augustine, to Innocent I, calling attention to the newborn Pelagian heresy and requesting that it be suppressed. Shortly afterwards, together with his old friends of the monastery at Hippo, Augustine, Alypius, Evodius and one outsider, Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, he signed another letter to Innocent, urging that this same heresy be formally denounced. The other council, though it is scarcely to be dignified by so important a name, was that held at Caesarea in 418, to which the Donatist bishop Emeritus was invited.

When the Vandals invaded Africa in 428, Calama was one of the many towns which fell into their hands. Possidius took refuge with Augustine at Hippo, one of the three cities which still maintained their independence. There he witnessed the death of Augustine in 430

and remained till the siege of Hippo was abandoned by the Vandals in 431. By or before the time an agreement was reached in 435 between the Roman Emperor and the Arian Geiseric, Possidius no doubt returned to his former charge, where he probably remained unmolested as long as he performed his duties quietly and did not attract the attention of the Arian authorities. In 437, however, when Geiseric endeavored to substitute Arianism for the Catholic faith, Possidius and several other bishops were driven from their sees because they refused to yield to the demands of the Vandal ruler. This is the last we hear of Possidius. He may have gone to Italy, but there is no evidence to that effect. He is honored by the Catholic Church on May 17.

His intimacy with Augustine. Were it not for Possidius's own statement in the last paragraph of the Vita, we should probably not recognize so readily the intimacy which existed between the two bishops. Among Augustine's letters there is only one addressed to Possidius and that is merely an answer to a question on discipline, such as might have been written to any stranger who had asked for advice. It was written in great haste and there is nothing in it to indicate any particular friendship. However, he spent much time in company with Augustine. For the first five or six years of their acquaintance he lived in that intimacy of daily companionship which makes or breaks a friendship as nothing else can, dwelling in the same house, eating at the same table, sharing in the same duties and experiencing the same trials and temptations. On one occasion he tells of a conversation at the table, then of a convert who came to see Augustine and, nobis coram, declared his former guilt and asked for their prayers. Again, we hear of Augustine's righteous indignation when some friends who were visiting disregarded his prohibition of gossip. There are many instances of this intimate nature.

After Possidius left the monastery at Hippo to take up his duties as bishop of Calama he was by no means separated from his friend. Calama was only about forty miles distant from Hippo and the two bishops found many opportunities of seeing each other. Now they are attending the same council, or are together on a special committee, or are side by side in a debate with the heretics, or Possidius is visiting Augustine. Finally, when Calama was taken by the Vandals, Possidius withdrew to Hippo and was with Augustine all through his last illness and at the time of his death. None of the other members of that monastery, save Alypius only, is associated with Augustine as frequently as is Possidius. Augustine's references to Possidius.

Besides the above-mentioned letter addressed to Possidius and those cited in this account of Possidius's life, there are several other references to him in Augustine's writings. Probably the most significant of these is found in Ep, CI, addressed to a certain Bishop Memor, in which Augustine discloses his affection for Possidius by calling him "no small image of my own self": Nimis autem ingratum ac ferreum fuit, ut te qui nos sic amas, hic sanctus frater et collega noster Possidius, in quo nostram non parvam praesentiam reperies, vet non disceret, vel sine litteris nostris disceret. Est enim per nostrum ministerium non litteris illis, quas variaram servi libidinum liberales vacant, sed dominico pane nutritus, quantus ei potuit

per nostras angustias dispensari. This is Augustine's fullest reference to Possidius and as it agrees so well with Possidius's own statements it serves to confirm our faith in him. Another letter written about this same time, while not so pertinent, still deserves notice. It begins in this manner: Cum vos fratres nostri comiunctissimi nobis, quos nobiscum desiderati desiderare et salutati resalutare consuestis, assidue vident, non tam augentur bona nostra, quam consolantur mala. Though Augustine may here be speaking in general terms, yet he means Possidius in particular, for he at once proceeds to name him as the person he has in mind. The other references to Possidius are of less importance and need only to be indicated. He concludes Ep. CXXXVII to Volusianus with a greeting from Possidius who is evidently visiting him, and in the De Civitate Dei XXII viii he speaks of a cure supposed to have been effected by a relic which the bishop of Calama had brought to that city.

His peculiar fitness for his task. Because of this prolonged and intimate friendship. Possidius was peculiarly fitted for the task he undertook. He had observed Augustine's daily life continuously for at least five years. He had seen him in the various phases of his work as teacher and administrator: instructing the people or the clergy or managing the funds of the church, or caring for the poor and the widows or judging the disputes of his parishioners. He had seen him faithful in his secular responsibilities, yet escaping them whenever possible and eagerly turning his attention to spiritual matters. He knew his habits of dress and food and had shared in his strict monastic asceticism. Later, himself a bishop, Possidius had seen Augustine as a leader among his fellow-bishops at the councils and as the Church's ablest defender against heresies. He was constantly in touch with his great master and friend and at no time throughout the thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of their acquaintance did anything occur to weaken their attachment. With the exception of the first four chapters of the Vita, which deal briefly with the period before their acquaintance, the account he gives is based entirely on his own observation—things he had himself witnessed and experienced.

His reliability. As a result we have a plain biography of fact, not of fiction. Possidius does not recount mere gossip or hearsay. Nowhere throughout the Vita do phrases occur indicating second-hand information. One thing that must immediately commend it as worthy of belief is the absence of such miraculous tales as abound in Paulinus's Vita Ambrosii. Even Augustine was not free from this credulity, as may be seen in the list of remarkable cures related toward the end of the De Civitate Dei. Possidius, however, was not given to recounting marvelous stories. Apart from a somewhat general reference to "certain energumens" from whom "demons departed by reason of Augustine's intercession in prayer," he relates, without affectation or extravagance, only one specific miracle performed by Augustine—the cure of a sick man by the laying on of hands. Moreover, wherever Possidius's statements can be checked by the writings of Augustine or the Acts of Councils, they are always fully corroborated. To this there is no exception. Yet in one respect he is careless: he does not always mention the sources of his few non-biblical quotations, but is apt to refer to the writers as cuiusdam sapientis or quidam poeta.

His appreciation of Augustine. Though he only partly realized Augustine's true greatness and his increasing importance to the Church, he did recognize in him a devout Christian, a profound and eager student, a devoted and watchful shepherd, a mighty opponent of heretics and a daily example in his domestic life. He sees the present and local greatness, but has less conception of the lasting and widening influence which a mind and personality like Augustine's were destined to exert for ages to come. He sees that Augustine's arguments and reasoning have established the faith and brought peace to the Church, but that centuries later theologians and philosophers should still base many of their doctrines upon the writings of his friend is far outside the range of his imagination; for his nature, like his style, was essentially prosaic. Yet he did believe that posterity ought not to forget Augustine, and therefore wrote the Vita and compiled the Indiculus, a catalogue of Augustine's works, to help those who would keep his memory alive.

The Vita, though not a regular chronological narrative, falls naturally into four parts: I-V Introductory VI-XVIII Activities against heresies XIX-XXVII Daily life at home and in the church XXVIII-XXXI Last days and death. In this arrangement the Vita closely resembles the literary form which had become traditional in the Alexandrian biography and which is best illustrated in the Lives of Suetonius. Possidius's acquaintance with this literary form evidently came not directly from classical sources but through his knowledge of the Lives of former Christian biographers. Chief among these was undoubtedly Jerome, who acknowledges his indebtedness to Suetonius. This form of biography lays principal stress on personal traits. Hence while Augustine's own writings are indispensable in forming an estimate of his far-reaching powers as a theologian, philosopher and preacher, were it not for the intimate revelations of every-day life presented by Possidius, our picture of his personality would be incomplete. Date of composition of the Vita.

The date generally given for the composition of the Vita is 432. From Possidius's words it is clear that it must have been written after July 431, when the siege of Hippo was abandoned by the Vandals, for he says he was in Hippo during the whole time of the siege. Furthermore, his use of quondam in the same chapter (quondam Bonifacius) seems to presuppose the death of Boniface, which occurred about 432. The terminus ad quem is the destruction of Carthage in 439, for Possidius states that when he wrote Carthage still remained uncaptured. While the probabilities favor 432 or soon after as the date of the composition of the Vita, the evidence for this is not complete and the nearest certain approximation attainable is 432-439. No evidence derived from the date of the burning of Hippo, which is unknown, or from the presumed escape of the church library from the conflagration can be deduced to help in fixing the date of the Vita more closely. The Indiculus must, of course, have been made up from the books in the library at Hippo and might very probably have been compiled during the siege in 431 and later affixed to the Vita.

Style.

The Vita, as already suggested, is a plain recital of facts and incidents which give a clear insight into Augustine's daily life in public and private, based on the writer's personal and

intimate knowledge. That Possidius was a man of moderate education appears readily. His style is wholly unadorned. It is the work of a plain man and untrained writer. This appears immediately in the striking contrast between the style of Possidius and that of the letter of Augustine, wonderful both in thought and style, which he embodies in Chapter XXX. The letter reads so smoothly and the argument is so clearly expressed that the scribes found little trouble in understanding it. This contrast with the diction of Possidius is further brought out by the very noticeable decrease in the variations and difficulties which this letter presents in all the MSS. The style of Possidius also differs radically from that of Augustine in that it lacks vivacity, versatility and copiousness. The form is somewhat stiff and the expression, while always marked by candor and often by naive beauty, frequently lacks fluency. The sentences are frequently abrupt and loosely connected. They are bald, unrhetorical and often wanting in animation. While his style in some degree resembles that of Suetonius this is evidently due to the example of Christian biography and not to the direct influence of Suetonius, as there appears to be no evidence that Possidius had any acquaintance with his writings. Possidius is both naive and commonplace in his manner.

His sentences show neither balance nor finish and are sometimes marred by awkward parenthetical statements or curious doubling of expression. Except in the Preface, no serious attempt at literary finish is made. There is no philosophizing or play of the imagination; neither is there any padding or moralizing. Though the sentences are not long and involved, yet they are frequently awkward and the thought is not always clearly expressed. It is a simple matter-of-fact account without embellishment, and is not weighed down with a mass of fable and fiction. Possidius shows self-restraint and modesty, with a touching sincerity and devotion to his leader. The work abounds in biblical references and quotations which are apt and reveal a considerable acquaintance with the Scriptures. Outside the Scriptures he quotes only three books, the Vita Ambrosii of Paulinus, the De Mortalitate of Cyprian and the Confessiones of Augustine—a very limited circle—and two or three unidentified commonplaces. With the Confessiones he was quite familiar. He quotes no secular writer. His one aim was to reveal Augustine as man and bishop in his daily life, work and character. Of this he has given a faithful, if incomplete picture, one of absorbing interest and at times of unaffected beauty.

His Latinity is that of his own time, as used by a man of only fair ability and education. His vocabulary, arrangement and style are thus restricted by his own limitations. It is unrhetorical narrative Latin of the fifth century. Characteristics of still later Latin also begin to appear. Manuscripts. The text of this edition of the Vita is based on a collation of ten of the earlier MSS., five from France and five from Italy, in photostatic copy. Of these, four of the latter and at least one of the former have been examined for previous editions. A description of each of these ten MSS. follows: A Bibliothèque de Chartres 112. Membraneus. 125ff. 220 x 170 millim., saec. IX-X. 1. S. Augustini Vita scripta a Possidio episcopo. As one of the earliest copies giving the complete text with fewer and less serious errors than any other, it is clearly the best of the ten MSS. It is carefully written in an excellent hand and presents only occasional errors. The observable errors in A are confined

to 35 instances of haplography, its characteristic fault, 25 erroneous substitution of single letters, perhaps 5 impossible readings, and some easily detected and insignificant other slips here and there. They are all noted in the apparatus criticus. This MS. seems to be quoted once, but inaccurately, by the Benedictine editors under the name Carnotensis, yet it nowhere appears in the list of MSS. which they have consulted.

B Vatican, Codex Reginae Sueciae 1025. Membraneus, foliorum 211 (o,273 x 0,222), paginis bipartitis exaratus saec. XI. 8. (Fol. 137-156) Vita S. Augustini ep. conscripta a Possidio ep. = BHL. 785, 786. This MS. is complete and in general agrees with A, though it contains numerous errors and occasional readings taken from the second or variant group of MSS. Omissions and corrections are frequent. It is one of the MSS. used by Salinas. C Vatican, Codex Reginae Sueciae 541. Membraneus, foliorum 179, signata olim I—XX/IX—I (o,378 x 0,274), paginis, bipartitis exaratus variis manibus saec. XII. 63. (Fol. 158-166) Vita S. Augustini ep. = BHL. 785. The main representative of the second or variant group. It is neatly written and errors are rather less numerous than in B. However it substitutes not a few readings of its own which are not found in the other MSS. The text is complete. Also used by Salinas. D Bibliothèque Nationale, Codex signatus num. 2076. Olim coenobii Dervensis, deinde Petri Pithoei, deinde Thuaneus, deinde Colbertinus 1237, postea Regius C. 3775.3.3. Foliorum 144, med. (o,285 x 0,23), columnis binis exaratus saec. X. 3. (Fol. 1o6-130) Vita beati Augustini a beatissimo Possidio edita Calamensi episcopo. In close agreement with C. There are many corrections, usually to the readings peculiar to C. It is complete.

E Bibliothèque Nationale, Codex signatus num. 13220. Olim Francisci de Harlay archiepiscopi Rotomagensis, deinde coenobii sancti Martialis Lemovicensis, postea SanGerm., Harlay 369. Foliorum 211, min. (fere o,175 x 0,44), lineis plenis, exaratus diversis manibus saec. X. 9. (Fol. 96-134) Vita Sancti Augustini episcopi Hipponensis, a beato Possidio edita Calamensi episcopo. Very carefully written. The few errors are generally corrected. It contains many interlinear explanatory words entered in a later hand above the corresponding word in the text. The conclusion of the Vita is missing. Though this MS. was once at St. Germain, it cannot be the MS. quoted by the Benedictine editors as Germanensis, for the readings do not agree. F Bibliothèque Nationale, Codex signatus num. 11748. Olim sancti Mauri Fossatensis 38, deinde San-Germ., prius 1060, recentius 487. Foliorum 155, med. (o,36 x 0,27), columnis binis, exaratus saec. X. 9. (Fol. 20-35) Vita beati Augustini. Very inaccurate in case endings. The text is complete. It is quoted in the Benedictine edition under the name Fossatensis and is called vetustissimus.

G Bibliothèque Nationale, Codex signatus num. 10863. Olim coenobii "Luxovinensis" (fol. 1), deinde Suppl. lat. 1445. Foliorum 99, min. (0,21 x 0,14), lineis plenis, exaratus saec. IX. 1. (Fol. 24-52) Vita sancti Augustini auctore Possidio. Likewise inaccurate in case endings. The first nine and a half chapters are missing and a portion of Augustine's letter is omitted. H Vatican, Codex 1190 (olim 2171). Membraneus, foliorum A et sign. 1-179, 181-264 (o,38o x 0,282), paginis bipartitis exaratus variis manibus saec. XII. 36. (Fol. 88-97) Acta S. Augustini ep. = BHL. 785. Fragmentary. Used by Salinas. J Vatican, Codex

1191. Membraneus, foliorum 205 (o,430 x 0,308), paginis bipartitis exaratus saec. XII extr. 70. (Fol. 198-203) Vita S. Augustini ep. edita a Possidio ep. — BHL. 785. Still more fragmentary. Used by Salinas. K Bibliotheca Vallicellana, Tomus I. Membraneus, foliorum A et sign. 1-336 (o,565 x 0,360), paginis bipartitis exaratus saec. XI/XII. 92. (Fol. 250-254) Natale S. Augustini ep. — BHL. 785.

Closely related to H. Fragmentary. It also breaks off abruptly in Chapter XXIV. LMNOP Five MSS. used by the Benedictine editors: duo Floriacenses, Germanensis, Vedastinus, Cisterciensis. Q Brussels, Bollandist Museum, P.MS 5. Belongs to the AB group, being related very closely to B. The order of the MSS. E-K represents no particular classification, except that G-K are more or less fragmentary. The readings from the MSS. L-Q, as given in the Benedictine edition and the Acta Sanctorum, are indicated in the apparatus criticus, though the former are very few and generally unimportant. However, when the Benedictine editors quote their MSS. as codex unus or codex alter, as they usually do, thereby making it impossible to identify the MS. from which the variant is taken, the reading has been omitted. The variants given from Q are important. In addition to the manuscripts enumerated and described above, readings in crucial places from seventeen manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale were obtained through the courtesy of M. Omont, Conservateur des Manuscrits. The readings thus obtained closely confirm the consensus of the other manuscripts used as against the readings introduced by previous editors. They do not, however, aid in determining more clearly the relative value of the body of manuscripts used as the basis for this edition. These seventeen manuscripts are marked in the general list of manuscripts on page 30 by the letters abcdefghijklmnopqr.

In determining the relative value of the various MSS. one fact must be kept in mind, namely that the texts of the lives of saints did not receive the same consideration as those of classical writers. Lives of saints were very common and were freely multiplied. Scribes were less careful with them than with either the Scriptures or classical writings for which a greater amount of regard was felt; for the former because of their inspired nature and for the latter because of their rarity and antiquity. Hence there was less restraint in copying the texts of these Lives. Accordingly there are more individual differences in such MSS., and the family groups are not as clearly defined. Moreover since the MSS. of any one Life are so much more numerous than for most classical texts—in the present case probably two hundred or more—definite relationship is clearly more difficult to establish on the basis of only a part of the extant MSS. of a given Life.

Thus in the case of the ten MSS. of the Vita Augustini examined for this edition, each MS. is in some degree independent of the others. Under such conditions, therefore, the choice of the best MS. or group of MSS., may be made by a process of elimination. In a comparison of the ten MSS. with a view to this choice GHJK may be omitted as they are quite fragmentary. Of the other six MSS. the crucial readings of A and B frequently agree in opposition to all the others, thus showing a certain relationship between these two. For instance in the Praefatio AB read videar fraudare, whereas CDFHK read fraudare videar; AB autem, CDEFHK enim.

In Chapter I A and B both read carthaginensi which is, of course, an error for tagastensi. In this same chapter AB read assistens as against astans in CDEFHJK. Other instances of this agreement between A and B may easily be found in the apparatus criticus.

C, on the other hand, contains many readings found in none of the other nine MSS., except only in the corrections made in D by a second hand. Thus in Chapter VIII for the reading sed consacerdos found in the other MSS. CD* have quam consacerdos; in Chapter IX for Quae cum audissent . . . comperta, CD* have quae vir beatus comperta; at the end of Chapter XV while the other MSS. vary between vivat, vivit and vitat, CD* alone agree on victitat; in Chapter XIX CD* read quanto magis instead of nedum or necdum found in the other MSS. However C also contains variant readings which are found in other MSS. and which seem to indicate that C belongs to a different family than AB. MSS. E and F agree sometimes with AB and sometimes with C. As their readings are found in AB or C they may be disregarded as not outstanding representatives of either group. The final choice, therefore, as to the best available source for the original text among these ten MSS. lies between AB and C. A is more free from errors than any of the other nine MSS. and is also one of the earliest. Moreover since C contains many readings not found in the other MSS. it cannot be regarded as a pure text, for if it were, it is highly improbable that none of the other nine MSS., except only D*, should contain any trace whatsoever of these readings, many of which differ radically from the readings in the other MSS.

The reading of CD* in Chapter XIX cited above is probably an alteration to the Vulgate reading. Such alterations are not infrequent in C and are a further illustration of the liberties which the writer of C took with the text. For these reasons the MSS. AB, of which A is the better representative, seem to furnish a text which resembles the archetype more closely than any of the other MSS. CDEFGHJK. Accordingly A has been adopted as the main basis of the text and followed rather closely. Its variant readings are fully noted in the apparatus criticus.

A partial list of MSS. of the Vita, as complete as could be made from available sources, is herewith given. List of Manuscripts PLACE OF DEPOSIT CATALOGUE NUMBER FOLIOS OF TEXT DATE Austria-Hungary Heiligenkreuz: Monastery, 168v-176v XII Lilienfeld: Monastery. 177v-185 XIII Melk: Monastery. M6 XV Vienna: Hofbibl. 226-255v (256-265v Ind) XI Vienna: Hofbibl. 38v-62 XII Belgium Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 163v-166 (fr) XI Brussels: Bibl. Reg. XIV Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 25v-52 XV Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 98v-101 (fr) XIII Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 90-97v (fr) XIII Brussels: Bibl. Reg. XII Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 18v-33v XI Brussels: Bibl. Reg. 123v-134 XIII Brussels: Bibl. Reg. D.Phil. 324, 327(1) 45-64 (Ind) XII Brussels: Bibl. Reg. D. Phil. 4627 43v-66v XI Brussels: Bibl. Reg. D. Phil. 8391 79-93v (93v-94 Ind) XI Mons: Bibl. Pub. 142-156v XIII Namur: Bibl. Pub. (3.75 f.) XIV France Angers: Bibl. d'Angers 50-68 (68v-73v Ind) XI Angers: Bibl. d'Angers 116-126v XII Auxerre: Bibl, d'Auxerre

XI Cambrai Bibl. de Cambrai 864 (767 II) 188-202 (202v-203v Ind) XI Cambrai: Bibl. de Cambrai 101-107v, 113-125 (fr) XIII Chalons-sur-Marne Bibl. de Chalons-sur-Marne XI A

Chartres: Bibl. de Chartres 1-42v (42v-61 Ind) IX-X Chartres: Bibl. de Chartres 500 (190) 162-167v (fr) XII Chartres: Bibl. de Chartres 501 (192) 141v-152 (fr) XII Dijon: Bibl. de Dijon 638-642 (383) Tom 3l-37 (fr) Xl-XII Douai: Bibl. de Douai 151 Tom II 98-99v (fr) XIII Douai: Bibl. de Douai 113v-116v (fr) XII Douai: Bibl. de Douai 52v-72 (72-73 Ind) XII Grenoble: Bibl. de Grenoble 92v-109 (109v-113v Ind) XII Le Mans: Bibl. du Mans 129-138 (138-140 Ind) XI-XII Paris: Bibl. de St. Genevieve 694 1-8 (fr) XVII Paris: Bibl. de St. Genevieve 2613 75 (fr) xvni Paris: Bibl. de Mazarine 3v-16 XIII D Paris: Bibl. Nat. 106v-130 (130-137v Ind) X Paris: Bibl. Nat. 3809A 53-54 (fr) XV a Paris: Bibl. Nat. 96-102v (fr) XIV

b Paris: Bibl. Nat. 45v-62 XIII c Paris: Bibl. Nat 120-136v (136v-137v Ind)XIV d Paris: Bibl. Nat. 177-187v (om. ep.) XIII e Paris: Bibl. Nat. 6-21 (21-24 Ind) XII f Paris: Bibl. Nat. 214-216v (fr) XIII g Paris: Bibl. Nat. 63-79 (79-84v Ind) XII h Paris: Babl. Nat. 66v-68v, 77-77v, 69-73 XII i Paris: Bibl. Nat. 35-49v (ora. praef.) XIII G Paris: Bibl. Nat. 24-52 (ff. missing) IX F Paris: Bibl. Nat. 20v-32 (32-35v Ind) X k Paris: Bibl. Nat. 148-156v XI Paris: Bibl. Nat. 122v-128v (fr) XII l Paris: Bibl. Nat. 163v-172 XIII m Paris: Bibl. Nat. 59-60v 282-287v XIV n Paris: Bibl. Nat. 88v-93 XII E Paris: Bibl. Nat 96v-134v X Paris: Bibl. Nat. 228v-239v XV p Paris: Bibl. Nat. 136v-141v XI q Paris: Bibl. Nat. XII Paris: Bibl. Nat. 231-232v (fr) X Paris: Bibl. Nat. 159-160 (fr) XII Paris: Bibl. Nat. N. A. 1595 136v-137v (fr) IX

r Paris: Bibl. Nat. N. A. 2178 106-122v XI Paris: Bibl. Nat. N. A. 2179 279v-286 (fr) XI Paris: Bibl. Nat N. A. 2261 72-79v XII Rouen: Bibl. Pub. 1388 (U32) 105-106 (fr) XII Rouen: Bibl. Pub. 1412 (A40) 88v-90 (fr) XII Germany Bamberg: K. Oeffent. Bibl. X Berlin: Kgl. Bibl. 344v-355 XIII Erlangen: K. Univ. Bibl. 21 (fr) XII Leipzig: Stadtbibl. CXCV 19v-34 XIII Munich: Kgl. Bibl. 174v-180 XIV Munich: Kgl. Bibl. XII Munich: Kgl. Bibl. XII Munich: Kgl. Bibl. XII Munster: Univ. Bibl. XIV Munster: Univ. Bibl. XV Trier: Stadtbibl. XVI Great Britain Dublin: Trinity College XIII Durham: Cathedral B IV 14 219-235v (Ind) XIII London: Brit. Mus. 15621, Addit of 1845 XIII London: Brit. Mus. 16161, Addit. of 1846 XII London: Brit. Mus. 35110, Addit of 1899 9v-28 (25-29v Ind) XII Italy Milan: Bibl. Ambros. B 33 Inf. 6v-20 (20-23 Ind) XIII Milan: Bibl. Ambros. B 55 Inf.

XI Milan: Bibl. Ambros. D 22 Inf. 170v-189v XII Milan: Bibl. Ambros. H 224 Inf. XII Milan: Bibl. Ambros. P 113 Sup. 100-113v (fr) X Monte Cassino CXLVII XI Naples: Bibl. Nat. XV AA15 Tom III 205-205v, 209-209v (fr) XIII Rome: Bibl. Angelica 240-266 (Ind) XIII Rome: Lateran A80 72-84v XI Rome: Sanctae Mariae Maioris B 108-114 (fr) XIII K Rome: Bibl. Vallicellana Tom 1 250-254v (fr) XI-XII Rome: Bibl. Vallicellana Tom XXV 287v-289v (fr) XI-XII Rome: Vatican XV H Rome: Vatican S8v-97 (fr) XII J Rome: Vatican 198-203v (fr) XII Rome: Vatican 350-351v (fr) XII Rome: Vatican Pal. 225 32-66v (Ind) XV C Rome: Vatican Cod. Reg. Sueciae 541 XII B Rome: Vatican Cod. Reg. Sueciae 1025 137v-150v (150v-186v Ind) XI Switzerland St. Gall: Stiftsbibl. 50-178 (1-48 Ind) IX St. Gall: Stiftsbibl. 451-498 (498- ? Ind) IX-X Bern: Stadtbibl. A8 6v (praef, only) XII Engelberg: Benedictine Monastery (62v-66 Ind)

XII [Note to the online edition: note should appear against one of these mss.] Editions. The earlier editions of the Vita Augustini in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were not printed separately but were regularly included in volumes containing works of Augustine. They are catalogued in part in the Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina 785 and in the British Museum Catalogue under Possidius. The most important older edition not printed separately but included with the works of Augustine is in the Benedictine edition printed at Paris, 1679-1700. It was based on previous editions and, if we may judge from the readings given, on a very cursory examination of six MSS., FLMNOP. It appears to have made but few alterations in the traditional printed text. Some criticism of the Benedictine and earlier editions is found in the edition by Salinas, printed at Rome in 1731, pp. V-VIII. This edition by Salinas is the first separate edition of the Vita. It is based on an examination of certain earlier editions, chiefly the Benedictine, and MSS. BCHJ and Vatican MS. 1188 at first hand. The edition is divided into two parts, the first containing the text of the Vita with critical and explanatory notes and the second a dissertation by Salinas De Vita et Rebus Gestis S. Possidii. His scanty citations of readings from the small group of MSS. he used, as tested by an examination of photostatic copies, are generally accurate, but several errors occur. He gives no classification or estimate of their relative value, though he seems to have a preference for C. His text, on the whole, differs very little from that of the Benedictine edition. His choice or change of readings, when explained at all, is based not on manuscript evidence, but rather on extraneous suggestions, generally of a historical nature.

The explanatory notes in the edition of Salinas are not very frequent. Nevertheless they give full and even superfluous information, consisting largely of quotations from Augustine, the Acts of Councils and other illustrations from church history. The main fault of the notes is that they are often burdened with unnecessary matter and are not proportioned to the importance of the subject explained. Salinas also added the chapter headings, which do not appear in the earlier editions. These have been retained in the present edition as providing convenient summaries of each chapter. The work of Salinas, however, has a distinct value. Apart from the earlier Benedictine edition, it is the first edition which attempts to be critical. Its general review of the text, though not made by scientific method, represents a certain advance over anything done before, and the information in the notes is usually reliable. There are three other editions which deserve brief notice. The Migne edition (1865) is merely a reprint of the Benedictine edition with a comparison of Salinas and the addition of his critical notes. The text in the Acta Sanctorum (Paris, 1866) is a reprint of the text of Salinas with variant readings from Q. There is also an edition by Hurter in Sanctorum Patrum Opuscula Selecta, Innsbruck 1895. The source of the text is not evident, as it agrees neither with the Benedictine nor Salinas edition, but seems to result from a capricious alteration of both. It abounds in errors of omission, transpositions and even has insertions which appear nowhere else, either in the ten MSS. used or in the editions. However it contains some valuable comments and a few selections from the critical notes of Salinas.

The text.

The textus receptus evidently dates back to the early editions, at least to the Lou vain edition of 1564. Many liberties have been taken in altering the text, chiefly to fit the rules of classical grammar or to make it read more smoothly. Instances are the substitution of the accusative for the ablative, in ipsas montium silvas et cavernas petrarum et speluncas confugientes: XXVIII; the subjunctive for the indicative, praedicaret: IX ; the imperfect for the pluperfect subjunctive, denegaret: XIV; a change to a more suitable conjunction, sed for et: XIV; petitus iret for petitum ire: XXVII, to avoid an abrupt change of construction; astantem for assistentem: XXVII, for no reason at all apparently; the unnecessary insertion of debeo: Praef., to complete the sentence; the omission of nam and insertion of autem: XXXI, and the substitution of the ablative absolute for the accusative, eisque compertis for eaque comperta: IX, because the parenthetical remarks were somewhat obscured; oppropinquaret for propinquaret: IV, and elevata for levata: V; the substitution of spectaret for speraret: IV, evidently because the common meaning of spero did not fit; factus ergo for factusque: V; iuste for intuit; XIII; latebras for latera: XV; probata for prolata: XVII; suos for suis: XXV; inobediensve for inobediensque: XXVIII; the insertion of quod after credo: XV; the addition, by Salinas, of conversus ad Deum: II, and verbum Dei: V; the numerous substitutions of its for his which appears consistently in all the MSS. In some of these instances the readings of the editions perhaps may find support in MSS.

not available for this edition, but the changes are altogether too numerous and too nice to be anything but an attempt at wholesale text-improvement. This text was unquestioningly adopted by later editions, without so much as an indication of the manuscript readings at many such places. Nevertheless, despite the alterations made by editors, the main body of the text is clear in all the manuscripts consulted, and the area of disputable readings, significant or insignificant, is only about eight hundred words out of a total of over twelve thousand.

In basing the text on AB, the best group of the MSS. A-K, it becomes clear that while there are no difficulties in the form of lacunae or corrupt passages of extended length, there are many readings, principally of individual words, which need exact determination. All these readings have been minutely examined and tested by the weight of the manuscript evidence available and a comparison of the usage of Possidius in other instances. Such alterations in the text as have been made without manuscript authority in previous editions have been largely subjective and have tended to obscure the language and style of Possidius. The purpose of this edition is to present a revision of previous editions in the light of fuller evidence from a larger number of MSS. and to arrive at a text which reproduces as nearly as possible what Possidius wrote, rather than what he should have written. While the result is a text written in a manner somewhat more uncouth, abrupt and awkward than is found in the editions where the text abounds in smooth corrections of editors, it is nevertheless evidently the truer text.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS IN THE APPARATUS CRITICUS

A Chartres 112. B Vatican 1025. C Vatican 541. D Paris 2076. E Paris 13220. F Paris

11748. G Paris 10863. H Vatican 1190. J Vatican 1191. K Vallicellana I. L Floriacensis I M Floriacensis II N Germanensis Benedictine MSS. Vedastinus P Cisterciensis Q P. MS 5 (in Acta Sanctorum) a-r 17 supplementary MSS., see page 30. Sal. Salinas. Ben. Benedictine. Mi. Migne. edd. Salinas, Benedictine, Migne. Second hand or change by first hand. Words followed by a single square bracket are extracts from the text adopted in this edition. Readings Noted in the Apparatus Criticus. The readings noted are the variant readings, with no citations from the MSS. supporting the text, except where there is considerable confusion in the MSS. and where readings of the supplementary MSS. a-r are given.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.