

28// THE LIFE OF ST. AUSTIN, OR AUGUSTINE, DOCTOR

St. Austin the noble doctor was born in Africa in the city of Carthage, and was come of noble kindred. And his father was named Patrick and his mother Monica. He was sufficiently instructed in the arts liberal, so that he was reputed for a sufficient philosopher and a right noble doctor, for he learned all by himself, without master, in reading the books of Aristotle and all other that he might find of arts liberal. And he understood them, as he himself witnesseth in the book of *Confessions*, saying:

All the books that be called of the arts liberal, then, I, most wretched servant of all covetises, read them all by myself alone, and understood all them that I might read, and all them of the craft of speaking and of devising, all them of divisions of figures, of music and of numbers. I read and understood them without great difficulty, and without teaching of any man, this knowest thou, my Lord God. For the hastiness of mine understanding and the gift of learning is of thee only, and cometh of thy name, but I have not sacrificed to thee therefore, and therefore science without charity edifieth not, but swelleth in the error of Manicheans, which affirm that Jesu Christ was fantastic, and reny the resurrection of the flesh.

And in the same error Austin fell, and abode therein nine years, whiles he was an adolescent, and was brought to believe the truffes and japes that say that the fig tree weepeth when his figs or leaves be taken away.

HIS CONVERSION

And when he was nineteen years of age, he began to read in the book of philosophy, in which he was taught to despise the vanities of the world. And because that book pleased him well, he began to be sorry that the name of Jesu Christ, which he had learned of his mother, was not therein. And his mother wept oft, and enforced her much to bring him to the verity of the faith.

And as it is read in the book of *Confessions*, she was in a place much heavy, and her thought that a fair young man was tofore her, that enquired of her the cause of her heaviness, and she said: I weep here the loss of my son Austin, and he answered: Be thou sure, for where thou art he is.

And she saw her son beside her, and when she had told this to Austin, he said to his mother: Thou art deceived mother, it was not said so but: Where that I am thou art.

And she said contrary: Son, it was not said so to me, but where I am thou art.

And then the mother ententively prayed and required a bishop instantly that he would pray for her son Augustin. And he, being overcome, said to her by the voice of a prophet: Go thy way surely, for a son of so many tears may not by possibility perish.

And when he had certain years taught rhetoric in Carthage he came to Rome secretly, without the knowledge of his mother, and assembled there many disciples. And his mother had followed him unto the gate to make him abide, or else that she should go with him, and he abode that night, but he departed secretly on the morn. And when she apperceived it, she replenished the ears of our Lord with clamour, and went in the morning and at even to the church, and prayed God for her son.

Encounter with St. Ambrose in Milan

In that time, they of Milan required a doctor of rhetoric of Symmachus the prefect of Rome, that he might read rhetoric at Milan. And that time Ambrose, servant of God, was bishop of that city, and Augustin was sent at the prayer of them of Milan. And his mother might not rest, but did much pain to come to him, and found him that he neither was very Manichean, ne very catholic. And then it happed that Augustin began to haunt with St. Ambrose, and oft heard his predications, and was much ententive to hear if anything were said against the Manicheans or other heresies.

On a time it happed that St. Ambrose disputed long against the error Manichean, and condemned it by open and evident reasons and by authorities, so that this error was all put out of the heart of Augustin. And what befell to him afterward he rehearseth in the book of his *Confessions*, and saith:

When I knew thee first thou beatedst away the infirmity of my sight, shining in me forcibly. And I trembled for dread of good love, and I found myself right far from thee in a region of unlikelihood, like as I heard thy voice from heaven on high, saying: I am meat of greatness increased and thou shalt eat me, thou shalt not change me in thee as meat of thy flesh, but thou shalt be changed in me.

And as he rehearseth there, the life of Jesu Christ pleased him much well, but he doubted yet to go in such distresses.

Austin, this name was sorted to him for the excellence of his dignity, or for the fervent love that he had, or for the exposition of his name.

For the excellence of his dignity; for like as the emperor Augustus precelled all other kings, right so he excelled all other doctors, after that Remigius saith: The other doctors be compared to stars and this to the sun. As it appeareth in the epistle that is sung of him: He shineth in the temple of God like to the sun shining.

Secondly, for the fervent love, for like as the month of August is hot by heat, so is he enchauffed of the fire of the divine love, wherefore he saith himself in the book of Confessions: Thou hast throughpierced my heart with thy charity. Also in the same: Thou hast brought me in to a desirous affection withinforth which cannot be assuaged. And I wot not to what sweetness it is made in me; I wot not to what it shall be, I wot well it shall not be in this life.

Thirdly, for the exposition of the name. Augus is as much to say as growing, and stin is a city, and ana is as much to say as sovereign, and then Augustin is as much to say as, increasing the city sovereign. And it is sung of him: This is he that may well increase the city of God. Or it is said in the glossary: Austin is said great, blessed, and clear; he was great in his life, clear in his doctrine, and blessed in glory. Possidonius, bishop of Calamete, compiled his life, as Cassiodore saith in the book of noble men.

St. Simplician

But our Lord anon put in his mind that he should go to Simplician, in whom all divine grace shone, for to refrain his desires, and for to say to him what manner was convenable to live, for to go in the way of God in which that other went. For all that was done displeased him save the sweetness of God and the beauty of the house of God, which he loved.

And Simplician began to exhort him, and St. Augustin exhorted himself and said: How many children and maidens serve in the church of God to our Lord: and mayst not thou do that they do in themselves and not in their God? Wherefore tarryest thou? Cast thyself on him and he shall receive thee and reward thee.

And among these words Victorin came to his mind. Then Simplician was much glad, and told to him how Victorin was yet a paynim, and deserved to have a great image to his likeness in the market of Rome, and how he oftentimes said that he was a Christian man. To whom Simplician said: I shall not believe it but if I see thee in the church. And he answered merrily: The walls make not a man Christian.

At the last, when he came into the church, he brought to him secretly a book wherein the credo of the mass was, and bade him read. And he ascended upon high, and with voice on high propounded it, whereof Rome marvelled, and the church was joyful, and all cried suddenly: Victorin! Victorin! And anon they held their peace for joy.

Take and Read

And after that there came from Africa a friend of Augustin which was named Poncian, and recounted to him the life and miracles of the great Anthony, that had died lately under Constantine the emperor. And by the ensamples Austin enforced him strongly, so that he assailed his fellow Alipius as well with cheer as mind, and cried strongly: What suffer we? what hear we? Untaught people and foolish, ravish and take heaven, and we with our conning and doctrines plunge and sink into hell, and because they go tofore we be ashamed to follow them.

And then he ran into a garden, and, as he saith himself, he cast himself down under a fig-tree and wept right bitterly, and gave out weeping voice because he had tarried so long from day to day, and from time to time. And was greatly tormented, so that he had no manner in himself for sorrow of his long tarrying, like as he writeth in the book of his *Confessions* and said:

Alas! Lord, how thou art high in high things and deep in deepness, and departest not ne goest out of the way, and unnethe we come to thee. Ah! Lord, he said, call me, move me, change me, and enlumine me, ravish me and make sweet and soft all mine empeshments and lettings, as it appertaineth, for I dread them sore, I have loved thee over late, thou beauty so old and so new, I over late have loved thee. Thou wert within and I was without, and there I sought thee and in the beauty and fairness that thou hast made I fell all deformed and foul. Thou wert with me, but I was not with thee. Thou hast called and cried and hast broken my deafness. Thou hast enlumined, cleared, and hast put away my blindness. Thou

hast replenished me with fragrant odours and I haste me to come to thee. I have tasted thee, and am hungry and desire thee. Thou hast touched me, and I am burnt in the voice of louing thy peace.

And as he wept thus bitterly, he heard a voice saying: *Take and read*, and anon he opened the book of the apostle, and cast his eyes on the first chapter and read: *Clothe ye you in our Lord Jesu Christ*. And anon all the doubts of darkness were extinct in him.

And in the meantime he began to be so greatly tormented with toothache, that almost, he saith, he was brought to believe the opinion of Cornelius the philosopher, which putteth that the sovereign weal of the soul is in wisdom, and the sovereign weal of the body is in suffering no pain ne sorrow. And his pain was so great and vehement that he had lost his speech, wherefore as he writeth in the book of his *Confessions*, he wrote in tables of wax that all men should pray for him that our Lord should assuage his pain, and he himself kneeled down with the other, and suddenly he felt himself whole.

And then he signified by letters to the holy man, St. Ambrose, that he would send to him word, which of the books of holy writ appertaineth best to read in, for to be made most convenable to the Christian faith. And he sent to him answer: Isaiah the prophet, because that he was seen to be the shower and pronouncer of the gospel and of calling of men. And when Augustin understood not all the beginning, and supposed all the remnant to be otherwise than it was to read, he deferred to read them till he were more conning in holy writ.

Baptism

And when the day of Easter came and Austin was thirty years old, he and his son which was named Adeodatus, a child of noble wit and understanding, whom he had gotten in his youth when he was a paynim and a philosopher, with Alipius his friend, by the merits of his mother, and by the preaching of St. Ambrose received baptism of St. Ambrose.

And then, as it is read, St. Ambrose said: *Te deum laudamus*, and St. Austin answered: *Te dominum confitemur*, and so they two together ordained and made this hymn and sung it unto the end. And so witnesseth it Honorius in his book which is named, *The Mirror of the Church*. And in some other old books, the title of this hymn or psalm is entitled: *The canticle of Ambrose and of Augustin*. And anon he was marvellously confirmed in the faith catholic, and forsook all the hope that he had in the world, and renounced the schools that he ruled. And he showeth in his book of *Confessions* how he was from thenceforth achauffed in the love of God, saying:

Lord, thou hast throughpierced my heart with thy charity, and I have borne thy words fixed in mine entrails, and the ensamples of thy manners which thou hast made of black, white and shining, and of dead, living, and of corrupt thoughts thou makest fair and high understanding in heavenly things. I mounted up into the hill of weeping, and thou gavest to me, singing the canticle of grees, sharp arrows and coals wasting, ne I was not in the days fulfilled in thy marvellous sweetness, for to consider the height of the divine counsel upon the health of the lineage human.

How much have I wept in thy hymns and canticles sweetly sounding, and by the voice of thy church I have been moved eagerly. The voices have run in mine ears, and thy truth hath dropped in mine heart, and then tears have run down and I was well eased with them. Then these hymns were established to be sung in the church of Milan.

And I cried with an high cry of mine heart: *O in pace, O in id ipsum*, O thou that sayst I shall sleep in that same and take rest, thou art the same, for thou art not changed, and in thee is rest, forgetting all labours. I read all that psalm, and I burned, which sometime had been a barker bitter and blind, against the letters honied with the sweetness of heaven and enlumined with thy light. And upon such scriptures I held my peace and spake not.

O Jesu Christ my helper, how sweet is it suddenly made to me to lack the sweetnesses of truffes and japes, which were far from me to leave and forsake, and now to leave and forsake them is to me great joy. Thou hast cast them out from me, and thou which art sovereign sweetness hast entered into me for them, which art sweeter than any sweetness or delices, more clear than any light, and more secret than any secret counsels, and more high than all honour, and there is none more high than thou.

And after this he took Nebridius and Evodius, and his mother, and returned again into Africa.

AUGUSTINE'S SERVICE AT HIPPO

But when they came to Tiberina, his sweet mother died, and after her death Austin returned unto his proper heritage, and there entended with them that bode with him in fastings and in prayers. He wrote books, and taught them that were not wise, and the fame and renown of him spread over all. And in all his books and works he was holden marvellous. He refused to come to any city whereas was no bishop lest he should be let by that office.

And in that time was in Hippo a man full of great virtues, which sent to Augustin, that if he would come to him that he might hear the good of his mouth, he would renounce the world. And when St. Augustin knew it he went hastily thither. And when Valerian, bishop of Hippo, heard his renomee and fame, he ordained him a priest in his church, howbeit that he refused it much and wept.

And some reputed his tears to be made by pride, and said to him, in comforting him, that it was time that he were a priest, though he were worthy to a greater office, nevertheless he approached to the bishopric. And anon he established a monastery of clerks, and began to live under the rule of the apostles, out of which monastery were ten chosen to be bishops.

And because the said bishop was a Greek and but little lettered in Latin tongue and taught, he gave power to Augustin for to preach against the manner of the church oriental. And therefore many bishops despised him, but he raught [cared] not if he did it to be done by the said Augustin, that which he could not do himself.

In that time he con-vanquished Fortunatus the priest, a Manichean, which was a heretic, and many other heretics, which namely were rebaptized Donatists and Manicheans; all these he confounded and overcame.

He is Made Bishop

Then the blessed Valerian doubted lest Augustin should be taken away from him, for to be made and required to be a bishop in another city. And he would have gladly offered to him his bishopric, but he supposed that he would have fled into some secret place, whereas he should not have been found. And then he impetred of the archbishop of Carthage that he might cease and leave his bishopric, and that he would promise Augustin to be bishop of the church of Hippo.

But when Augustin heard that, he refused it utterly in all manners. Nevertheless he was constrained and so co-acted that he took at the last the cure of the bishopric, which thing, he said, that he ought not to be ordained, the bishop living, and said, and wrote, for the inhibition of the general council, the which he learned after, that it was ordained in the council of the bishops, that all the statutes of the fathers ought to be said to ordain of them that ordained them. And it is read that he said after of himself: I ne feel our Lord so angry with me in no thing as that I am not worthy to be set in the dignity of the governance of the church.

His Manner of Living

His clothing, and hosing, and shoeing, and all his other adornments and array, were not over foul ne over fair, but they were of sufficient, moderate, and competent habit. And he said of himself: I am ashamed of precious clothing, and therefore, when any is given to me I sell it, for clothing may not be common, the price is common. He used always his table sparing; he used always pottage and wortes for sick folk, and oftimes he had flesh for guests and sick people, and he loved better at his table lessons and disputations than meat, and had these verses written at his table:

*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,
Hanc mensam indignam noverit esse sibi.*

That is to say: Whosoever loves to missay any creature that is absent, it may be said that this table is denied to him at all. For, on a time as a man had loosed his tongue to missay of a bishop familiar with him, he rebuked him cruelly, and said that, he should leave off or raze away these verses, or go from the table.

A Lesson in Temperance

On a time when he had bidden to dinner some of his friends, one of them entered into the kitchen, and found yet all the meat cold that they should have at dinner; and anon he returned to Austin and said: What have ye for our dinner?

And Austin answered to him: I noot ne can no skill of such meats

And then he said: I shall not then dine with you.

And then Augustin said that three things he had learned of St. Ambrose: the first is that, he should never demand wife for another man, the second that, he should never not lend his horse to him that would ride, and the third, that he should go to no feast. The cause of the first, lest they accord not and be not of one will, and curse him that brought them together. The cause of the second, lest the rider take harm in his riding and blame him that lent him the horse. The cause of the third, lest at the feast he lose the manner of temperance.

His Self-Accusations

He was of so great purity and humility, that the right little sins which we repute for none he confessed them to God, as it appeareth in the book of his *Confessions*, and accused himself meekly to our Lord.

For he accused himself there, that when he was a child, how he played at the ball when he should go to school.

Also of that he would not learn of his father and mother and of his masters, but by constraint.

Also, when he was a child, of that he read gladly the fables of Æneas and complained Dido which died for love.

Also of that he had stolen meat from the table out of the celyer of his father and mother that he had given to children that played with him, and of that, that the plays and games he had victory by fraud.

Also he confessed him of stealing of pears off a pear tree standing nigh his vineyard when he was sixteen years old.

In the same book he accused him of that little delectation which sometime he felt in eating, and said:

Thou hast taught me that I should take nourishing of meat like a medicine, but when I go to rest with full belly, then I go in the way in which the snare of concupiscence assaileth me. And how well that the cause of eating and drinking be cause of health, she adjoineth with her a perilous chamberer, that is joyousty, which enforceth her oft to perish, so that by the cause it is oft cause of that I would do for health. Drunkenness is far from me; I beseech thee, Lord, have mercy on me, that it approach not me. And, Lord, who is he, but sometime he is ravished out of his meats? Who that it be that is not, certainly is much perfect, it am not I, for I am a sinful man.

Also he held himself suspect of smelling, saying: Of unlawful smelling I intermit me not overmuch, but when they be present, I require them not, and if I have them I refuse them not, nor

I covet them not as me seemeth, when I lack them I shall not be deceived. No man, saith he, ought to be sure in this life, for it is called all temptation, that is to wit, that he may be made of the worse the better, and not of the better the worse.

And he confessed him also of hearing, saying: The delights and voluptuosities of mine ears have bowed and subdued me, but thou hast unbound and delivered me, for when it happed me that the song more moved me than the thing sung, I confess me sore to have sinned, and then I would that I had not heard him that so sang.

And then he accused him of seeing; of that he saw sometime gladly the hound running, and when he went sometime by adventure by the fields, he beheld gladly hunting, and when he was at home he beheld oftymes the spincoppes or spiders taking flies by the nets of their cobwebs. Hereof he confessed him to our Lord, for sometime they took from him good thoughts, and letted him of some good works.

And he accused him of the appetite of praising and of the moving of vain glory, saying that he would be praised of men:

And [if] thou blamest him, he shall not be defended of men when thou judgest him, nor be withdrawn when thou shalt damn him. For man is praised for some gift that thou hast given to him; nevertheless he enjoyeth more of that he is praised, than he doth of the gift that thou hast given. We be tempted every day with these temptations without ceasing, for quotidian furnace is our tongue human. Nevertheless I would well that the name of every good deed should increase by the help of a strange mouth. But the tongue increaseth it not, but blame minisheth it. I am sorry sometime of my praisings, when they be praised in me in which they displease me, for so some manners be esteemed better than they be.

The Attacks of Heretics

This holy man confounded right valiantly the heretics, insomuch that they preached openly that it were no sin to slay Augustin, and said that he ought to be slain like a wolf, and they affirmed that God pardoned all the sins to them that slew him, and he was oftymes awaited of them, and when he went in to any places, they set spies, but, by the grace of God, they were deceived of their voyage and might not find him.

His Charity

He remembered always the poor people, and succoured them freely of that he might have, and sometimes he commanded to break the vessels of the church for to give to the poor people, and dispend it among the needy. He would never buy house, nor field, nor town, and refused many heritages that were fallen to him, wherefore, he said, that they appertained to the children of the dead people, and to them that were next of their kin, and it sufficed him enough that which fell to him by the church. And yet he was not ententive for the love of such goods, but day and night he thought in divine scriptures.

His Thoughts on Building New Churches

He had never study in new fabrics nor buildings, but eschewed to set thereon his courage, which ever he would have free from all bodily griefs, so that he might more freely entende, and more continually, to the lesson. Nevertheless he would not forbid them that would edify, if that he saw them not do it disattemperately.

His Thoughts on Death

He praised them strongly that had desire to die, and remembered much oft thereupon the ensamples of three bishops. For when Ambrose was at his end, he was prayed that he should get longer space of his life by his prayers. He answered: I have not lived so that I am ashamed to live among you, and I am not afraid to die, for I have a good Lord.

Which answer Augustin praised marvellously, and also he said of another bishop, that it was said to him that he was yet much necessary to the church, and that he should pray to God for the deliverance of his sickness. And he said: If I did never well but seldom, wherefore should he deliver me now?

And of another bishop, that he said that Cyprian told when he was in grievous sickness and prayed that God would send him health, a youngling appeared to him, and looked sternly on him, and said to him by disdain: Thou doubttest to suffer, thou willest not to die, what shall I do to thee?

His Shunning of Women

He would never have that any woman should dwell with him, neither his own sisters, nor the daughters of his brother, which served God together. For he said, though of his sister nor of his nieces might none evil suspicion grow; nevertheless because that such persons might not be without other that served them, and also other might come to them, and of such might the thoughts be moved to temptations, or might be defamed by evil suspicion of men. He would never speak alone with any women but if some one were present in secret.

His Treatment of Kin and Friends

He gave never no goods to his kin, nor to his cousins, nor he recked whether they abounded or were needy.

He would never, or seldom, pray for any, neither by letters nor by words, remembering a certain philosopher to whom his friends had not given much to in the time of his fame; and oft he said: Oft the puissant that is required giveth verily.

When he spake for his friend he attempered so the manner of his duty, that he was not overhasting himself, but the courtesy of the sayer deserved to be heard. He would gladlier hear causes of unknown men than of his friends, for between them he might freely know the default, and of them to make one his friend for whom by right he might give sentence, and of his friends he was sure to lose one, that was, him against whom he gave the sentence.

His Preaching

He was desired to preach the word of God in many churches, and there he preached and converted many from errors. When he preached he had a custom sometime to depart him from his purpose, and then he said that God had ordained that for the profit of some person; as it appeared to a Manichean, which in a sermon of Augustin whereas he departed from his matter and preached against the same error, and thereby he was converted to the faith.

The City of God

In that time that the Goths had taken Rome, and that the idolaters and false Christian men enjoyed them thereof, then made St. Augustin therefore the book of the City of God, in which he showed first that righteous men were destroyed in this life, and the evil men flourished. And the treatise of the two cities is Jerusalem and Babylon and of the kings of them. For the king of Jerusalem is Jesu Christ, and he of Babylon is the devil, the which two cities make two loves in them. For the city of the devil maketh a love to himself, growing the same unto despite of God. And the city of God made a love growing unto the despite of him.

The Vandal Conquest

In that time the Vandals about the year of our Lord four hundred and forty took all the province of Africa, and wasted all, and spared neither man nor woman nor for order nor for age, and after came to the city of Hippo and assieged it with great power. And under that tribulation, Augustin before all other led a bitter and right holy life, for the tears of his eyes were to him bread day and night, when he saw some slain, others chased away, the churches without priests, and the city wasted with the inhabitants.

And among these many evils, by the sentence of a certain wise man he comforted himself, saying: Thou shalt not be great in weening great things because that the woods and stones fall, and they that be mortal die.

He called them his brethren, and said: I have prayed our Lord that either he take away from us these perils or send to us patience, or take me out of this life that I be no more constrained to have so many cursednesses or ill-haps.

And the third thing that he required he had. For in the third month of the siege he travailed in the fevers, and lay down on his bed. And when he understood his departing he did do write the seven psalms of penance in a place against the wall, and read them lying in his bed and wept abundantly. And because he should entend to God the more diligently, and that his entent should not be letted by nobody, ten days tofore his death he suffered nobody to enter in to him but if it were his physician, or else when his refection was brought him.

Healing the Sick

A certain sick man came because he should lay his hand on him and thereby to heal him of his infirmity: and St. Augustin answered to him: Son, that which thou requirest of me weenest thou that I may do such thing that I ne never did? If I might do it, I would then heal myself.

And the man required of him always, affirming that he was so commanded in a vision to come to him. And then he prayed for him, and he received health.

He healed many sick people and did many other miracles. He counted in the book of the City of God another miracle of twain fools, of which that one said: I have seen a virgin of Hippo which anointeth her with oil, and anon the devil ravished and vexed her, and a priest prayed for her weeping, and she was anon made all whole and the fiend issued from her.

And of that other miracle he saith in the same book: I know well that a bishop on a time prayed for a child that he had never seen, and he was anon delivered of the devil. And it is no doubt but that he said it of himself but he would not name himself because of humility.

He saith in the same book that a man should have been cut of the stone and men doubted that he should die, and then the sick man prayed God weeping, and Austin prayed for him, and he was healed without cutting or incision.

His Departure from this World

Then, when his departing approached, he enseigned his brethren that they should retain in mind that no man, of what excellence that he were, ought not to die without confession, ne without to receive his Saviour.

And when he came to the last hour he felt him whole in all his members, of good entendment, clear seeing and hearing, and in the year of his age three score and six, and of his bishopric forty, he put himself in prayers with his brethren, which praying he departed out of this life and went unto our Lord. And he made no testament, for he was poor in Jesu Christ and had not whereof. And he flourished about the year of our Lord four hundred.

And thus St. Augustin right clear by light of wisdom, fighting in defence of truth, of faith and of garrison of the church, surmounted all the other doctors of the church, as well by engine as by conning, flourishing without comparison as well by example of virtues as by abundance of doctrine.

THE TESTIMONY OF DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

Of whom the blessed Remigius in recording of Jerome and other doctors saith thus: St. Augustin concluded all the others by engine and by science. For howbeit that the blessed Jerome saith that he had seen six thousand volumes of Origen, this same wrote so many that no man by day nor night might not write his books ne yet read them.

Volusian, to whom St. Augustin wrote, saith of him, thus: It lacketh in the law of God all that Augustin knew not.

St. Jerome saith thus in an epistle that he wrote to the glorious St. Augustin: I have no conning to answer to thy two great books, shining by all clearness of fair speaking, and certainly this that I have said and have learned by engine and conning, and drawn out of the fountain of scripture, is by thee declared and set forth, but I pray thy reverence thou suffer me a little to praise thy engine.

The blessed Isidore wrote thus of him in the *Book of Twelve Doctors*: The glorious St. Augustin, bishop, flying by the high mountains as an eagle, hath pronounced by clear words many of the spaces of heaven, the bounds of the lands, and the circle of the waters.

And after it appeareth what reverence and love St. Jerome had to him in the epistles that he sent to the holy father St. Augustin: I, Jerome, honour alway thy blessedness by such honour as it appertaineth to love our Lord Jesu Christ dwelling in thee. But and if it may be, let us now gather of thy praisings something.

The blessed St. Gregory saith thus of his books in an epistle that he sent unto Innocent, provost of Africa: Because it hath liked to thee to send to us for the exposition of holy Job, we rejoyce us in thy study. But if thou wilt be made fat in science, read the sweet epistles of thy patron and head St. Augustin our fellow, but think not that our wheat may be compared to his rye.

And the blessed Prosper saith of him: St. Augustin was quick in engine, sweet in speech, wise in letters, and a noble worker in the labours of the church; clear in daily disputations, in all his doings well ordered, sharp in assoiling questions, right appert in confounding heretics, and right catholic in expounding of our faith, and subtle in expounding the canon of scripture.

THE TRANSLATIONS OF AUGUSTINE'S BODY

And after that the strange people had occupied that country long, and had corrupted the holy places, the good Christian men took the body of St. Augustin and brought it into Sardinia. And after that, two hundred and eighty years, one Liprand, a devout king of the Lombards, sent

solemn messengers thither for to bring the relics of St. Augustin to Pavia, which gave great good for it, and brought the body unto Genoa. And when the devout king heard thereof he had great joy, and went for to meet with it at the said city, and received it honourably. And on the morn when they would have led the body away, they might not remove it in no manner till that the king had avowed that, if he would let him be borne thence, he would make there a church in the honour of him; and when he had done so, anon without any difficulty it was led and taken from thence.

And on that day following there fell a miracle in a town named Cassel, in the bishopric of Tyrdone, in the same wise; and there he builded another church in the honour of him. And the same town with all the appurtenances he gave to them that served in the same church, to possess for evermore. And because the king would please the saint, and doubted that he would be in some other place than the king would have, wherever the king harboured by night with the body, he made there a church in the honour of him, and thus was brought to Pavia with great joy; and was laid honourably in the church of St. Peter which is called *Cieldore*, or heaven of gold in English.

MIRACLES OF ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Bernard's Vision of St. Augustine

St. Bernard, on a night as he was at matins, he slumbered a little, and the lessons of St. Augustin were read. And then he saw a right fair young man standing before him, and so great abundance of water coming out of his mouth that him seemed all the church was full thereof. And then he awoke, and wist well that it was St. Augustin, which had fulfilled that church with his doctrine.

The Man with the Finger

There was a man, which had great devotion to St. Augustin, gave great good to a monk that kept the body of St. Augustin for to have a finger of the glorious saint. And this monk took this money and delivered to him the finger of another dead man, wrapped in silk, and feigned that it was the finger of the glorious St. Austin.

And the good man received it much honourably and in great reverence, and honoured it every day devoutly and touched withal his eyes and his mouth, and oft embraced it against his breast. And God by his mercy, that beholdeth all things, and the faith of this man, gave to him for that finger the very proper finger of St. Augustin, and when he came into his country, there were many miracles showed thereby.

The renown and fame thereof came to Pavia of this finger, and the monk aforesaid affirmed always that it was the finger of another dead man. The sepulchre was opened for to know the truth, and it was found that there lacked one of the fingers of the glorious saint. And when the abbot had knowledge of this thing, he put out the monk of that office, and tormented and punished him sore.

The Boy By the Sea

Many other miracles hath God showed by his life, and also after his death, which were overlong to write in this book, for they would, I suppose, contain a book as much as all this and more, but among other corrections, I will set herein one miracle, which I have seen painted on an altar of St. Austin at the black frirs at Antwerp, howbeit I find it not in the legend, mine exemplar, neither in English, French, ne in Latin.

It was so that this glorious doctor made and compiled many volumes, as afore is said, among whom he made a book of the Trinity, in which he studied and mused sore in his mind, so far forth that on a time as he went by the sea-side in Africa, studying on the Trinity, he found by the sea-side a little child which had made a little pit in the sand, and in his hand a little spoon. And with the spoon he took out water of the large sea and poured it into the pit.

And when St. Augustin beheld him he marvelled, and demanded him what he did. And he answered and said: I will lade out and bring all this water of the sea into this pit.

What? said he, it is impossible, how may it be done, sith the sea is so great and large, and thy pit and spoon so little?

Yes, forsooth, said he, I shall lightlier and sooner draw all the water of the sea and bring it into this pit than thou shalt bring the mystery of the Trinity and his divinity into thy little understanding as to the regard thereof; for the mystery of the Trinity is greater and larger to the comparison of thy wit and brain than is this great sea unto this little pit.

And therewith the child vanished away. Then here may every man take ensample that no man, and especially simple lettered men, ne unlearned, presume to intermit ne to muse on high things of the godhead, farther than we be informed by our faith, for our only faith shall suffice us.

Then herewith I make an end of the life of this glorious doctor St. Austin, to whom let us devoutly pray that he be a mediator and advocate unto the blessed Trinity, that we may amend our sinful life in this transitory world, that when we shall depart we may come to everlasting bliss in heaven. Amen.

The [iconography of St. Augustine](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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