Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.

Public Library
Kansas City, Mo.

TENSION ENVELOPE CORP

A Letter to St. Augustine

By Haniel Long

Pittsburgh Memoranda

The Power Within Us

Walt Whitman and the Springs of Courage

Malinche (Doña Marina)

Piñon Country

The Grist Mill

A Letter to St. Augustine

A Letter to St. Augustine
after re-reading his confessions

Haniel Long

DUELL, SLOAN and PEARCE

New York

I

Printed in the U.S.A.

Contents

A Letter to St. Augustine

Salutation

My dear Bishop:

I have but now finished a new re-reading of your *Confessions*, and wish to talk with you about a number of points in it. It is three o'clock in the morning; I have been out walking under the stars. I see the Dipper; the stars that constellate it are quite large and seem near the earth. I wish to talk about a number of little things which I am quite sure will involve our talking about a number of big things, also.

I know you better than I know most of my friends. I feel that I know you very well; but in one respect you are unlike the living, for you are not only a man I know intimately (because you wrote about your private life in your autobiography), but an historic figure, and a very famous one. You live a different life on the printed page, among those remarkable men and women whom the race for its own reasons

wishes to keep in mind, or whom for agreeable or disagreeable reasons it cannot forget. I recall the essential facts about the Augustine with whom history deals—that you are the most celebrated father of the Latin church, that you were born at Tagaste, Numidia, in 354 A.D., and died at Hippo (the modern Bone) in the same imperial province, in 430, living your seventy-six years during the collapse of the Roman Empire and the dawn of organized Christianity. That you were educated at Madaura and Carthage; taught rhetoric at Tagaste, Carthage, and Rome; removed to Milan in 384 and came under the influence of Ambrose the Bishop; that, three years later, he baptized you into Catholic Christianity; that in 395 you became Bishop of Hippo, and filled this office for your remaining thirty-five years. That although your diocese was provincial, you became extraordinarily well known through the Christian world as the champion of orthodoxy; that while you were on your deathbed the Vandals broke into your town and were pillaging it. That the next eight or nine centuries are called the Dark Ages, and literature pauses only for the names of Boethius, Beowulf, Abélard and Heloïse, the Song of Roland and the Volsunga Saga, until the coming of Aquinas in 1225 and of Dante in 1265. But that during this long time of destruction, confusion, germinal growings, there continued unabated the predominance of your voice and influence.

And yet these simple facts are capable of an almost unlimited expansion. An untiring reader with thirty or forty years at his disposal could hardly read all you wrote or all that has been written about you. The number of your letters must have been immense; they went everywhere, for like Jerome you ruled by the pen. Many are of an excessive length and no fewer than two hundred and twenty of them are preserved, together with fifty letters received by you. Your sermons were apparently taken down by shorthand writers and we possess volumes of these brief talks to your flock sixteen centuries ago. Of your letters and sermons you take little notice; but during the latter part of your life you calculated that you had composed more than two hundred and thirty formal tractates and larger works, and you commented on them in an important chronological catalogue. We learn from it that you composed *On the Trinity* at intervals over several years, and a dozen parts of it were circulated before revision and without your consent. It took you sixteen years to write *The City of God*, and you issued its divisions separately as you concluded them. In books growing in such a leisurely manner, there were naturally many digressions, many reflections on current events. They are full of actual occasions, but your *Confessions* is singular in that it bears no stamp of an occasion.

Your work has been copied and recopied, anno-

tated again and again, and the very annotations annotated. From this mass of material ideas and images have entered the mind of the West, for you were a coiner of phrases, and you are a landmark in the world of theology and the world of philosophy. During the final disaster of the Western Empire with its political and economic dissensions, many Christians longed for harmony in their beliefs, and felt as did Socrates that if a man thought aright he would act aright. Our Lord had come out of Galilee saying and doing things intelligible enough to a peaceable and not stupid folk living in a province protected by Roman law and Roman soldiers, to which they were so accustomed as not to give the matter a thought. But the moment he spoke his language in Jerusalem he encountered the kind of opposition from Herod the King and the High Priests and the worldly and privileged groups which he has met ever since. In the world as it was, his ideas inevitably were not practical; nor can they become practical, as the genius of Paul understood, until the saints, the martyrs, the Christian community in general have prepared the world to receive them. But there had to be common consent as to what a Christian should believe, even if he could not or did not choose to act on his beliefs, even if the central figure of his religion might seem far off and misty and incredible. Your remark, Augustine, that you yourself could not have believed in the events of the Gospels with-

out the authority of the Church, may well have been the point of view of many.

The question of belief became the question of dogma, and the ensuing controversies within Western Christendom and between the Western and the Eastern churches, though they often go far afield from the ideas of the forthright Nazarene, contributed to the psychic development of the race. The theological tradition was the tradition of the rationalistic justification of faith, and it goes from early Greek theologians to you, Augustine, and from you to Aquinas, and from Aquinas to Luther and Calvin. During the long sway of theology, figures like St. Francis had insisted on deeds instead of words, but the significance of such figures did not become clear until the Wesleyan Protestant revival in England at the end of the eighteenth century suggested how wide the distance was becoming between the modern intellectual world and the theological tradition. In order to spread the conception of the brotherhood of man and of the importance of all men, the Methodist preachers appealed much less to constructive reason than to direct intuition. It was thus that they reached the group of modern men of good will who surrounded Wilberforce and so brought about the abolition of the slave trade.* Alfred North Whitehead says, "The great Methodist movement . . .

* Elie Halévy, *A History of the English People in 1815*, tr. by E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker, New York, 1924.

can appeal to no great intellectual construction explanatory of its modes of understanding. . . . It may have chosen the better way. Its instinct may be sound. . . . More recently scientists and critical philosophers have followed the Methodist example." *

Because of your importance during the age of theology, Augustine, one can hardly overestimate your weight in stabilizing the shattered mental life of Europe during the dark centuries after you. Historians of the Latin mind during the fourth and fifth centuries see in you the central figure they must understand.† In comparisons, too, of Eastern and Western Christianity, you are again the central figure. So there is no gainsaying your historical gianthood; and yet in that role I must confess you seem strange to me, because it is not the Augustine whom I know. My Augustine is not a figure whose significance ceases with the end of the theological tradition. Even within that period he is not the same man; I doubt whether your controversial writings ever gave you such hold on the West as did an image which rises easily from your pages and is everywhere understood—such an image, I mean, as the intuition of Botticelli found to be just in his portrait of you

* In his *Adventures of Ideas*, New York, 1933.

† For example, Edward Motley Pickman, *The Mind of Latin Christendom*, New York, 1937.

centuries after you died—an old man on bended knee fervently beseeching the Great Spirit for help. Fundamentally, it was your version of the gospel of our Lord. Not for a moment do I say that one can understand the history of Europe without considering your doctrines of grace, of original sin, and of the mission of the Catholic church. But the image of the old man praying for help belongs to another order of influences and in the long run a mightier one.

To me the atmosphere of theological controversy is unknown. I was born twenty-five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, one hundred and fifty years after the Wesleys—that is, in the period prepared by the Age of Reason in France and the liberal Catholicism of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, which is unique because of the desire for brotherhood that flows from the Wesleyan movement and from Quaker preachers like Woolman. And so it is not your theology which is my main concern, but rather the way you lived your life. In our day the appeal to man's reason separates itself from the appeal to his direct intuitions only at great risk. Your *Confessions* does not confine itself to one appeal or to the other.

It is not easy to go back into antiquity and recover the humanity of a man. Arguments are abstractions —the point of view can be dictated by one's period,

the connection between forensic debate and personalities cannot perhaps be traced even with the aid of psychology. But I am afraid we may lose you by misunderstanding you. I wish to recover the state of your humanity, because of my feeling that you are vital to us today. Contemporary writers who touch you as a human being tend to accept uncritically the image which rises from a superficial reading of your *Confessions*, i.e., that you were a carnal sinner, shaping his sins into the material of repentance. They are misled, and do not see the depth and richness of your nature. Theirs is not the same image which Botticelli painted, for in Botticelli's old man on bended knees, we find the man needing help in many, many ways, as we need it today. The man needing to believe, as Traherne did, that "It is the glory of God to give all things to us in the best of all possible manners." The man needing belief and love and encouragement and self-esteem.

We lose a great man when we consign him to a certain period, confine him in it, conclude he was its child and gave his gifts to it, with no overflow for posterity and for us. But with your *Confessions* it is otherwise. There you are universal, of any age, and in a sense inexhaustible both for warning and for guidance. Certainly there are great men whose age circumscribes them so completely that we lose interest. It is not the case with you. So far are you from being forgotten that even now eighteen volumes of

your works, including letters and sermons, are being published in English.*

When I meet a new person, I am on the lookout for signs of what he or she is loyal to. It is a preliminary clue to the sense of belonging, and hence of his or her humanity. You are not a new person to me, but when I first read you I did not know what to look for. Now I have come to understand better the importance of loyalties, of belonging. And I see that you are like me, the importance of belonging was with you also a matter to understand slowly. Your *Confessions* is the story of a man who searched for a home, finding that loyalties are the home of the heart.

We are for this reason concerned with our relation to those who are nearest us. At least, you treat it so, and so shall I. It is natural enough to try to find one's home in one's mother or one's beloved or one's friends; but it is going rather far to do so. How can any one person be expected to furnish the manifold forms of security and incentive which make the reality of a true home for the heart? It is wonderful that certain human beings have so shaped themselves as to suggest to us over a period of years the abiding place of the affections, or the environment of refuge and rest, or the center of warm and sound familiar

* *Fathers of the Church*, ed. Dr. Ludwig Schopp, New York, 1948 and after.

life. It is wonderful, yes, wonderful enough and more than one should reasonably believe likely. They are the salt of the earth. We push our search for the dream we are after in the direction they suggest to us by being what they are. They give us glimpses of a Great Spirit, and we try to enter the region this Spirit lives in. And sometimes we feel that we are near Him. We seem to lose our way most of the time, but sometimes we find it.

Of our customary state of being off the true path, we must talk a little, for it is a confused matter. We have been trying to make the world better, and we keep making it worse. With great effort we perfect new destructions; not new ways of living, but new ways of dying. Of what human beings are composed we know but little. Thoughtful men may well meditate on powers they cannot name or profess to understand. For we can give when we have nothing; can find within ourselves steady currents of adaptation and sympathy. But we have in our mental equipment also the ability to invent ever more fatal weapons and to unleash them in warfare. International rivalry has meant a progressive development of acts of hostility. The cost of scientific research to support such acts is often in times of peace prohibitive; only the extravagance of war makes it possible. Thus science has augmented our powers; because of it, we are able to do far more good, but also far more evil.

I wish to talk with you about the Great Spirit, not in an attempt to define that Spirit, but to consider its manifestations when they are humanly recognizable. And so let us speak of the core of our Christianity, the religion of our Lord considered by itself and taken out of its enclosures. For Jesus set our evolutional and spiritual goal. Humanity is still extremely young in terms of the age of the earth, and perhaps there will be ages in which we can develop; but the time has come to find a better path forward among the many meanings men have found in Christianity, or think they have found. I do not believe that we can stop perfecting new ways of dying until we have found new ways of living. Every new life-way ought to prevent a new death-way.

Our talks will not be discussion or argument or even conversation. And we shall be in communion for the sake of the nightmare we all carry round in us today and cannot overcome.

Everything I wish to commune with you about will concern the future of my country, the future of the world, the horror of the two world wars; and yet I shall not really be communing with you about my country, the world, the two world wars. Everything I say will be about man's freedom; yet I shall really not be talking about freedom. But everyone who reads my letter to you, I hope, will know what I am concerned about; what we all have dreamt and

dreamt and are afraid will not happen. What we pray for, what *must* happen.

I have an urgent need of men and women anywhere in time or space who have dreamt it might be possible to find the secret of concord, of measure, of law-abiding change; but of you most of all, who are so far from perfect and so human, so conversable, so candid, whom I understand, with whom I find it easy to sympathize.

I am writing you, you see, about graver matters even than the wars; but between my lines will be the prison camps, the ships sinking in flaming oil, the toppling cities—these must all be in the included vision of the closed eyes, flotsam and jetsam on a tide. I write you of the tide itself. You will feel the whir of the engines above Rotterdam, and you will see Hiroshima after the bomb, for they too will be between my lines, though not mentioned. They are part of the tidal tension of man today.

What I invite to your attention in particular in our life today are children and young people living in the ruins of cities or going out in packs on the highways to hunt. I wish you to observe small dead bodies scattered along the roads, in the forest, up and down the rivers from Europe to China. When my gaze narrows down to these children, as it is only too likely to do, passing by the feats of courage and heroism for which war sets a stage, it happens that they seem to me children I know, perhaps girls and

boys in my neighborhood. The dead ones in the fields and the live ones surviving as best they can, have familiar faces. On this account I would forbid myself to think about them, but the heart steals off in directions in which one can forbid his mind to go. A friend in Europe writes me, "I have just helped to welcome, clean, clothe, and organize a little group of two hundred orphans from Rumania, strange self-contained children, many of whom have been living for months in the woods." Strange, self-contained children. Many should mend, with care; but the question remains of the others and of those whom we have lost. I believe that it might help us of the West, if like the Chinese we had ceremonies yearly for lost souls and hungry ghosts, those who have died without families to honor them, those so sad and desperate that they have destroyed themselves.

The little ones are only an incidental part of the general scene of human life, now as always. But here they concern us in particular, for we speak of an emergency from which may come one of two things —either the evil fate of man's destruction on earth, or his ascent into a greater good than he has ever imagined. To help avert the evil and bring the good, is it not wise for us to look again at our past and see with fresh eyes those great figures who have molded us? So I am gazing back at you; I am wondering whether we have found the truest causes of your endless fascination.

I write of our determination to federate the world, with a world court and world police. For it is our necessity, our greatest dream. Even so, this necessity is enwrapt in the vaster situation—in a word, man now stands on the threshold of his manhood. How is he to cross it?

I do not know you so well as I might if I had seen you and perhaps been one of your friends. But I know you better than I do anyone else in antiquity, and you have made it possible. When I am in a reflective mood, your interest for me is almost irresistible. I could end it, but I see every reason for not ending it. I keep exploring the tension between us. You are to me like the sound of remote but heavy bells ringing across a lake at evening, and it cannot be my imagination that in that faraway clangor, however compelling it is, I hear a discord as I listen, and a jangling out of tune. Your chapel yonder is in the realm of the eternal; you are walls and buttresses and my thoughts are a mist which curves in and out; or it is you who dim my walls and buttresses with dark swirling. None knew better than you that in darkness is the seed of light, and in light the seed of the dark. One thing is plain: between you and me exist understandings and misunderstandings. My research of your words stimulates and feeds me, but at times I wonder whether you may not misinterpret yourself in your self-analysis. And another thing is plain: I can permit myself a very real sympathy with

you. The ways in which we are mutually antagonistic or apathetic may only reveal eternal opposites seeking out each other. The moral nature of man has not appreciably changed for five thousand years; the fact that I live a few hundred years after you, sixty or seventy generations, let us say, is inconsequential. That I am twenty-some years older than you when you wrote the *Confessions* is of no consequence, either. You were a man friendly to speculation, to reflection. You had a cult of friendship, and liked nothing better than discussion and, for a great part of your life, discussion free as the air. Best of all, at certain moments I have felt that you welcome communion with modern man.

So we are having these grave exchanges as our daily paths cross. Sometimes you have walked home with me in the late afternoon, and sometimes you are seated beside me out of doors at night, looking at the stars. You were with me tonight when I saw the Dipper.

Your *Confessions*, from beginning to end, trembles on the chord of the universal. In it we deal only with ourselves, our world, the Great Spirit. The secret passion of the world had swept into your heart. At times the seen and the unseen, like outspread wings, bore your feeling past your thought. Then it would all go, and you were again an ordinary man, a Carthaginian Roman bewildered by your

future, bothered by your mother and your mistress, irritated by being the paid tutor of anyone's little boys. Again you would be caught away, and I can listen to the birdlike heart of eternity singing within you. Then reality would give you a good prodding, and you fell to sighing and whining.

When you first conceived the idea of your *Confessions*, you must have had great joy in the anticipatory vision of it. When you had inscribed the last phrase and put away your stylus, did you not tingle with the joy of having done what you were born to do? You were the first to tell men the truth about oneself, and when I remember that this truth is what we need above all else from one another, I see how great you are as pioneer and wayfinder. Because you were real, you give me the chance of a real relation with you.

It is true that because of your great prestige people have thought the truth about you must also be the truth about them. They have thought that what you found expedient for yourself they should imitate; that your ideas about God and the earth and men and women and babies, should be their ideas also. They missed the point that your truth can only be regarded as a possible aid to them in finding their truth. They did not understand how the truth about a person can be in itself a priceless possession, widening the horizon of our reality. They did not admire you for your courage in facing yourself. They did

not get down on their knees and pray the Lord to give them the like of it. He who has the rare courage to face himself, and permits others to look into his mistakes as well as his successes, turn them over in the palm and study them, is the prince of givers. What you thought your successes may well seem to another your defeats; but it is a consequence of your initial generosity that one can say so. You let me know you; the warmth of this experience lives in every part of me. Your historic figure and the results of your life pale beside your frankness; for us, centuries after you, it is a colossal deed of good will.

As you probably know, out there in your eternity, people since your time have been of various minds about you. Even in your own church there have been those who did not agree with your views about God's general attitude toward us. The antithetical views of a bishop who was a contemporary of yours, if I am right, have been included in the Church's body of doctrine. Most admirers of St. Francis are lacking in esteem for you. Those who do esteem you regard you as the ablest father of the Church. Historians have said that you made the Church so strong in its organization that your work prevented the Saracens from conquering Europe. A philosopher with a great vogue in my time calls you "the most powerful of all ethical natures the West has produced," and says that your life proved that "sin

implied not only an obstacle but also assistance, that it is precisely the barriers of nature which make it impossible to overcome her; that imperfection is the very substance of which God stands in need in order to take shape in man." *

A friend of mine who is a professor of theology once said to me that he had always felt a central instability in you, of a neurotic nature. And if your own church has been of two minds about you, it is even more the case in the Protestant churches. The most unfavorable judgment of you I can think of is Dr. Allen's: "For a thousand years those who came after Augustine did little more than reaffirm his teaching, and so deep is the hold which his long supremacy has left upon the church, that his opinions have become identified with the divine revelation, and are all that the majority of the Christian world yet know of the religion of Christ." †

What my friend the theologian said of your nervous instability I agree with, and it is one of the reasons why you fill me with sympathy. That neurosis comes from a deeper conflict than has been pointed out. In as uncompromising manner as could be, you were faced with the necessity of casting in your lot with only one of the three great choices men face, in the form of church, state, family. It is enough to

* Count Hermann Keyserling, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, Vol. I, New York, 1925.

† Alexander V. G. Allen, *The Continuity of Christian Thought*, Boston, 1900.

destroy a man of perception and judgment. If it did not destroy you, the reason is that you could not understand, living when you did, all that history and psychology have since shown us is implied in this drastic and unfair choice. But your heart was extraordinarily agitated, as your book reveals.

Dr. Allen, who judges you so severely in the passage I quote, was speaking of your opinions regarding original sin, predestination, grace, sacraments, endless punishment, and purgatory; I pass such questions by as not of first importance. For you were many-sided. You had much to give the ten centuries that followed you. You were a genius great enough to establish a pattern of religious life which the West could understand. I cannot believe that you became part of the millions through your dogmas. They are dogmas which could only appeal to a special type of mind or the needs of a special age. If they became prominent and people had to accept them or suffer, so much the worse for Christianity, and for the West. But their acceptance would surely depend on something else, upon the popular image of you, and that is the image which fills the mind of anyone who has read the *Confessions*.

Like Paul you were a convert to Christianity, and like him an extraordinary and complicated human being. The misery of sin, and the deliverance from it, such is your Christianity, and it is an essential part of what our Lord taught. What was strange, was

that this experience did not bring you the great happiness it brought Paul, the exultant feeling of liberty in being a child of God. You are unable to feel this joy or to express it. But what you *could* express beyond anyone, is man's bewilderment faced with the problems of life, his sense of shock and guilt at his blunders, his longing for help in shaping himself better, and the actuality of the sense of consolation when it comes. Since there can hardly exist a person so complacent as to be satisfied with his relation to the Invisible, and since everyone longs for oneness in the life festival, your words, your attitude, have molded the millions. You describe universal symptoms, offer a universal cure. Since your time, inward and powerful religious fervor, and the expression which it takes, are patterned after you, and not only in the Roman church but in most of the churches which like beautiful stars shot up in the sky at the time of the Reformation.

It is your kneeling and desperate figure which later ages could understand. We understand it because each has a great problem of the external world, of one's family, church, and state. The enveloping walls of the womb from which a human being must emerge to become a free individual, are today and have always been three-fold. For his own good or evil, a person faces his blood kin first, and then for his good or evil the two larger families. Man's history comes down to his relations with these three

Presences. So much of what is best in us is bound up in our love of family, that it remains the measure of our stability because it measures our sense of loyalty. All other pacts of love or fear derive from it and are modeled upon it. Man needs all three of his swaddling bands. His greatest joys and the triumphs of his selflessness come from them. Their purpose is the same as the chrysalis of the butterfly, to protect him while he is a worm; on the other hand, what will give our communion somberness is the fact that each of the swaddling bands in turn is apt to try to keep him a worm by making him live solely for its own purposes. To strip a man of all loyalties but those to the state, makes him not only a worm but a monster, without a shred of humanity. We knew it before the Nuremberg trials.

Free people make the only milieu possible in society for the full gift of one's self to church, state, and family. Free people enjoy and sustain and feel with one another because they live for one another. The paths of life are intermingled lives. It is true that no family or state or church can be sound and healthy unless people do live so, but it is a fantastic kind of reasoning to argue that the purpose behind such natural living is to make a personal contribution to the welfare of any one of the triple strands of society. We do not have our multifarious experiences with one another because we bear the state

forever in mind. The state is incidental and external. "What is good for the bee is good for the hive." *

Dear Bishop, we are in communion about man and his loyalties and disloyalties. We are in communion about the saying of our Lord that whoever does the will of our Heavenly Father, the same is my mother and father and brother—that is, is my family, my state, my church. And what you have given us in the *Confessions* is the story of a man occupied with this three-fold problem, even if not aware of it as life's very warp and woof. My letter deals with this central theme in your life and in ours today.

Even though the world for all I know may be on the brink of destruction, I praise your *Confessions*. The first book of its kind, it remains the most valuable, from beginning to end an account of your search for innocence. It deals with the motives men must deal with. It shows you trying to adjust yourself to all phases of life, in a veritable epic of self-shaping, of self-examination. You go too far in your morbid self-analysis, but you lived before our psychology and our natural history were well enough known to keep us steady. Still, the words of Paul in fourteenth Romans could honestly be written on the first page of the story of your search for innocence—"Happy

* *Cf.* Report to the International Congress on Mental Health; Autonomous Groups Bulletin, 1948: *The Individual and Society.*

is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Stendhal remarked that a masterpiece is only a looking glass dawdling along the road. While we see ourselves more and more faintly in many masterpieces, no Western man, surely, can say that in your story he does not see much, too much, of his own. No modern Western man, at least; in self-analysis and preoccupation with the ego you were the first of us. You led the grand parade of the introspective intellectuals, determined to come to terms with yourself, with those who lived life with you, with the Life that lives all.

And life was nightmare then, not only for introspective intellectuals; the inroads of the barbarians meant slaughter by sword, hunger, and thirst. Our life too is nightmare. Your world was swirling underfoot. So is ours today. Your world was changing into something undreamt of, terrible. So may ours be today. In writing the *Confessions* you faced the problem of describing personal relations with the invisible and the visible no one had ever traced in detail. I do not know whether you were the first psychologist. But you were by nature more the thinker than the feeler; more the teacher than the lover; lost primarily in yourself, not in others. Thus many of us cannot look at your portrait today without catching glimpses of ourselves.

At the end of the fourth century your Roman

world is disorganized. Military unpreparedness is a scandal, government inefficient and stumbling, taxation oppressive. Good citizens are few and far between. The city of Rome itself loses its political importance; Constantine transfers the seat of empire to Constantinople. But the deterioration of politics had not as yet affected intellectual life. Men are still thinking, are still free to think, as in certain countries they are today. You, a young Carthaginian Roman, consider the general predicament and like your fellows are at a loss to know what to do with yourself. You can see that the empire is past saving and the future lies with the Church. So, finding your life ashen before your thirty-first year, you allow yourself to be swept into its rising current and you are to become its ablest formulator of doctrine. The idea of a universal church fires your Roman mind, and for it you live your life. Your shadow, like that of Achilles across Athens, falls across European history.

Your decisions regarding church and state are clear enough. But in regard to the family you were indecisive, and it is a life-giving matter for us.

A few months after Hiroshima, a friend of mine who had been deeply agitated by the war had a fantastic dream in which she found herself inspecting her brain; it lay before her on a table. The curious little shapes which compose that organ all appeared to

her in good order, except that on one side hung a limp lobe. Looking closely at this lobe she understood that it was the part by which the brain was to grasp the whole world of living people and to think and act in terms of them all. It was waiting, so she felt, to be filled by a suitable activity.

This dream finds no fault with the handiwork of the Creator, but accepts our nature as provisional and makeshift and so obliges us to work on it ourselves. It touches the most sensitive spot in us modern men and women, the spot above all which we try to conceal—our inability to deprive ourselves of the immense satisfaction of hating and to find an equivalent satisfaction in being animated by good will. To grow a lobe of the brain equal to seeing and hearing all over the world, would require aeons. But the dream is too suggestive to be read literally. Since the moment has come to change our ways of thinking, it would be an error to be misled by our inherited Roman tendency to regard organization, size, scope, endless arranging and rearranging of the external aggregates, as of themselves important and so necessarily implied in such a dream. Since man made his brain to help him make himself, as we must conclude from a survey of our natural history, the brain is at home in the service of the individual, that is, of the tiny unit of society. So the suitable activity to bring about a golden age is to take nothing human for granted, and to continue that research of our-

selves which your *Confessions* exemplifies, though often, it seems to me, so strangely, so darkly. It will be to struggle toward the happiness of the man who does not need to condemn himself for the way he lives his life with others and with the Invisible. In reverse of losing itself in the external and the gigantic, the purpose of the limp lobe must be to understand ourselves and others and how it happens that man's history consists of repetitions of his finding that the thing he dreaded most has come upon him.

And those who hold the race back from its spiritual fulfillment are those who will not face themselves and their desires, who are somnambulists in that terrible world where there is no self-scrutiny. We were awe-struck by the destructive action of the energies bound up in the atom exploded above the Japanese city. It passed ordinary comprehension. Yet the explosions in history of a Hitler, a Genghis Khan, are more terrible because they come from the clash of shadows within the human breast. To find out about those shadows is the path of survival for the race. Whatever else we know, we must become aware of the death we carry within us; in that blackness we will find the seed of light. You will understand our need of living in a new world and that it is no easy matter. We may know the roads to take us to it; none of them is easy to follow, and dust storms obliterate them. Yet if a world can be built more satisfactory to the heart, however roughly and even

though cracks let in snow and rain, it will still be a place where people can start living together in a good atmosphere. Many people are beginning to live in it now. To do so before it is completed or roofed requires pioneering. You well know what I am talking about, Bishop; you were a wayfinder. If the new and different world cannot be built, it will only matter to him who has done his best to build it; and he will still exist in the soul of his Maker. One can start living in this new world and at the same time start building it as one human being among many. It is a moment to live together as well as alone, an adventurous moment, a moment for new forms of love. Fortunately, history shows us lives already fitted for the new world. Certain people lived those lives without the scourge of an emergency. To love one's fellows keeps one always in an emergency, and such people could not live cruel lives merely because the people around them lived cruel lives. They were thinking of someone else, not of themselves. They were innocent. They were regarded as fools. It takes all kinds of men to make the complete man. To believe so is to believe in the evolutionary power of man toward freedom.

Rome, then, was whirling underfoot when you lived. That portion of the world ruled by Rome was having a hard time and could look forward to progressively harder times. That portion was to influence us inescapably. Nonetheless, from the fifth

Egyptian dynasty, we are able to know man as an ethical being, and so the Roman episode and its results, though they mold us, can be viewed as a matter of brief centuries, and even our situation today as the situation of a moment.

Men and women wish to create their world; creative people find help in a chart to live by. They may not follow it, but they find help in it. In the void of time and space, against the bright mystery of the universe, it is what we must have. It is what you try to give us. We know that there have been many of these charts through the ages. Scores of generations have found themselves in the greatest difficulties and have tried one chart after another, following one leader after another. But it has come to pass that the chart you left us is still to a great extent the chart we in the Occident are living by. It is based on the religion of our Lord. You organized his religion both as Roman and individual; you added things to it, you took things away from it. Above all, you left us the image of your own desperate search for the right relation to the Invisible. You have been a singularly influential filter through which Christianity has come down to us. I mean filter in the sense of a screen which does not allow all the light to come through.

I am no theologian. I am a layman. I am among those who are preached to, and who listen. It is not for me to preach. I should not willingly forego

being a listener, a man who reads the Gospels and then listens to what others say that our Lord meant. But sometimes a listener speaks out, and listens to his own voice.

In the Gospels what our Lord taught us, I believe, is that God is love, that a man who wishes to be in the spirit of the Almighty may not act or think otherwise than in love. From his words he wished us to free ourselves from the world. But it seems plain that he did not wish us to free ourselves in the sense of forsaking it. It is the singularity of his religion, this compassion for the world. He wished us to be free of that labyrinth of selfishness and blindness we call the world, yet only so that we might live in the tangles of it, unentangled ourselves. What our work was to be he made clear enough, in his sayings and parables. It was an attitude toward our brothers and sisters. I am speaking out, you see. I am a Christian layman summarizing *his* Christianity. I am not trying to summarize Christianity. I am bringing up certain aspects of it, in fact only two aspects, which I feel a great need of bringing up.

We first see our Lord at a marriage feast, where he increased and improved the festival wine. Our Lord had the red blood of our life in him, and his blood troubled his rational mind with the great problem—how to preserve the goodness of living, and cast out the ugliness and cruelty. His answer was not union with the physical life of the tribe,

but union in a spiritual community; rebirth not into the joy of unashamed naturalness, but into a feeling of relatedness which could go as far as individual capacity.

It is entirely possible to regard this religion as one of joy. It is the first aspect of our Lord which I feel I must bring into our communion. You did not find it so, but Paul and Francis did, and countless others have so experienced it. Let me imagine the ceremonies primitive peoples elaborate with such care to produce the feeling among themselves of the oneness of man and nature. I am thinking particularly of Youth Bloom, occurring when boys and girls are becoming men and women. Wherever we note them, the rites are intended to welcome the novices at living into participation in the joys and griefs of tribal life. These scenes are filled with a mystical joy. The difference between that joy and the joy of our Lord lies in his desire to keep this joy constant among people, and not a fleeting sensation which has to be induced and arranged for. He wished the feeling of our oneness, a mystical feeling, to be with us always, part of the mind's life and the heart's. Surely I am not wrong. It seems to me as clear as day. He saw that only with some trace in us always of the festivals of oneness could our separateness be a good thing for us. And his moments of coldness, brusqueness, and anger occurred on the occasions when the primal sanctities were defiled. But he

knew too, as vividly as one could know it, that only the spirit of right living among one another could produce for man the world in which the miracle of oneness could become constant. What he said and did, in the records we have of him, amounted to no hard-and-fast rules, but one suggestion after another to prevent our fossilizing into departments, classes, individuals. These suggestions were simple but titanic, and bear upon the spiritual evolution of the race. The best formula is to see our Lord with the future of man in mind, forgetting what is contradictory in the Gospels and what has become parochial. Thus we shall keep the warm attention of true believers in other world religions who are interested and concerned in the future of everyone. And as a layman I long for such a reconciliation.

Any true believer will be making of what he believes his own personal religion, but that personal religion will most certainly contain universal elements; and it is only right, for a Christian, to center his thought on what bears on the measure of Man and declare what is universal in our faith, as did our Lord when he transformed the racial religion of a small nation into a faith for all. For example, what could be more vital than his answer to the question, who is my neighbor? With whom am I truly in community? This second aspect of our Lord's teaching I feel so deeply about, that I bring it up with you.

In this parable the priest and the Levite pass by the

man who had fallen among thieves. Without question they noticed him lying there, but their feelings took familiar patterns. They did not dare stop to help him for fear the robbers were using him as bait and waited behind the rocks to fall on anyone who came to his rescue. Or perhaps they were finicky about the human body, having highfalutin notions of the soul, and did not like to touch the bleeding and misshapen thing lying by the road. Yet they knew that this calamity might have happened to them, and the thought outraged them, and they felt they wanted to do something about it. There should be a law forbidding robbery, or a religious movement against it, with evangelists and publicity. When they got to the next town, they would send back the police and the ambulance. They would go to see the mayor, and the priest, and the chief of police.

The priest and the Levite were conscious of the man's plight, at least I hope so, but they did not feel free to assist him. They are of his own nation and class, and in that sense of his own community. But the Good Samaritan, a man of a different nation, stops and puts the victim on his donkey, walks beside him slowly to the next inn, explains to the innkeeper what has happened, takes out his wallet and leaves money for the man's care and lodging. The outsider is to our Lord the real neighbor of the sufferer. This definition does away with human sympathies not of a practical nature. The important thing

becomes the direct response of one person to another. It is as though a sudden silence had filled the being of the Samaritan, in which all he heard was the beating heart of another. All the thoughts that could pass through the mind of the Levite and the priest were pressed back, out of the focus of this silence; the world of the Samaritan's business affairs and the reason for his journey and the world of business men, of Herod, of Pilate, of Sadducee and Pharisee, were temporarily suspended, the strange and beautiful silence enveloped and throttled them, and in those heartbeats he knew with a deep instinctive knowing that he would find his own in another's good. It was a thought, nothing conscious; it was the law of human life exulting in him, the feeling of freedom to help, the certainty of the worth of the human spirit and of the defense of it. The sharing of money is important as evidence of this response, but it is the gift of one's self out of love that is the core of the tale. When individual fear or apathy passes by the unfortunate, life is of no account. When a religion withdraws from the world and leaves the unfortunate on the wheel of chance, life is of no account. When a nation forbids its citizens to offer charity, and undertakes to handle human misery scientifically through its organizations, life is of no account. The leap of heart to heart results in no kindly action. The fundamental tension of communal life is nullified.

The Good Samaritan is a free man. He may feel free to act because nothing in his understanding of his religion or his patriotism or his family relations contradicts the impulse, but he acts so spontaneously that he has no interest in considering whether the members of his church, or of his party, or of his family or familiar group would approve of his acting. That is why he is a free man. He has no fear of his personal safety, of ostracism, of informers, of being cut off by his seniors without a penny. He may feel that those who love him and whom he loves would be glad to have him act in fulfillment of his nature, but he would act even without such knowledge. He knows without thinking about it that spontaneous action is the only way to perpetuate freedom of heart and judgment. His figure is symbolic enough to cover any situation. He is the man who knows when a lonely neighbor finds life purposeless and in the depths of his despair plans to go down to the drugstore for some arsenic. And he knows what will be better for that lonely neighbor than arsenic. It is easy to think of instance after instance in which the Good Samaritan helps another, and certain of these instances will be of a delicate and difficult nature. For his figure covers the phases of our human relationships. And that is why the religion of our Lord has endless possibilities for free men and women. Each of us is a being in himself and a being in society, each of us needs to understand himself

and understand others, take care of others and be taken care of himself.

It is extraordinary, this religion, like our Lord himself, full of intellectual and emotional attractions, and leading forward into every conceivable good direction.

But I also know that the light of this religion had begun to dim even before your time. I know too that from one age to another, individuals have arisen who undertook to make it glow again, as did St. Francis in the twelfth century. The face of the Lord is continually being obscured, and each time only a man of action or a woman of action, that is, an individual human being, has been able to remove the veils from its meaning.

It is inevitable that we are all screens for the wisdom of our Lord. When people discuss religion, it is a pity that they often become excited and argue. We should merely listen, as one does on a dark night; we should merely gaze at the stars. The history of religions is a grisly affair in the West, because we have not listened and gazed enough. A friend of mine has just died, and I was mildly surprised to hear that he belonged to a church, for I never heard him say anything about religion. He merely lived it; he was a good man.

You were a Roman, Augustine, and the religion of Jesus which had come out of the Law and the prophets of an oriental people had to pass through your

Roman mind, that is, through a mind preoccupied with temporal authority, centralized government, the organization of society, the administration of justice, the problems of the provinces, the rights of Roman citizens. In the fourth century, because the greatness of Rome had passed away, the Roman soul was perplexed by the frustration of these urges especially dear to it. The astonishing growth of the Christian religion and the adherence to it of upper-class Romans made it appear that order might be restored to the disintegrating world through church organization and law. To the Roman, order had to come first; and whether you yourself, Augustine, were Roman in blood or not, you were a Roman citizen and a Roman in culture. You admire Cicero, in whom these Roman characteristics had reached a remarkable point.

Religion among the Jews was one thing; among the Romans another. Jewish religion did not become involved in ideas of the next world; its eyes were fixed on the Here and Now, and thus on the problems of social behavior. In times of national disaster the prophets looked for the causes not in the strength of rival nations, but in their own racial failure as a people to keep alive in the heart the dream of human community. So the Jews searched one particular problem, the moral basis of our life together as brothers and sisters. Their realism makes them great. To them right living was never an abstract ideal; it

was the only practical framework for our fruition. Jesus was the culmination of this longing for social righteousness; in him the religion of his race became universal in its scope and possibilities. For in him the beautiful ways of living together were carefully separated from the ugly ways and placed within the reach of everyone, despite race, color, class.

History records in a sufficiently ample manner what happened to the religion of our Lord in passing through the Roman kind of understanding on its way north and west. It was certainly to be expected.

But what you understood above all else in the message was the need of the change in each of us, to fit a world of good will. It was the strongest beam of the light that came through you. It was easy for Paul, of the same race as Jesus, to understand the kind of life our Lord was talking about. Furthermore, Paul had seen the stoning of Stephen. Stephen had antagonized the Jewish conservatives by believing and preaching as had our Lord that the spirit of the Most High could dwell in the breast of man independent of any outward temple. In this way our Lord had weakened the power of outward groups over the personal vision of truth. This was an attitude even harder for a Roman to understand than a Jew, because it limited national authority. Paul was touched to the quick by the brutal murder of Stephen and there followed his conversion to the religion of our Lord and Stephen.

Paul faced a great problem in wishing to perpetuate our Lord's teaching. For that teaching was the communicating of a spirit, not an organized body of doctrine to be put into the safekeeping of an institution. Paul was naturally afraid it would blow away with the winds. He wanted to save it because it was so wonderful. He began the organizing of little groups of people who would preserve it. This meant that he tried to organize what was unorganizable. But what else was there to do? So he filtered a good deal out of the religion of our Lord, and he contributed much of himself, some of it astonishingly beautiful, some of it personal with the mutilations of his personality. You were like Paul in both respects; you contributed beauty, contributed personal deformity. The beauty and the deformity of you and Paul added to the message fused in later Christianity. It was a misfortune, but it might have been a great deal worse, and it is imperative to say so. The edifice you built stood, and had terrible storms to endure. It stood, and it held within it for us the words of our Lord. By standing, it permitted the ideal of spiritual freedom to go before us like a star. As a result, it has finally come to pass that each of us is as free as you were, Augustine, or as Paul, or as Stephen, or John, to re-filter his message, to interpret him anew, to keep alive human answers to him.

If the religion of our Lord had passed to the Chinese instead of to the Romans and the Greeks, it

would doubtless have fused in one way or another with the feeling that the forces of nature are benevolent. The Chinese had had more centuries of civilization than the Greco-Roman-Jewish world, and as a matter of fact they had had religious thinkers nearer in time than was Amos, the first great Jewish prophet, to our Lord, and these teachers had taught many things that our Lord did. Before Mencius (Meng Tsz, 372–289 B.C.) and Meccius (Meh Tsz, second half of fifth century B.C.) swam visions of men united in an ardent love of universal brotherhood. Like modern Christians, they dreamed of the kingdom of Heaven, which human love was to realize on the earth. "Heaven desires that men should love and be of use to one another, and does not wish them to rob one another," says Meccius, in the translation of James Legge. "Heaven loves all without exception and ministers to the needs of all."

These men traveled over the empire, preaching disarmament, friendliness, self-examination. Chwang Tsz tells us that the world was not ready to accept their teaching, but they held to it all the more firmly. Human nature was the same in China as in the West; high and low tried to avoid encountering these pure spirits, and they had to force themselves on people. The weak point of Chinese religious thought, which was as apparent to certain of their most fascinating thinkers, like Lao-Tse, as it is to us, was the assumption that in the workings of nature we may find a

love such as men need. So one speculates on what might have happened if the religion of our Lord had gone to China in the first place. Our Lord was under no illusion that a living, ethical religion can come from a knowledge of nature. In nature as in ourselves we find much that is evil. We find in ourselves a great contrast between God and the world. The religion of our Lord takes account of this contrast, and it might have offered to Chinese religious thought a solution of its problem.

But Christianity did not go to China. The Jewish conservatives rejected our Lord as just another rabbi, just another radical; but there were Jews like Paul who saw what his religion implied. They devoted themselves to it, and it went to the peripheries of the Mediterranean world. It gradually assumed the shape of two churches, and for a long time men hoped that the differences between the Greek and Roman cultures might be overcome, and that a single church might inherit the result. It could not in the nature of things come to pass.

And so the teaching of the Galilean has been preserved for us in the edifices of these two mighty churches, enfolding Europe like a pair of arms. Whatever the history of the two churches, whatever it had to be for their survival, they guarded for us the Gospels. Striking differences appear between the churches. In the West, from the beginning, the laity wished the priesthood to be unmarried, and after

some centuries the church made celibacy a rule. It naturally followed that the priesthood has often seemed to be an army militant in the service of the hierarchy. And thus the Western church has been an entity distinct from the family. It has also been from the first on its guard to keep independent of the state. Popes have tried to control emperors, emperors have tried to control popes; the friction so set up between church and state has been remarkably life-giving to the West, breeding strong men. To the Eastern Orthodox church, celibacy was not a matter of first importance; the priests were free to marry, and so to enter communal life. The Protestant churches which followed the Reformation have all, I think, agreed with the Greek church in feeling that a minister of God might well become a husband and a father. Nor have the boundaries between church and state remained distinct; as the church spread north through the Balkans, the respective nations took over religion as a department to be administered by the state. This blurred the natural entity of each, and it does not seem as though either had profited in social vision because of it. The Eastern church has apparently done little down the centuries to bring about a better life for men on earth through alleviating misery and combating ignorance. It was in the hands of the masters, and the masters generally have less of the milk of human kindness than their servants. And the Eastern church has had no taste

for efficient and widespread organization; it has not been strong with the iron strength of cohorts, like its brother in the West. The Western church actually continued the domain of the Roman Empire, and enlarged it, through its organizing genius. For centuries the portion of the world its influence dominated has seen a remarkable unfolding of human nature. This unfolding has been cankered by a lack of brotherly love and thus too much of its history is exploitation and rivalry. Yet it has always produced great souls who were moved to their depths by the parable of the Good Samaritan, who lived their lives driving home to men the black guilt of indifference and ill will to others. Nor has the church of the East been without religious leaders able to stir the hearts of men to compassion; the East has had also a Tolstoy, a Dostoevsky, a Chekhov.

Suddenly into the vacuum caused by the lack of creature kindness, there burst thirty-five years ago in Russia, a system of social organization in which goods are held in common, the opposite of the system of private property obtaining in the West. This economic system involved common ownership of the agencies of production, and so far as possible equal distribution of the products of industry. It was an explosion of the first magnitude, and born of world-wide unrest. It is impossible to consider that this cataclysm has nothing to do with that part of our

Lord's message which has appealed least to either East or West.

The East has left the West and gone in an unexplored direction. The West is skeptical of its being a good direction; the West does not believe that the state can ever be as good a Good Samaritan as can the individual. The great religious and political fruit of the West has been the ideal of freedom for the individual conscience. Thus it has been found possible to argue that East and West have each got hold of different parts of the religion of our Lord; that neither takes the whole message, and both misunderstand therefore the part they have hold of. However that may be, and whatever the value of the economic theories on which the U.S.S.R. rests, it is plain that the Russian government is in no way answerable to the Russian people for its conduct and policies. Now, there is nothing about representative government which precludes the dignity of the individual. Representative government is answerable to the people; it is not tyranny, it is not the property of a gang.

The ordinary human being is stripped of his humanity in modern life by being stripped of the sense of loyalty to his particular human relationships, those centering about the family, the community, and religious and cultural association. This can be done in many ways; for example, by cutting down his leisure, or his feeling of financial security. The

question of individual rights has occupied thinkers for several centuries; but the securing of rights for the individual in the complicated world of corporations and trade unions has constantly ended in lessening him and in magnifying the state. It is a scandal in the totalitarian states; but it is a tendency even in free nations, and causes them the gravest concern. If the French Revolution showed anything, it was that the state is an entity which cannot absorb many of the loyalties needed for human sanity, and that the obliteration of compatible groups intermediate to individual and state makes a wasteland of society. When the state overgrazes the human pasture, the pasture turns into desert, eroded and barren. There may be, of course, a period of successful robotism. The state may increase its police power, it may allow the police to proliferate into thousands of spies, it may redistribute wealth and, by confiscating sources of production, secure economic relief; "but it cannot in itself be a substitute for that sense of belongingness which is the basis of social order." *

The family, the community, the religious group, above all the milieu of spontaneous friendliness, afford the individual realities of relation which develop

* Robert A. Nisbet, "The French Revolution and Rise of Sociology in France," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLIX, 1943. See also his "Rousseau and Totalitarianism," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. IV, 1943; and "De Bonald and the Concept of the Social Group," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. V, 1944.

the loyalties needful for his fruition as a person, as well as the controls that go with these loyalties, which keep the social order stable. When the human pastures are thus well grassed, well rooted in the earth, they do not blow away with every wind.

Such is the process of depersonalization against which we are struggling today, dear Bishop. I need not say that while it is the state (and its unresolved relations with racial minorities and corporate groups) which now jeopardizes our spiritual treasure, in the past it has sometimes been the family, and more often the church. Whatever educates us merely for its own use, without regard to us as living beings, whatever takes us for granted, degrades and impoverishes us. It does not matter that we are told it is for our own good.

The most frightening pages of history are those which reveal how easily conditions making a desert of the human spirit may come into existence, with the oozings away of incentive and kindliness in our natural social structure. I have dealt in big panoramas, for the modern mind is in love with bigness, scope, surveys of historic cause and effect. One might think that great organizations and great movements are the factors of the problem of good will with which we must deal. But such thinking can have no basis in reason. You were born, Augustine, long before your mind could be furnished suitable activi-

ties by your environment. I hazard this remark, which I could not prove, because we are talking personally. I am talking to you, to no one else. That magnificent mind of yours was slowly stripped of objective powers by the habit of introspection. Today, I have an idea that you might have been a pioneer in this unknown and all-important land; you were always on the fringes of it.

The greatest effects come from the smallest causes, and not only in physics, not only in psychological research. Luther tells us, "When a fellow monk one day repeated the words of the creed: 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' I saw the Scripture in an extremely new light; and straightaway I felt as if I were born anew. It was as if I had found the door of paradise thrown wide open." Things like that are always happening to people. There are words of Scripture like the insistence of Jesus that we are members of one body, which most of us hear and hear and yet never actually hear, since we do not hear them in our depths. And what could be more trivial than to hear at last a few words one has heard daily for years, without paying the slightest attention to them?

Yes, it is only little things that matter. If we change our point of view we understand it. Every time we change our scale of observation, we encounter new phenomena. At bottom the story may be the same but everyone who tells it, tells it differently. It de-

pends on what we keep referring it to. In dealing with the story of man we must ultimately refer everything to his spirit; his life is spirit. What spirit may mean I cannot define. Neither can anybody else. But choosing as the point from which to see people, that particular view in which the only significant events are those of "spirit," we leave all vast theories like the economic or cultural interpretations of our history and enter the realm of the very small. All this conjuring up of the centuries and the growth in them of the Eastern and the Western church is only a preliminary to entering through the recital a door like the fabulous door in the mountainside into a very different world, where David becomes Goliath and Goliath David.

Big things can matter only if they gain their reality from little things, which are the realm of one's own loyalties and betrayals. A man's motive in the small actions of daily life, like resting a moment on his pitchfork in the sun and listening intently, may be the most important thing about that man. I know well enough that you were the greatest individual in the early centuries of Christianity, the man with the most universal nature, and that in itself would be good reason to call you back. But a better reason to me is this book you wrote of your ideas and feelings about little things; so honest were you, so intelligent, such a future-carrying individual, that you knew the recital of one's own story could only con-

sist of his ideas about little things. So, let us talk. Let us talk of some of the ideas you confide to posterity, about babies and nurses, for example, and school days and teachers, and stealing pears, the distinction you made between your physical body and your soul, and what you thought of mothers and fathers, and of becoming a father yourself, and of Patrick's borrowing money for you to finish school, and of your mother's ambition for you, and of your wanting to retreat from the world with a congenial group, and so forth and so on—all trivial matters one might think, yet living, always recurring, the highway of man's life, where a slip may prove more fatal to the race than a holocaust.

I

"You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You."
—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 1 *

ONE never forgets this sentence, which opens your *Confessions*. It is piercing, unforgettable, and one of the pair of such sentences we know you by.

* I have on my desk three different translations of Augustine's *Confessions*, translated by E. B. Pusey, I. G. Pilkington, and F. J. Sheed. I have known the Pusey translation since my college days, and Pilkington's has also been useful, since it has an index. Mr. Sheed's translation is a recent one, and is much more readable than the other two. I had shaped my quotations from the first two translations before a friend sent me the Sheed translation, but I have followed Mr. Sheed in one respect. To quote him, "The use of *Thou* or *You* in speaking to God presented a real problem. St. Augustine of course knew nothing of *Thou* as a

It is the quietest dusk imaginable. I have been standing by my back door looking out into the garden, watching the long pods of the trumpet hanging from the stiff curves of that vine, with snow underneath through which stick the tops of yellow grasses. The snow has been falling in fine flakes all day, and now the landscape—my little part of the landscape—is half hidden by a white mist. My garden is a place so small as to be hardly worth speaking of, on a planet called Earth, so small too in the great cosmos as to be hardly worth speaking of. Tonight in the snow-mist and the silence, this little part of Earth's body is beautiful. And for the time being my garden is safe, even safe for women and children, those beings who shed such light in the air, as Dante says. Suddenly a robin whirs from the trumpet vine. In these borders I see no beasts, hear no padding feet, smell no tarry, foxy, furry smells. Men have inhabited this region too long for the wolf packs to come, even in the hardest winters.

---

term reserved for religious use. He, like any other writer of Latin, used *Tu* when he was talking to one (whether it were God or his mother or his mistress or an opponent in controversy), *Vos* when he was talking to more than one. . . . If *Thou* is used throughout, the effect is quite intolerably archaic and untrue to the extreme modernness of St. Augustine's Latin. I have therefore made a compromise: in passages of straight prayer, I have used *Thou;* but when he addresses God in narrative or discussion, I have used *You.*"

As for myself, I have in fact gone further than Mr. Sheed; I have used *You* throughout whenever Augustine is addressing God. It seems to me less confusing.

I stand at my back door, thinking into the far centuries of human beings who lived with their lives always in their hands. It has not been entirely different in the world of my own days; in many lands, now, this very hour, is the grimness of famine, of homelessness, of civil war.

When I look out into the black night you seem quite near me, Augustine—the sixteen centuries between us are as nothing. The words you addressed to the Great Spirit, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You," I can repeat with a full heart. Thoughtful men of ancient Egypt were mystical, were ethical, could echo your words too, and those men seem fairly near us also, though they lived five thousand years ago. I reach further back, much further, through the Ages of Bronze and Iron, through the New Stone Age, to the imaginative Cro-Magnon people and the pictures and instruments they left behind them in Spanish and French caves 25,000 years ago. I reach further back still, into the Old Stone Age, to the Neanderthal race, who perhaps went into Europe from Egypt forty thousand years ago.

I like to think of the Cro-Magnons. Above my desk hangs the black and white drawing of the tall girl gathering wild honey on a cliff, from the cave at Bicorp; my wife copied it for me from Obermeier's book on fossil man in Spain. I think of the summer day unimaginably long ago that this girl

took her basket and climbed the wall of rock, the bees buzzing angrily about her, as the artist makes quite plain. I wonder about the artist also, and the charming summer memory which came back to him during the long winter, so that he drew it on the wall of his smoky cave.

As far back as I can touch human signs I am at home, for men in the past as now are seeking out beauty and struggling for survival. Would these ancient men understand your saying that the Great Spirit has made us for himself and is the source of all the peace possible to us? I see archaic men trying to anticipate the forces of nature that surround them; and I see too that on their scale of observation these forces must often appear malign, and thus cause terrible growths of superstition in their minds and require the elaborations of magic. Fear stays with us, and still gives birth to the same kind of untrue perceptions. When I wonder about it, I see that they lived their lives in a series of acts calculated to keep them close to the divine as they understood it. Sometimes I go to witness the ceremonial dances of the Pueblo Indians. Archaic civilization has reached a high point among the Indians, and beauty touches their round of placative and adorative acts. But the purpose of all is to keep them safe from transgression against the powers of nature and of their own nature, and safe in the world of included adoration.

I do not know how you came to write your sen-

tence, from which nothing can be taken away, to which nothing added. Was it the pure cry of the heart? Or slowly born, slowly uttered, derived in part from philosophers and poets who had known the same agony as you? Who can tell us now—or where you were when you wrote it, the hour of the day or night that saw created this master-stroke in the description of mankind?

Again I repeat your words, "You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You." It is strange to phrase it, but it seems as though man had this spiritual restlessness deep inside him, like a light, from the very beginning. We see signs of it in the most ancient burials, signs of a broken heart, of tears, of love. So far back as one can go, man is learning to love, is loving to the best of his ability; is holding close and trying to protect what he loves, as though he knows that perfect love casts out fear. Men are seeking rest. They are searching the spirit who has rest for all.

Man has acted as though constantly drawn toward a goal. The reason why one can never forget your sentence is that, no matter where we peer, the words sum up the chief experience of each one of us and the chief experience of all of us.

II

"Let me seek You, Lord, in calling on You, and call on You in believing on You; for You have been preached unto us."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 1

AUGUSTINE, let me put this into my own words, so that I am sure I understand what you are saying. "Let me seek you, Spirit of Love, by summoning you, and summon you by believing in you"—that is it, is it not? It is so very difficult to believe that Love can be the center of our world. The only thing to do is to summon in all thoughtfulness the spirit of good will by believing, yes, actually believing it will show us our true path. Whether to act in love or not to act in love,—so far back as we can trace our history, it has been the central question.

III

"O Lord, my faith calls on You—that faith which You have imparted to me, which You have breathed into me through the incarnation of Your son, through the ministry of Your preacher."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 1

SOMEWHERE in your *Confessions* you have an image of God as a mountain top and Jesus our path to it. But from your words, I do not understand how to follow the path. I know that it is not easy to suggest it. It is anything but easy, even though the figures in the parables, the Good Samaritan, for example, show one the way. You talk a great deal about faith; is faith the same as love? It was not

to Paul. "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love," he says, "it profiteth me nothing." I am like everyone else; I encounter human situations in which I have to be a good deal kinder and wiser about people than I am. Our Lord meant that we have the health and happiness of others in our keeping. He was talking to us as persons, not as institutions; he was concerned for fear we would impoverish our hearts by giving away the welfare of others to the monsters we become when grouped in great masses.

IV

"Tell me, Your suppliant, tell me, O merciful one, Your miserable servant, tell me whether my infancy followed another age of mine which had at that time perished. Was it that age which I spent in my mother's womb? And before that again, O Lord of my joy, was I anywhere or any body? For no one can tell me these things, neither father nor mother, nor the experience of others, nor my own memory. Do You laugh at me for asking such things? I give thanks to You, Lord of heaven and earth, praising You for my first being and infancy of which I remember nothing; for You have granted to man that from others he should come to conclusions about himself, and believe many things concerning himself on the authority of feeble women. . . ."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 6

I AM told that when I was a child, I often inquired (like you) where I was before I was born. I was told, in my mother. Then, where was I before I was in my mother? To this question nobody had the answer; I suspected that nobody knew, and it appalled me. I dreaded what I suppose you dreaded, the possibility that I began by not existing at all, and so for an untold length of time had been of no concern to anyone. For it is the way of children to want to be of concern to others. One begins to grow up only when the welfare of others begins to be one's own concern.

My mother, when she saw that the question of my prenatal whereabouts was a real torment to me, was moved to assure me that I had been with God from the beginning. She gave me an answer from the heart, and it has sufficed. But I share your curiosity as to the source of life. Only, I do not see that it is a religious question. Our Lord undertakes to explain none of the facts of existence. He furnishes no data on the points which occur to the active intellect of a child or an adult. We are surrounded by enigmas, there is little we can understand. He directs our attention to one point, that we should live our life with a heart. He addressed himself to human feeling, not to the scientific mind, and the values of feeling do not change.

V

"The gifts of Your mercy sustained me from the first moment: not that I remember it, but that I have heard tell of it from the parents of my flesh. . . . Thus for my nourishment and delight, I had woman's milk; neither my mother nor my nurses filled their own breasts, but You, through them, gave me the food of infancy according to Your law and that bounty of Yours which underlies everything. By Your gift I desired what You gave me and no more; by Your gift those who nourished me willingly gave me what You had given them. For by instinctive affection, they were anxious to give me what You had supplied them in abundance. In truth, it was good for them that my good should come from them, though indeed it was not from them, but by them; for from You, O Lord, are all good things, and from You is all my safety."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 6

It is one of the treasurable passages in which you express a poet's delight in our unseparate nature and in the natural order of interdependent things. I love it greatly. It is the you I love best, your eye fixed on those moments of beneficent fusion which unite humanity. The lovely words which picture the cluster of life in which the nurse nourishes the child, are also entirely applicable, it seems to me, to that other cluster, from which the child comes, of man and woman nourishing each other, giving each other "what the Creator had supplied in abundance," finding it good that man's good should come from woman, and woman's from man, though as you say, not so much *from* them as *by* them, they being but conduits of the "bounty which underlies everything."

But it is excessively important to have you say here that it is good for us to nourish one another; would that you had always been able to say it and believe it! For the human babe will continue to need protection many years after it is weaned. It will need warmth, shelter, clothing, many forms of forethought. What is sad is that some children are born with bitter handicaps; some lose their mothers at birth, some have no fathers to fend for them, some starve and soon die, some starve and die more slowly and in other ways.

VI

"I myself have seen and known an infant to be jealous though it could not speak. It became pale and cast bitter looks on its foster brother. Who is ignorant of this? . . . And may this be taken for innocence, that when the fountain of milk is flowing fresh and abundant, one who has need should not be allowed to share it, though needing that nourishment to sustain life?"

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 7

But is it not rather obvious that the fight among the sucklings for the breast means that they come into the world hungry, instead of evil?

The kind of nature the babe brings with him from eternity is a leisurely question to cause speculation, but the kind of world we prepare for him, as our Lord says, to come into, is pressing.

VII

". . . for in Your sight there is none pure from sin, not even the infant whose life is but a day upon the earth. *Who is to remind me? Perhaps some tiny child in whom I see what I no longer remember of myself. What were my sins at that age? That I wailed too fiercely for the breast? . . . I do not remember living my infancy . . . reluctant to count it as part of the life I live. It is buried in the darkness of the forgotten as completely as the period earlier still in my mother's womb. But* if I was conceived in iniquity, and in sin my mother nourished me in the womb, *then where, my God, where, O Lord, where or when was I, Your servant, innocent?*"

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 7

Our Lord was born of woman, and called himself the Lamb of God. He said we could not inherit the Kingdom unless we became as little children. He acted as though children were innocent of evil intention. The question you ask of God, wherein were you born innocent, is a question to which our Lord never gave an answer. What you elaborate in your later treatises, that doctrine of predestination to salvation which damns all of us but a favored few, is your own personal solution of a problem that did not interest our Lord.

But to run down the persistence of the murder habit we must begin by entering the nursery. In these amazing pages in which a great mind considers the infant at the breast, you are near the core of what is disturbing us today. Children are born wild, or soon become wild, unless they are trained. The great Comenius, who had an experience of wild children in the Thirty Years' War, said truly that we are not born fully human, and must be trained to become so, as a puppy to become a good dog, or a colt who stays wild till he is broken.

VIII

"*If* I was conceived in iniquity, and in sin my mother nourished me in the womb, *then where, my God, where, O Lord, where or when was I, your servant, innocent?*"

—*Confessions,* Book I, Chapter 7

I AM sure that—no more than I—do you regard as in itself evil that intricate network of thoughts and emotions in man, which insures his racial future on earth, and his endless feelings of relatedness in the present, like the company of continual spring.

But your words are depressing. Even if it is only a way of talking, it is a way I do not care for; when I think of our human nature, I find it inexcusable.

IX

"Still suffer me to speak before Thy mercy—me, 'dust and ashes.'"
—*Confessions,* Book I, Chapter 6

THIS is only one of many passages in which you belittle yourself and human nature. This need of yours of becoming very little distresses me, for today we need badly to find grounds on which we can honestly esteem ourselves. And there is also, dear Bishop, dear friend, a practical objection to it—if we go too far in the direction of self-debasement, the pendulum swings back too far in the direction of arrogance. It appears to be a law of the psyche, and we all illustrate it. You yourself furnish us examples

of it; here is one. In *The City of God*,* you are engaged in argument to prove that evil is in man, not in the world. You cite instances of evil and try to explain them. You consider what God's motive might be in permitting each evil to happen; and what one might infer, from a careful compilation of cases, as to his general policy toward us now. When Alaric sacked Rome in 410, the barbarians ravished the Vestal Virgins. You say of the Vestals, "It is possible that, although unconscious of any undue pride on account of that virtuous chastity whereby they sinlessly suffered the violence of their captors, those virgins had yet some lurking infirmity which might have betrayed them into a proud and contemptuous bearing, had they not been subjected to the humiliation that befell them in the taking of the city."

So you feel that God may have permitted their rape to make sure the Vestals remained humble; that he may have seen in their characters tendencies which would lead to false pride. In speaking of the Vestals you assume that God would think as you do. It is what I mean by arrogance; it is the opposite of your many passages of self-debasement. You sometimes quote the words, "God's judgments are unsearchable, his ways past finding out," but I entertain a doubt as to whether you really believe it. Time

* *The City of God*, I–28. Tr. quoted from E. M. Pickman, *The Mind of Latin Christendom*, v. I.

after time you undertake to search his judgments and find them out.

The Vestal Virgins were gentlewomen who symbolized to Rome the sacredness of hearth and home, and the flow of clear, unpolluted water. They were the heart of what good citizens would wish to protect. We cannot today look for possible seeds in them of haughtiness to account for their suffering, any more than we would believe that a friend dying of cancer was being punished for his sins. Instead, we look at the citizens of Rome and ask ourselves what was the matter with them, not to protect their Vestals; we look at the whole structure of Roman government, to see why that city lacked virility to hold off its enemies. The record of what caused the gradual rotting of Rome is there to study, a mass of observable facts and ascertainable data. I am bothered at your quickness to turn away from these earthly matters for a flight through the empyrean.

My friend Jens Jensen, who is an ornithologist, tells me that when he was a boy in Denmark he caught a big carp embedded in which, across the spinal vertebrae, were the talons of an osprey. Apparently years before, the fish hawk had dived for its prey, but had misjudged its size. The carp was too heavy for it to lift up out of the water, and so after a struggle the bird of prey was pulled under and drowned. The fish then lived as best it could with

the great bird clamped to it, till time disintegrated the carcass, and freed it, all but the bony structure of the talon. There are deeds and ways of talking that do not mean good for everybody, as the sun, the wind, the rain, and loyalty do; and who of us, without good will, can avoid such deeds and ways. It was so in Rome, and it is so today. I feel like the carp with the talons of an old, predatory but disintegrating idea in my spine, that we must put ourselves, our race and color, our social and financial class first.

Later in the *Confessions* you tell us that Ambrose advised you to study the prophecies of Isaiah and that you replied you could not understand them. It is a pity, for Isaiah saw the Great Spirit as mother as well as father, and interprets that spirit thus—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so I comfort you." (66:13). But I think particularly of Isaiah's words to the Jews on one of those occasions when they attempted to avoid reality by an orgy of fasting. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? [saith the Lord.] A day for a man to afflict his soul? . . . Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" (58:5, 6). Thus, religious thinkers had tried to bring measure into self-debasement long before you were born. They had looked into it and found

it unacceptable to the Lord when the natural impulse behind it did not end in practical ethics.

Unreal self-debasement is a most difficult thing for our churches today to fight. But they are fighting it. Certainly some of them are fighting it, are trying to make people see that the Great Spirit is not an oriental tyrant, but a reality to be known "as the acorn knows the oak with its crown of leaves." * That He is the kind of reality to whom "all the prostrations in the world are not worth the beautiful upright attitude of a free man as he kneels." †

Of course, behind the dark religious phraseology in which you dress your dissatisfaction with yourself, is the fact that you sought to show men how their very mistakes can be used to advance them on their way. But it is odd what a singular color you gave the experience. In varying degrees, but to an astonishing extent, this singular color, a gloomy one indeed as compared to the air of our Lord, or of Paul or Francis, has pervaded the religious West ever since, and only powerful natures have been able to strip themselves of it and go naked into the life of the spirit. That the temperament of one man was able so to change the atmosphere created by the words of Jesus and of Paul, that they seem to come down to us through him only, is one of the enigmas of Christian history.

* Peggy Pond Church, Christmas poem, 1948.

† Charles Péguy, *Basic Verities*, rendered into English by Ann and Julian Green, New York, 1943.

X

"You, O Lord my God, gave me in my infancy life and a body; and You supplied my body with senses, fitted it with limbs, gave it shape and proportion, and for its general well-being and security implanted in it all the instincts of a living being. . . .

"There is a desirableness in all beautiful bodies, and in gold, and silver, and all things; and in bodily contact sympathy is powerful, and each other sense hath his proper adaptation of body. Worldly honor hath also its glory, and the power of command, and of overcoming . . . and yet to acquire all these, we must not depart from You, O Lord, nor deviate from Your law. The life which we live here hath also its peculiar attractiveness, through a certain measure of comeliness of its own, and harmony with all things here below. The friendships of men also are endeared by a sweet bond, in the

oneness of many souls. On account of all these, and such as these, is sin committed; while through an inordinate preference for these goods of a lower kind, the better and higher are neglected—even You, our Lord God, Your truth, and Your law. For these meaner things have their delights, but not like unto my God, Who hath created all things; for in Him doth the righteous delight, and He is the sweetness of the upright in heart.

—*Confessions*, Book II, Chapter 5

I FIND in you a man simple as a child, who loves the world for what it is. You accept your body, your senses, your instincts; you see the comeliness of others, feel bodily sympathy with them. You feel the charm of social life, are friendly and taste the sweetness of friendship. Above all, you perceive that these are God's gifts to us; we may have them, we may flourish in a marvelous world, if only we remain human, become more and more human.

You are more than a man of letters, or pamphleteer, or advocate, or judge advocate; you are a poet. Courtesy costs nothing; sympathy is better than detachment. You reveal an aspect of your nature which draws me to you and disarms me—an aspect of which

I need not beware when I find it in myself or in others. It implies no "inordinate preferences" for the world's goods, but rather a passion for justice, a sense of guilt nothing can assuage till all of us treat one another in *human* fashion. I am sure it is what you mean by saying that to have all the good things of life "we must not depart from you, O Lord." I put it into my own words to understand it better. *Human* is a word we use today for the attitudes of mind and heart we consider best. When we say, for example, "It was not a human thing to do," we stamp an action as cruel, thoughtless, damaging for our future together. When we speak of a person as "really human," we mean that the spirit of that person saves the finest elements of life. But your admonition that "We must not depart from you, O Lord," may have two meanings—one lighted by the light of the spirit; the other relying on the apparent meaning of words uttered a long time ago in a different country and a different language, and needing to be blown into flame again so that religion may not die of obscurity or of a painful literalness. We should not need to keep re-examining the law and the prophets in the light of this or that personal or impersonal disaster; what our religion requires of us is constant good will directed by thoughtfulness.

I am repeating your words: "You, O Lord my God, gave me in my infancy life and a body; and you

supplied my body with senses, fitted it with limbs, gave it shape and proportion, and for its general well-being and security implanted in it all the instincts of a living being. . . ."

What you say does not have the ring of the Old Testament writers, or of the great Latin writers, either, unless the spirit of Plato had touched them. I remember with what awe I first read the spacious and reassuring passage in Jowett's translation of the *Symposium* which begins, "He who would proceed aright . . . should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then, if beauty of form is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same!"

I have said that we are hard-pressed today, as you were. The spirit in our breast is constantly humiliated by the terrible times in which we live. We have suffered shocks we never thought possible, like the horrors of the German prison camps. The worst possible shock is to lose faith in man's essential goodness, and some of us have lost this faith. And yet for every horror, even in those very prison camps, there was its opposite in courage and in faith.

This constant faith in what is permanent, in what

is shifting, lies at the heart of Plato and at your heart in the *Confessions*. We all respond to it; it has its place in our spirit. Maybe our deepest fight is to prevent our age from turning this inward place into a desert of sand. We are driven back upon one another, to find corroborating sanity and encouragement.

Had you read Plato, Bishop? At least you had read "certain books of the Platonists translated from Greek into Latin." You tell us so in the seventh book of the *Confessions*. You add that, although you did not find in them the meaning of the Gospels, they did admonish you to search for invisible Truth. In spite of "the darkness of your mind" you caught a glimpse of the unseen things of the Creator and of how they are to be recognized in his invisible handiwork. No one who read sensitively in your time, or reads so in ours, but must feel, when it approaches, the presence of Plato. For many centuries Plato has been approaching the minds of educated men like a mild light, with power to illumine things over a far radius. The lost book of Cicero's which you so much admired, the *Hortensius*, may well have been modeled, in one fashion or another, on Plato; for Cicero had seized a moment when it was well for him to leave Rome, to go to Athens for resident study.

The passage I quote is not the only Platonic passage in your *Confessions*. There are many of them;

they came from your hand when you had been for ten years a Christian. You did not find the spirit of Plato incompatible with the spirit of Christianity. That you did not was a fortunate thing. In the Dark Ages after you, over which you had such great influence, the Platonic flavor of your pages may well have been the only way Plato himself reached through to the many—reached through and said to them that the supreme Idea is the Idea of the Good, which in the world of Ideas is like the sun in the world of phenomena; and that this supreme Idea is the rational conception of the total cosmic good, exhibited completely in the character of the Absolute, and imperfectly expressed in the laws of nature and in the government and conduct of men. His view of the soul, with its influence on religion and on social theory, is the farthest intellectual thrust toward the measure of man; just as the ethical ideas of our Lord establish for us our farthest targets in the conduct of our lives. The relation of the religion of our Lord to the moral concepts of Plato is too complex for us who have inherited both, to know always which is which; perhaps one might say that our Lord walked into the world of Plato as he walks into everyone's world, and the world of Plato was far better prepared to receive him than are the worlds of most men. You owed your power over man's soul in the Dark Ages in part to your combination of Plato and the Gospels, in occasional passages

such as the one I have quoted. Not all men, and particularly not all gifted and responsive young men shut up in monasteries during the Dark Ages, could respond indefinitely and wholeheartedly, Augustine, to the controversial you, or to the image of you on your knees begging the Great Spirit for grace. There is more to religion. I am thinking of some lines in an anthology of medieval lyrics found in Munich a hundred years ago, which had floated there after the dissolution of a monastery in upper Bavaria. The lyric I am happily thinking of is in the handwriting of the thirteenth century: *

Thou hast been Beauty,
Thou hast been Desire;
Be Love alone.

One of the supplications deepest in our soul is—how can we have the beautiful, the desirable, and have it in a way to build our lives together? For like Thomas Traherne we believe deeply and sometimes express the belief, to the confusion of heretic and orthodox alike, that "It is the glory of God to give all things to us in the best of all possible manners."

* Helen Waddell, *Medieval Latin Lyrics*, New York, 1930.

XI

"There was a pear-tree close to our vineyard, heavily laden with fruit, which was tempting neither for its color nor its flavor. To shake and rob this some of us wanton young fellows went, late one night (having, according to our disgraceful habit, prolonged our games in the street until then), and carried away great loads, not to eat ourselves, but to fling to the very swine, having only eaten some of them; and to do this pleased us all the more because it was not permitted. Behold my heart, O my God; behold my heart, which You had pity upon when in the bottomless pit. Behold, now, let my heart tell You what it was seeking there, that I should be gratuitously wanton, having no inducement to evil but the evil itself. It was foul, and I loved it. I loved to perish. I loved my own

error—not that for which I erred, but the error itself.

"Fair were those yellow pears because they were your creation, You the creator of all, You the good God, my true good. Those pears were pleasant to the sight, but my father had better pears at home, and I took them only for the sake of stealing. Then having plucked them I tossed them away, and if any of their flesh entered my mouth what sweetened it was the sin. . . .

"And You, O Lord, I ask what it was in this theft of mine that caused me such delight; there was no beauty in it, no such beauty as exists in justice and wisdom; nor such as is in the mind, memory, senses, and animal life of man; nor yet such as is the glory and beauty of the stars in their courses—nor indeed that false and shadowy beauty which pertains to deceptive vices. . . .

"As the theft itself was nothing, all the more wretched was I who loved it. Yet by myself alone I would not have done it. I loved, then, in it the companionship of my fellows with whom I did it. I did not, therefore, love the theft alone —yea, rather, it was that alone that I loved, for the companionship was nothing. What is it that hath come into my mind to inquire about, to discuss, and to reflect upon? For had I at that

time loved the pears I stole, and wished to enjoy them, I might have done so alone, if I could have been satisfied with the mere commission of the theft by which my pleasure was secured; nor needed I have provoked that itching of my own passions, by the encouragement of other boys. But as my enjoyment was not in those pears it was in the crime itself, which the company of my fellow-sinners produced. . . .

"By what feelings, then, was I animated? For it was in truth too shameful; and woe was me who did it. But still what was it? 'Who can understand his errors?' We laughed, because our hearts were tickled at the thought of deceiving those who little imagined what we were doing, and would have vehemently disapproved of it. Yet, again, why did I so rejoice in this, that I did not alone? Is it that no one readily laughs alone? No one does readily; but yet sometimes, when men are alone by themselves, nobody being by, a fit of laughter overcomes them when anything very droll presents itself to their senses or mind. Yet alone I would not have done it—alone I could not at all have done it. Behold, my God, the lively recollection of my soul is laid bare before You—alone I had not committed that theft, wherein what I stole pleased me not, but rather the act of stealing; nor to have done it alone would I have liked it so well,

neither would I have done it. O Friendship too unfriendly! you mysterious seducer of the soul, your greediness to do mischief out of mirth and wantonness, your craving for others' loss, without desire for my own profit or revenge; but when they say, 'Let us go, let us do it,' we are ashamed not to be shameless. . . .

"Who can unravel that twisted knottiness? It is foul. I hate to reflect on it. I hate to look on it. But You do I long for, O righteousness and innocency, fair and comely to all virtuous eyes, and of a satisfaction that never palls! With You is perfect rest, and life unchanging. He who enters into You enters into the joy of his Lord, and shall have no fear, and shall do excellently in the most Excellent. . . .
—*Confessions*, Book II, Chapters 4, 6, 8, 9, 10

THOUGH you search to discover what it was that made you take the pears, you do not answer questions the judge of a juvenile court would ask you today if you a delinquent were brought before him for petty larceny. Did the pears belong to a man who had a walled-in orchard? Did this man keep a savage dog; was he perhaps a man of wrath?

You say you had better pears at home; perhaps the spirit of adventure played its part in the incident. If the pears belonged to a poor widow living by the street, without walls or dog, it was a miserable episode, requiring no spirit. Even for a rowdy it requires hardihood to go over a wall and into the unknown. It involves old instincts of attack and hunting, instincts which boyhood often exhibits. In a child every instinct is precious and to be taken into account, or so we feel today, and valuable instincts might first appear in a boy in the guise of stealing. If the instinct is not molded aright it would end, as I say, in gang psychology. Boys must fight and attack and go in for exploits—it is their nature if they are sound. You were a normal boy. To go in for exploits was not foreign to your nature; you admit in so many words that you "hated a way not beset with snares."

Again, who was the leader in the affair—you, or another? The judge of the juvenile court would surely ask this question. Were you the hero of the other boys, or was one of them your hero? From your *Confessions*, hero worship was a constant source of your own growth. After you went to Italy you sought out and admired Ambrose. And then Victorinus—"I was on fire to imitate Victorinus," you say. In regard to the pears you do not talk like a follower. You reproach yourself at such length that you may have been responsible for this irresponsible

action. Yours was a nature for exploits; before your fortieth year, you tackled the biggest tasks in the world, the attempt to bring order out of oneself, to bring order out of society.

But let us speak longer of these golden pears; to agree with you that taking them was not a good idea is far from exhausting the subject. Now for the first time I hear your own voice. Mingled with expressions which are common to Christians of your time, I hear a different voice, I feel a different kind of sensitiveness, and one which moves me deeply. Our communions so far have been needful, but they were the touch and go of two separated points of view. Now, suddenly, I am stabbed to complete awareness of what you are trying to say. In this faltering and bewildered account of a boyish misdeed, a new voice enters the world, a new personality reveals itself. You do not understand just what happened, and you are uneasy about it. You have felt on the horizon of your mind the presence of the horrible. Your sensitiveness contains, foreshadows, our own constant awareness of the sinister presences we must live with today. For what you were feeling and could not articulate, we understand only too well, and to understand we have gone through hell after hell.

You might have seen the owner of the orchard the next morning and let him cane you. I am glad you did not. In this case it is better not to make speedy atonement, but to wrestle with the dark angel.

The theft sounds more like grown-up rowdyism, the way you tell it, than an adolescent episode; and, of course, boys mature early in North Africa. And boys anywhere, after puberty, and before they are accustomed to their new horizon, play irresponsibly with their new strength. You say you were misled by the pleasure of doing things with others. It can be a great and true pleasure, and intoxicate one with joy, even though the joy of it can pass into delirium and madness. We may lose our identity in crowds, become subject to panic fear, or do a violent deed with a mob from which we should shrink back in horror as individuals. To do things with others, to live in a group, became more and more important to you; it becomes more and more important to us today.

The element in the theft of the pears which disturbed you, even if you could not put your finger on it, was your participation in gang psychology. The gang is the group turned predatory and socially irresponsible, with unlimited power for evil. Today, we live in a world in which no danger equals this. A gang is the same as a wolf pack; gang members do not use their energies in friendship with one another, for they do not know what friendship is. If they are united, it is by the common bond of a desire to attack their world. We have seen unbelievable destruction and suffering caused by military gangs with only a

handful of men in them, using as a weapon the millions of their followers.

You begin to sketch the definition of the gang in expressions like these: "O Friendship too unfriendly! . . . your greediness to do mischief out of mirth and wantonness, your craving for others' loss. . . . We are ashamed not to be shameless. . . ." You may ascribe the wrong motives to the gang, but you are within sight of the true state of affairs. You had a great desire for power, yourself, as the members of gangs do; but you wanted power in order to do good, were a group person. There is every reason why the theft of the pears should remain disturbingly in your mind.

The law of the increase of power through group life acts through groups of any kind or size. To do things with others may turn out well or ill; it is like everything else in life. Our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there shall I be also." And it is upon the prayer of united hearts that Christendom is founded. What you remembered was the misuse of group power; and that is the condition we confront today. In our time we have had to fight two great wars against nations led by gangsters. Our veterans' hospitals are filled with young men who were wounded or contracted tropical diseases or lost their minds. We have had another Armistice Day. I should like to tell you how it was observed in my town. A regiment of Coast

Artillery which bore the brunt of much of the worst fighting on Bataan, was made up in part of young men from our vicinity. Today in our tree-filled town plaza eighty of the survivors sat on a reviewing stand and the townspeople filed past them. In this war our soldiers have had a great disinclination to parade, but in any case these boys could not have paraded, for they were under hospital care. So it was we of the town who paraded before them. Forty-five high-school students marched past the reviewing stand carrying forty-five gold stars for the high-school graduates who lost their lives, and at that moment the brass bands started playing, and what brings a lump to one's throat quicker than a brass band when one is pent up with emotion in the face of a universe complex and hard to understand and a great deal bigger than oneself?

These young men, many of whom had first joined the National Guard because others were doing so, had known to the full what it means to go through the Shadow together. Each man has to die alone, but in fighting the criminal and the gangster there is a togetherness to the end. So there in our town plaza, the day clear and a cold wind blowing, the Bataan survivors faced us and we faced them, each of us by himself; and the emotion in our hearts had to do with making a life together, a future together.

And may I tell you another story? Once my wife

was ill, and my four-year-old boy had to be taken to a hospital suddenly. There were no nurses to be had, since it was wartime, and I could not leave my wife alone overnight. I lived in a great city, and great cities uncluster people in many ways and for many reasons. One does not, for example, always feel free to ask others for help. I had friends, but I hesitated to increase the burdens of responsibility they were already bearing. At the moment and under the circumstances I could think of no one to turn to.

I explained the situation to my boy and asked him whether he could manage to stay at the hospital overnight alone. He said he guessed so, and I took him across town on a street car and left him in his room with a toy hook-and-ladder he had been quick to espy in a shop window near by. As I was saying goodbye, he asked me to tell him again how it happened that he had to stay there alone. I went through all the reasons for it once more. He looked at me with his eyes full of trust and with no idea of resisting my wishes. He merely wanted to understand why he had to do something he did not want to do.

There are things we endure alone for the good of all, and things we endure together, such as our human loneliness in the world's dark times. Unless we endure them for love, it never seems easy.

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who has meant much to our generation, says in his posthumous book,

"Though others may deprive you of what you receive, who has the power to deprive you of what you give?" *

* A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*, p. 174, Paris, 1948. (Tr.)

XII

"In boyhood our sole delight is play; and for this we are punished by those whose delight is also play. But elder folks' idleness is called 'business'; that of boys, although really business too, is punished by their seniors; and nobody has pity on either the child or the man. For will anyone of good sense approve of my being whipped for playing ball? The teacher who whipped me did not like it when he lost an argument with a fellow teacher. I have seen him as furious as I was when I lost my ball game to other students. . . .

"But if our play store no honey in the comb —if it drain dry the precious comb of its honey, we are all to be pitied whether we be seven or seventy. . . .

"In this fantastic world of my school days, the only thing that matters is the way one uses

words—my teachers praise me if I speak well, cuff me if I do not. . . .

"Out of their sight I am out of their minds. Then I drift toward my fellows in wild play and the joys called impermissible. . . . Guidance I have in plenty as to how to compose a letter, make a speech, write a poem, deliver an oration, harangue a crowd. All this for show, for earning a living, for the respect of others. . . .

"But what I need to win is my own respect. I would not care to be one of these lawyers who had rather murder an innocent man than the Latin language. . . . For my blood, my ignorant youth, guidance there is none. Why am I tortured, yet ashamed to say I am tortured? Is it only the conjugation of a verb, only the correct balance of two adjectives, which requires teaching? The mingling of words, with all that a deft mind can do to instill in them a strange life, and a disturbing beauty, can never take the place of a heart at peace. . . . Even as a boy at school I knew it."

—*Confessions*, paraphrased
from parts of Book I

I AM condensing certain of your complaints against your schooling. Every intelligence will agree with you: play is the business of the young, and continues to be the business of the child who luckily persists in many adults through later life. When you describe the absurdity of your teachers and their lack of feeling, you describe perfect conditions for learning nothing of value. Yet it is something to learn the conditions which are valueless. Pestalozzi was delighted when a peasant visiting his elementary school exclaimed, "But this is not a school, it is a family."

XIII

". . . to talk and laugh together, to do kind offices by turns; to read together honeyed books; to play the fool or be earnest together; to dissent at times without discontent, as a man might with his own self; and even with the seldomness of these disagreements, to season our more frequent agreements; sometimes to teach, and sometimes learn; to long for the absent with impatience; and welcome their coming with joy. These and the like expressions, proceeding out of the hearts of those that loved and were loved again, by the countenance, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand pleasing gestures, were so much fuel to melt our souls together, and out of many make but one."

—*Confessions*, Book IV, Chapter 8

In this immortal passage you unveil further the nature of your sensitiveness. Let us see what you are doing. What you have in mind is a description of the comforts of friendship in a time of grief. (You had just lost a beloved friend.) But to a modern man it is more exactly a description of a group of young men with friendly feelings toward one another, comrades, or companions. More exactly still, they are free young men, and make a *free group*. You are contrasting them with the little slaves in the classroom, browbeaten by their masters, and more deeply with the gang of hoodlums who stole the golden pears.

In my own student days I have known friendly associations which allow me to respond to the picture you draw. Our later life today does not often furnish the conditions they need for their existence, and it is the cause of most of our trouble. To me nothing is more extraordinary in the whole range of your book than the expression of our value to one another as revealed by word and gesture, by glance and mobility of feature. Here is personal solicitude for our intimates, and the desire to take care of them. Here you are definitely ours today. It is this picture of life flowing from person to person that you describe with your young men. One is accepted as one is. One is free to speak as one pleases. The problems of mental life and conscience are threshed out in discussion. One teaches and one learns. There is no tale-

bearing afterward to the quarters easily alarmed by the appearance of free individuals; I mean, of course, the family, or the police, or the local priest or rich man. Far from such malice, there is only the frankest interest in one another's opinions, only concern to search out the truth. No one enforces his own truth on the rest. No one controls the atmosphere. The expression of opinion does not require adjustment to political, ecclesiastical, business, or traditional points of view. You picture a tolerance with which we are none too familiar. I am fascinated by your words; I read and re-read the passage with joy, gratitude, and a kind of wonder. From now onward your fondness for close association plays a greater and greater part in your existence, and no one perhaps has been the cause of the founding of more brotherhoods and sisterhoods. Later you lose sight inevitably of the need of complete freedom for the mental life of the individual; but here you give us your dream as you first felt it.

It is the fostering and protection of free groups which will save the race. Enlightenment in high places can only entertain the deepest solicitude for the well-being of these health-giving molecules, because it is only through their presence in society that church, state, family, and business can receive the candid appraisal of aim and function which is so necessary for their soundest effort.

A further reflection: you and your friends were

interested in learning, and you learned without teachers. Yet the Manichean philosophy interested you all, and so you had a teaching in the background. Yet it was not what you were studying, but the way you studied it that mattered. Later you rejected entirely the Manichean philosophy, but you did not reject the way you had studied it.

XIV

"And for that year (my sixteenth) my studies were intermitted, while after my return from Madaura (a neighboring city, whither I had begun to go in order to learn grammar and rhetoric), the expenses for a further residence at Carthage were provided for me; and that was rather by the determination than the means of my father, who was but a poor freeman of Thagaste. To whom do I narrate this? Not unto You, my God; but before You unto my own kind, even to that small part of the human race who may chance to light upon these my writings. And to what end? That I and all who read the same may reflect out of what depths we are to cry unto You. For what comes nearer to Your ears than a confessing heart and a life of faith? For who did not extol and praise my father, in that he went even beyond his means

to supply his son with all the necessaries for a far journey for the sake of his studies? For many far richer citizens did not the like for their children. But yet this same father did not trouble himself how I grew toward You, nor how chaste I was, so long as I was skillful in speaking—however barren I was to your tilling, O God, Who are the sole true and good Lord of my heart, which is Your field."

—*Confessions*, Book II, Chapter 3

WHATEVER his morals or his temperament, Patrick was a good father. We know also that he was a tolerant husband, in some respects, for he interposed no bar to your mother's adopting the new Christian religion and later he even accompanied her part way on the course. Thank you for telling us about him; it is very important for us to know that he borrowed money so that you could finish school. A poor man with a gifted son faces many problems. He wanted you to have all the mysterious things which simple people rightly suppose should be hidden in the word education. What he hoped for, naturally, was that you would be able to express yourself publicly, as an advocate, a rhetorician, a public servant. He was a Roman, and these were the ways

of honor and accomplishment. That is, he tried to give you a better life than he had had. If your mother had kept at him to do so, I think you would mention the fact, for you omit nothing you consider to her credit. But you speak of it as his own determination, and contrast him favorably with other fathers. We judge people finally, not by their foibles or weaknesses, but by their helping or hindering man's spiritual evolution. Patrick helped the race by helping his son—the pulse of the blood.

XV

"Being thus modestly and soberly trained, and rather made subject by You to her parents, than by her parents to You, when she had arrived at a marriageable age, she (my mother, Monica) was given to a husband whom she served as her lord. And she busied herself to gain him to You, preaching You unto him by her behavior; by which You made her fair, and reverently amiable, and admirable unto her husband. For she so bore the wronging of her bed as never to have any dissension with her husband on account of it. For she waited for Your mercy upon him, that by believing in You he might become chaste. And besides this, as he was earnest in friendship, so was he violent in anger; but she had learned that an angry husband should not be resisted, neither in deed, nor even in word. But so soon as he was grown calm and

tranquil, and she saw a fitting moment, she would give him a reason for her conduct, should he have been excited without cause. In short, while many matrons, whose husbands were more gentle, carried the marks of blows on their dishonored faces, she would blame their tongues, monishing them gravely, as if in jest: 'That from the hour they heard what are called the matrimonial tablets read to them they should think of them as instruments whereby they were made servants; so, being always mindful of their condition, they ought not to set themselves in opposition to their lords.' And when they, knowing what a furious husband she endured, marveled that it had never been reported, nor appeared by any indication, that Patricius had beaten his wife, or that there had been any domestic strife between them, even for a day, and asked her in confidence the reason for this, she taught them her rule, which I have mentioned above. They who observed it experienced the wisdom of it, and rejoiced; those who observed it not were kept in subjection, and suffered.

"Her mother-in-law, also, being at first prejudiced against her by the whisperings of evil-disposed servants, she so conquered by submission, persevering in it with patience and meekness, that she voluntarily disclosed to her

son the tongues of the meddling servants, by which the domestic peace between herself and her daughter-in-law had been agitated, begging him to punish them for it. When, therefore, he had—in conformity with his mother's wish, and with a view to the discipline of his family, and to ensure the future harmony of its members—corrected them with stripes, she promised a similar reward to any who, to please her, should say anything evil to her of her daughter-in-law. And, none now daring to do so, they lived together with a wonderful sweetness of mutual good will.

"This great gift You bestowed also, my God, my mercy, upon that good handmaid of Yours, out of whose womb You created me, even that, whenever she could, she showed herself a peacemaker between any differing and discordant spirits. . . . Such a one was she—You, her most intimate Instructor, teaching her in the school of her heart. . . ."

—*Confessions,* Book IX, Chapter 9

A GREAT man's account of those dearest and nearest to him indicates his obligations to the people, generally obscure but often fascinating,

who make the nest of affection from which he spreads his wings. I am impressed by the lack of stability of the familiar circle who accompanied you at the beginning of your long life. I mean stability of environment and of income. You mention your mother's mother, but the home of your grandparents played little part in your life. Your mother and father kept moving, like a modern couple. You went to several North African towns for your education, and then went to Rome to earn your living, and thence to Milan. Your mistress and your son accompanied you, if I understand aright the reason for your deceiving your mother at embarking. But your mother soon followed you, and so did Alypius and other students and friends of yours in Africa. You did not grow from family or neighborhood roots. Your life is a parallel to the lives of millions today.

With us the plight of persons displaced by the wars amounts to an emergency at the moment. Scrutiny of history suggests that it has always been as grave a problem as the race knows. Certain phases of it are more dangerous than others. For two centuries we have had to think about families who had been living together in close association with natural things, in small agricultural hamlets, but who were uprooted with the coming of factories and forced to swarm into the factory towns. These living clusters and racemes of people, with all protections of custom and emotional nucleoplasm torn away from

them, have known the ruin of their inmost citadels of safety. Unbridled egotisms sprang up among the powerful, and ambitions of the kind that devastate society. The decay of the Roman Empire and Roman agricultural problems unsolved for centuries produced a somewhat similar situation in your day. Any uprooting means damage which will require a long time to mend; root-death is worse than leaf- or limb-death. Thus there is an intensity in your times like ours today. Destruction walks abroad. Your mother and you are full of fear; your mother rescues herself from it by becoming a Christian. But she has not as yet seen you converted. Ambrose, like your mother, has rescued his spirit from chaotic conditions by the Christian faith, and he is the instrument by whom you are to enter the church also. The docile Alypius will follow you, and become in time a bishop too. But your father and your son are soon to die, and I am sorry that they vanish from your story.

We see these people through your words, and your words are agitated because of your ambition and your intellectual loneliness, so that the human figures shake and tremble as behind a veil. So we see one another today in a world of similar strain and conflict. We read you with ease and sympathy. I am reaching back to your boyhood in North Africa, and to the girlhood of your mother, the boyhood of your father. I am reaching back to the boyhood of Alypius and to the girlhood of her who is to be your

mistress. For these two also were there with you, entering perhaps later this beautiful world, this difficult world, whether it be boy or girl who hears the bells of the caravan as it comes nearer, and who year by year feels the gossamers of reality drawn tighter across the soul, and knows what is to be bound into the web of necessity, caught fast, caught forever in the melange of blood and dream. The little Carthaginian girls and boys, knowing it, knowing it too soon, not knowing how to keep a part of themselves away from it and out of it, and being hurt, and hurting others, and shedding tears at night. And wrapt in their growing up are their elders, children too, the boy rarely becoming differentiated and fully male, the girl rarely woman in her own right, both staying members of the herd—always the circus, with its violence, and shedding of blood, the law courts, the visits of the tax collectors, the legionnaires and the recruiting, the dancing girls, the couches, the baths, the odor of spikenard and myrrh, the taverns, the cool trellis arbors, the great talkers and arguers sitting on the settles, the ships with colored sails coming in at sunset from the sea, and the endless stimulating days of sun—yet these elders holding close the children, wrapping them in the safety of convention, of gesture, of address, trying to keep them on a safe path across the quicksands.

But of Patrick your father we know little except that he helped you, though only a poor freedman;

and that he had certain habits which go with people who would like to be happier than they are. Of your mother we know a good deal. She was better-born than your father, came from a home of some security, had real force of character. She is the dominant person in your story. As a girl she had a way of going down cellar and sampling the wine casks, and much later she was mildly rebuked by Ambrose for tippling as she visited the tombs of the saints, carrying a little basket of food and wine. She appears to have disliked the sordidness of reality. In her last talk with you her thoughts moved easily up into the empyrean. But she was attentive always to the problems of your future and practical in her advice. You have a sense of humor about her; for example, you say somewhere that she had "already fled out of the midst of Babylon—walking, however, somewhat slowly in the suburbs."

You grew up at a time when men were comparatively free, and yet considered that they had little in which to believe, little to which to be loyal, little to rebel against, little to strive for. No one took the empire seriously. Only believers took Christianity seriously. Today we are dominated by our governments to such a point that we cannot put ourselves in your place. The family tie is weak today, but probably no weaker than in your time. Now as then, the presence of a strong nature like Monica in a family makes all the difference. Though you lived under a patriarchy, her force of character allowed

her to rule with a minimum of acquiescence in her husband's superiority at law. We are familiar enough with the Monica type of mother.

In the ominous calm of the time you lived, which as we glance back at history, resembles the eye of a hurricane, half the social damage done, half to follow, Monica's aim was to secure peace of mind for you. She understood quickly what it took you years to understand, that the future of young men lay in the organization of the church. You were close to her by nature, but not too close; you went your own way first and learned for yourself. You ultimately came to agree with her view of the times and fell in line with her ambitions for you.

The coming of the machine age disturbed two elements in society which are as old as our recognizable humanity, and the forerunners of which were in existence no doubt at a subhuman level—the family, and the clusters of families and unattached males who lived together. Thus it disturbed the ties of blood and the ties of compatibility. It entered the life of the private person and gave him repeated wrenchings out of the order he had known from the beginning of things. The owners and capitalists suffered this violence as well as the victims of the new arrangement of society. Their humanity was distorted, for they were alike unclustered, and as a result began to think of themselves as important and isolated. But

man can never be isolated, he is always a part of other lives.

The weakening of the father influence in the family has weakened authority in the world, as in archaic times the weakening of the mother influence weakened the nourishing cohesive impulse. We are becoming more and more aware of it. Nothing makes you seem closer to us than the fact that your father was of less account than your mother. It was a mere matter of chance then, but today it is a more general dislocation. Patriarchy and matriarchy were each imperfect. We must consider the coming of the machine to be another hindrance toward that balance of influence between the sexes, toward which wisdom drives us. Your father's lack of authority resulted in your mother's playing the predominant role in your life. Her dominance, as it happened, even thwarted your own strong impulses toward family life. Your impulse to affectionate intimacy was remarkable. The path to marriage blocked, you threw all your fervor into monastic life.

Since the coming of the factory, the loss of family rootedness has thrown people into associations also with a purpose, generally of self-defense. To head off the greed of employers and shareholders, these associations have played more and more into the hands of government; church and family have been weakened. The rootedness of our life can only be restored through myriad growths of relationship. The

true impoverishment of modern times is the lack of the small forms of friendliness and mutual sustainment and help through compatibility and deep sympathies.

We too live in neurotic times. Naturally, the most vital relation exists between the social order and the mental health of the individual. Stagnation is a terrible thing; the static ends in death. The process of dynamic social order is merely the succession of personal experiences and relationships which accompany mental health. If people are to be human, they must have the chance of feeling with one another, because it is the way of life, and for no political economic or other considerations. Their mutual enjoyment and nourishment of one another contribute to the development of personality and spiritual balance, and so of course to the welfare of society as a whole. Everything good really depends for the individual (and so for society) on his or her satisfaction of the hunger for fulfillment. In the words of Lamennais, "Who says liberty, says association."

From this standpoint your life is of such interest to us that in certain ways we envy you. Though you lived in the eye of a hurricane with the old order gone and the new one not yet apparent, you were free as a wild thing in seeking love, friendship, intellectual companionship. Monica could not see your frequenting of heretics and schismatics as a necessary preliminary to her ambitions for you. She was with-

out intellectual curiosities herself; but you were strong enough to go your own way, and that way led you further afield than you could have gone if born into a tighter set of traditions and obligations. You came to be neurotic, it is true, but that is another matter, the matter of your being stripped of human closeness.

XVI

"Bear with me, my God, while I speak a little of those talents You have bestowed upon me, and on what follies I wasted them. . . . We were compelled . . . to turn that into prose which the poet had said in verse. And his acting was most applauded in whom, according to the reputation of the persons delineated, the passions of anger and sorrow were most strikingly reproduced, and clothed in the most suitable language. But what is it to me, O my true Life, my God, that my declaiming was applauded above that of many who were my contemporaries and fellow students? . . . There is more than one way in which men sacrifice to the fallen angels. . . ."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 17

You regret that you had so much enthusiasm for play-acting, but I can only regret your regret. What better could happen to a self-conscious child than to play the part of another personality with other motives than his own and a different disposition? True, nothing was explained to you of the moral issues brought up by a drama, issues embodied, for example, for the Greeks in their idea of the furies who pursue us when we do wrong.

But children from the beginning pretend they are animals or aborigines or street-car conductors, and this is as it should be. Then when they go to school they can take a further imaginative step, becoming in a drama the deserted, the outcast, the suffering, as well as the more fortunate characters. Best of all, play-acting is a form of play; and play, as you yourself say, is the business of the child.

Winnowing the ashes of your school days, I begin to find the jewels of a true culture, impervious to destruction, the rubies, the beryls; chief among them is poetry. And poetry is an imaginative welcoming, a kind of transformation, even if it cannot be quite an inhabiting. It takes us out of the walls of selfhood. Vergil shows Dido in the eternal light of poetry, looking at her forsaken state through her own eyes. Though he was no Homer, he is centuries nearer the sensibilities of a modern man.

XVII

"But awhile, in that sixteenth year of my age, I resided with my parents, having holiday from school for a time (this idleness being imposed upon me by my parents' necessitous circumstances), the thorns of lust grew rank over my head, and there was no hand to pluck them out. Moreover, when my father, seeing me at the baths, perceived that I was becoming a man, and was stirred with a restless youthfulness, as if from this anticipating future descendants, he told it happily to my mother; rejoicing in that tumult of the senses in which the world so often forgets You, its Creator, and falls in love with Your creature instead of You. . . . But in my mother's breast You had even now begun Your bold habitation, though my father was only a catechumen as yet, and that but recently. She then started up with a pious fear and

trembling; for she feared for us in those crooked ways in which they walk who turn their back to You, and not their face.

"Woe is me! and dare I affirm that You held Your peace, O my God, while I strayed farther from You? Did you then hold Your peace to me? And whose words were they but Yours which by my mother, your faithful handmaid, You poured into my ears, none of which sank into my heart to make me do it? For she despised, and I remember privately warned me, with a great solicitude, 'not to commit fornication; but above all things never to defile another man's wife.' These appeared to me but womanish counsels, which I should blush to obey. But they were Yours, and I knew it not. . . .

"Nor did the mother of my flesh . . . in counseling me to chastity, so bear in mind what she had been told about me by her husband as to restrain in the limits of conjugal affection . . . what she knew to be destructive in the present and dangerous in the future. . . . She was afraid lest a wife should prove a hindrance and a clog to my hopes. . . .

"Oh, for one to have regulated my disorder, and turned to my profit the fleeting beauties of the things around me, and fixed a bound to their sweetness, so that the tides of my youth

might have spent themselves upon the conjugal shore, if so be they could not be tranquilized and satisfied within the object of a family, as Your law appoints, O Lord—who thus forms the offspring of our death, being able also with a tender hand to blunt the thorns which were excluded from Your paradise! . . . Those about me meanwhile took no care to save me from ruin by marriage, their sole care being that I should learn to make a powerful speech, and become a persuasive orator."

—*Confessions*, Book II, Chapters 2 and 3

You tell us elsewhere that you did not like Greek, and you speak of the *Odyssey* in particular. But even if you had been adept at Greek, what could it have been to you that the shipwrecked Ulysses came across the lawns of parsley and violets to the cavern of the nymph Calypso, hidden in the black-colored alders and poplars, and saw the nymph at her loom, before the hearth of fragrant arborvitae and cedar, Calypso herself bright as the golden shuttle she threw; and that he stayed there with her, ascending at night into the high bed and mingling with her, until the gods themselves grew jealous? For at this very time of reading the epics, you were liv-

ing their substance. There are signs of it. For example, you saw your father at the baths and perhaps had a talk with him. (It is plain that Patrick did not need to see you at the baths to know you had reached puberty.) It is also plain that along about this time, a little later, perhaps as much as a year and a half later, you became the father of a son. You do not tell us about it at once.

After talking with you at the baths, the simple and natural man was delighted, and went home and gave your mother to understand that they could expect to be grandparents soon. Monica took a less joyful view of it. No figure from an epic, but fitting well into a parish, Monica could not face the situation and gave advice in sexual matters without deference to the heart. As to marriage, she feared it might be a clog on your future; the family lacked connections of advantage. A marriage with a maiden you had grown intimate with, was to her out of the question. So in your own unruly hot youth you were experiencing and rehearsing, prematurely it is true, and yet with flesh and blood and not in the shadows of your pillow, such intense soul-widening, implacable, and agonizing adventures as those of Aeneas and Ulysses. What was it to you that Ulysses descended into hell, being in hell yourself? Or that he stayed there till he found the path back to the sun? Not until the Ninth Book of the *Confessions*, do you speak of the child born to you in your early youth, the gentle and

soon-to-die Adeodatus. He was then sixteen and you thirty-four, and you were together in Italy, having been converted to Christianity. All of which is different from life in the hexameters, the cause of the difference being chiefly your mother Monica—so potent her shadow as it falls across your pages that you tell us nothing about the girl you loved, her name, where you met her, or how you and she managed when Monica said you could not marry her. You say nothing about the birth of the baby, or about being a father, or about the problems of the situation, or shelter and care; but we are blind and unloving of you if we do not keep them in mind and in imagination live those moments with you, after experiencing which nothing could be the same for you again. For you were no longer detached, but part of a nucleus of life, bound into the lives of others, and the future.

Vergil makes Dido say to Aeneas, when he was about to leave her, "By these my tears I pray you, and by your pledge, by our union, by the nuptial rites we entered on; if I have done you aught of good, if any charm of mine ever gave you pleasure, pity me; and if for prayer there still is room, I beseech you change your purpose." And Aeneas answers, "Cease to excite yourself and me by your complaints; not of my own accord but of my destiny I leave you."

In Vergil's poem, a woman finds the only man she can love. He loves her, but is compelled by the gods,

as he puts it, to fare further. Your destiny, in the person of Monica, ultimately demanded that you should send away your mistress, the mother of your boy. It bears a certain parallel to Vergil's story.

Dido's living needed a brother's life—the life of one brother in particular; and this need was so great her life lost all value without him. A situation in which a human being has no further use for life, and commits suicide, becomes a grave matter if our purpose be to increase the life of the spirit in one another. That spirit can only work through our emotions and the human relations that are their frame. The truthfulness of poetry is that these relations are its fabric; they are also, is it not so, the fabric of the religion of our Lord?

XVIII

"O Lord . . . for Your service be whatever useful thing I learnt as a boy—for Your service what I speak, and write, and count. For when I learned vain things, You did grant me Your discipline; and my sin taking delight in those vanities, You have forgiven me. I learned, indeed, in them many useful words; but these may be learned in things not vain, and that is the safe way for youths to walk in."

—*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 15

AUGUSTINE, we have all gone to school. I agree wholeheartedly in your conclusion about your education—"O Lord, for your service be whatever useful thing I learnt as a boy." True education must be of use to others and ourselves, to the

Great Spirit of Love. We must learn what it is to be real, we must learn that we are free to be real, and for the sake of other people. It is most important to say that personal goodness, reality, morality are for the sake of other people as well as for our own.

We human beings, as we have been forced to conclude, are suspended on a revolving globe we call earth; we are both good and evil, and we have many problems. We have no idea as to how it happens that we are here, on a planet that is part of a universe. We have no idea as to what the universe is, why it is, or where it is. We are spectators of the stars, but can imagine no reason nor excuse for the spectacle or for ourselves. When we think about a Creator creating us and the solar bodies, our minds bog down; why would a Creator do it? Where is this Creator, what is his background, what is his purpose? The more we think of it, the less we like to think of it. Clearly, the process of abstract thought is of no human value here. We need a different instrument.

I am thinking of the letter I've been writing you for ever so long, the man of antiquity of whom I am most mindful, speaking to me always as out of a great silence and leisure, as in a world of white mist, as it happens my world is tonight. I envy you that strange antique leisure (with which probably only time and distance invests you). But you, too, had to go to grammar school!

The history of education is maddening. I feel like

echoing the words of George Bernard Shaw, in the preface to *Misalliance:* "The tears of countless children have fallen unavenged. I will turn them into boiling vitriol and force it into the souls of their screaming oppressors!" Your picture of Roman education in the Punic schools of the third century shows it as one of the oddest systems man has ever devised: the sedulous pursuit of the correct, how to speak, think, and act correctly. No teacher and no study gave you a sense of reality, and a consequent peace of mind. It was not a good school. The attitude to play was wrong. The feeling between teacher and student was wrong. The choice of subjects was one-sided. It is a world in which a boy must know more than how to write a correct letter or make a correct speech or recite Terence tastefully. What you were praised for were the wrong things, the embroideries, the tinsel, of a culture one is tempted to call at first glance rootless.

Yet does not one thing make sense in your instruction? You were taught to use words, to express yourself. Your teachers taught you to communicate whether they taught you anything worth communicating or not. Your point is that your education was not ethical. You were a bright pupil and, after your conversion, you tried to turn your education to ethical use.

Though Christianity could not conquer the Roman Empire, it has made some small progress since

your time in the schooling of our children. The important points are, of course, the preservation of the child's moral freedom and the gifts he was born with.

The path of those who planned the education of little boys and centuries later of little girls, has not been an easy one. The record is full of the cruelest mistakes; childhood has faced one kind of betrayal after another. The first ten centuries of betrayals were a night long and black; but at last came the first signs of dawn. Then in succession arose three men who aimed at that simple human goodness which is the moral principle of life, who derived authority in everything from virtue, who regulated their conduct by benevolence. The distance across the years does not dwarf the stature of Vives, Comenius, or Pestalozzi.*

I should like to tell you first what Comenius means to me, and defer the other two for the moment. A believer in our Lord rather than in the established churches, Comenius knew that the creation of self by self is the triumphant art of life, open to the pursuit of men at all times.

A creative mind, he forgot, forsook, waived, or deferred beliefs and theories that interfere with a

* Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540); Johann Amos Comenius (1592–1670); Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). See *The Development of Modern Education in Theory, Organization and Practice* by Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, New York, 1945.

future of human friendship and understanding. Such men as he hold no theories to which they must fit the observable facts of life. To them, there is a sacredness in the visible. They see the outward and visible clearly before they try to relate it to the invisible which is within it and part of its nature. They wear no blinders.

There is a great composure and the sweetness of health in the views of this heretic to whom we owe more than we can acknowledge. Comenius, the Moravian bishop, leader of a sect being exterminated as harshly as ecclesiastics could exterminate it, walks through the spaces of human thought forever—amiable, winning, his mind clear as clear water.

He called the primary school "a forging place or manufactory of humanity." He was twenty-six at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, that terrible mixture of bigotry and cruelty, so that most of his life was lived in the bloody ambages of it, and he had personally seen and known certain children who in the ravages of it had grown up "wild." He had been with these children, had *experienced* them, as one might experience a disturbance of nature. He knew at first hand what human life would be like if one age did not pass on to the next its knowledge, virtue, loyalties. It was the frightening thing Comenius knew. It is the frightening thing we know today. And so it was that he felt to his deeps that training and cherishing provide the indispensable process by

which the young are made human. "All are born to become man and must therefore be educated"—such are his words. In an age moving toward the most anti-democratic forms of government, he believed that "as far as possible all should be educated together, that they may stimulate and urge on one another." For the right organization of society he used the term, "Christian Republic."

The views of Comenius are excellent for a humanity mammalian by heredity and carrying the secrets of its future in its heart, through the deserts of heartlessness. The wisdom of his Moravian brethren was in him when he opposed a school intended for nobles only. "My whole didactic system forces me to dissent." Admission to a nation's schools should not be reserved only for the children "of nobles, rich men and magistrates." "We wish all men to be trained in all the virtues . . . and it is therefore undesirable to create class distinctions . . . and give some children the chance to consider their own lot with satisfaction and that of others with scorn."

Comenius lay awake at night stalking shy ideas for the children. All the children in the world were his children. The thoughts that moved in the warmth of his being were for them, for all of them. "They will learn not for the school but for life, so that the youth will go forth energetic, ready for everything, apt, industrious, worthy of being entrusted with any of life's duties, and this all the more if they have added to virtues a sweet conversation and crowned

all with the love of God. Then they will go forth capable of expressing themselves."

Good textbooks, good teachers, good methods make a school, so reflected Comenius. He even thought about the proper site for the school building, and about light and air and space for the children. The school and the school building should be a place where children live and work together for some end under conditions resembling those of a playground. There should be opportunity for movement, spontaneity, social relations, rivalry, good order; the exercises in learning should be pleasurable.

My dear Bishop, a quite different school from yours!

His times soon smothered Comenius, but he had had his say.

Contact with the harsh reality of existence can make even stout-hearted men change their views. Before 1524, Martin Luther believed in individual competence in spiritual matters. His writings had given the leaders of the peasants new hope and confidence. But when those desperately poor and ill-treated people seized whatever weapons and implements they could and made war on the nobles, and shed blood, and were cruel, Luther was shocked and denounced them with all his verbal power. The horrors of revolution revolted the great revolutionary. But the thirty years of war in his lifetime did not

daunt Comenius. The fountain of light inside him contradicted Machiavelli's words about Savonarola: "The unarmed prophet is always sure to be destroyed, and his institutions must always come to naught." The only way to explain it is that people like Comenius have received the full impact of our Lord's religion of brotherhood. It concerns us, my dear Augustine, that at first both Luther and Comenius believed that man was free to worship God according to his own conscience. Then both faced the definite, observable fact that man is very evil. But Comenius did not change. Observable fact merely led to his seeing the importance of education; what he said was: "There is no more certain way under the sun for raising sunken humanity than the proper education of the young." Comenius summarizes the strength of those few thousand of devoted men and women who preserved and insured for us our attitude toward religion today, universal tolerance, and the sure conviction that, through the respect and nourishment and training of children, the soundest religion will stand revealed.

You gave up teaching gladly after your conversion, saying that you refused to teach tricks, and that you would no longer be subservient to the opinions and demands of the parents of your pupils. But am I not right in thinking that by entering the church you were still bent on teaching; that you saw that in

your age the church and not the school was the power to use in molding men? The situation has changed since your day; there is no universal, organized, legally empowered church, in a world which includes Moslems and Hindus and Chinese, and the primitive peoples too; but the common school or the longing for it exists almost everywhere, the longing for science and for the scrupulous fairness it should teach in approaching everything. Teachers who cherish the young will teach them that they are mammals and not fallen angels or superhuman beings, and as mammals part of the natural scene, and happiest as part of that scene. Perhaps children taught by such teachers would be proof against such ideas as that man is depraved, that one sex is superior to the other, one psychological type preferable to the other, one nation of men more valuable than another.

So I return to the men I call the saviors of the children, not that the children *are* saved, for each generation must be saved by itself; but these three men showed us the path toward innocence, and it waits for us to take it. Comenius, who shed such light on the uncertain path of our future, is not the only one lighting the Western heavens. If in your eternity, Augustine, you saw beginning in 1492 repeated flashes of lightning in our blackness, it must have been the Roman Catholic scholar, Luis Vives, for he was then born, even before the Moravian bishop, Comenius, was saying things that filled the clouds

with all-revealing though momentary lightnings. Three centuries later began the bursts of light which were the ideas of the Lutheran, Pestalozzi, he who changed the sable horizons into flashes of white by his bursts of tension, his pent-up electrical energies. They say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, but the lightnings of Pestalozzi hit the same region a hundred times, and in this it was no different from the powerful strokes of Vives and of Comenius, all of which ripped darkness to shreds for a moment, and gave man views of his path that he can never forget.

Juan Luis Vives is the great Spanish scholar who, as you may remember, wrote an elaborate commentary on your celebrated book *The City of God,* receiving the suggestion from his friend Erasmus.

I think of one incident in the life of Vives. He dedicated his edition of your *City of God* to Henry VIII, and that monarch invited him to England to lecture at Oxford. While in England he drew up a system of education for Princess Mary. We do not know whether he ever saw the princess or not. If his system had been used, if he himself had tutored her, she might not have gone down in English history as Bloody Queen Mary. Vives came close to having a fateful personality entrusted to his care.

Vives was really a most satisfactory human being. It is an exciting thing to remember that he accused the ancients of arguing absurdly, and that he him-

self swore off positively from asking the time-honored question, "What is the soul?" replacing it instead with another, more to the point. "What the soul is," he remarked, "is of no great concern for us to know. What its manifestations are, is of great importance." So too when discussing the nature of the mind, he did not refer to its essence, but occupied himself with investigating its actions. His is a modern point of view, with the cobwebs brushed off the worship of Aristotle and the scholastics, and I imagine that Descartes and Bacon would have been the first to give back to him some of the praise they have received from posterity.

It is not always remembered of Comenius that two wars crippled him extremely. When the Spaniards plundered Fulnek after the battle of Prague in 1620, he lost all his possessions and writings. Another war overtook him at Lissa in 1654, while he was attending to his religious duties, and he again had to flee with the loss of all manuscripts. The publication of his ideas on education in Persian, Arabic, and Mongolian as well as in European languages comforted him. He knew that the dragon's teeth of his common sense would spring up over the world. The brain that produced them could replace the lost papers. He kept on looking at children, holding them on his knee, gazing into their eyes and tweaking their ears, and so his springs of creation held to his death itself, which came on the eve of his eightieth birthday.

There are also a good many reasons for liking Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. When the French invaded Switzerland in 1798, the Swiss left behind them in Canton Unterwalden on the shores of the Lake of Lucerne a number of children without care, food, or shelter. Pestalozzi collected as many of them as he could in a deserted convent, and undertook their care and reclamation. All winter long he was engaged with them, and it must have tested his wits to maintain the supply of food and fuel during a wartime winter in a deserted neighborhood. In the following June the French demanded the convent as a military hospital, and in the pleasant summer weather it was possible, I hope, to disperse and restore the children with a measure of safety. This episode shows the heroic side of his character, but I see in it, as in the earlier episode of his adopting fifty beggar children, the offspring of paupers, at his madder farm in Neuhof, a character which would receive delight and stimulation from childhood on an unusual scale. Children are engrossing enough in stable society, but when war endangers them, the incentive to save their very lives would add tragic value to the girl who could mimic, the boy with a divine voice for singing, and the others whose treasure may have been only a pug nose or freckles or sad eyes, or the way of turning on a heel, or the dramatic gesture perfectly timed with the occasion. I wish I could have been present when Madame de Staël visited Pesta-

lozzi or von Humboldt, or Fichte. And the quarrels among his teachers during the last years of his life, when he was putting his principles into practice in an established school, even if these quarrels darkened his happiness, would have given one food for thought, and reason to think about children.

"I want to be a schoolmaster," cried Pestalozzi one day, while still rather young. So he took charge of the orphanage at Stanz. He said of himself, "Long years I lived surrounded by more than fifty beggar children. In poverty I shared my bread with them. I lived like a beggar in order to learn how to make beggars live like men. . . . Ever since my youth my heart has moved on like a mighty stream . . . toward my one sole end—to stop the sources of the misery in which I saw the people around me sunk."

Long years he lived with fifty beggar children, like the Melampus of legend who befriended bereaved young serpents, feeding them milk, and also like this Melampus he was thus to learn voices of nature many do not hear or understand, and to see into the course of the future. One can only work toward the salvation of society, he saw, by raising each individual to a higher level of self-respect and sense of power, and toward this purpose the home is the ideal educational institution. As I have told you, Bishop, a peasant who came to see one of his schools, said, "Why, this is not a school, but a family." Pestalozzi replied—"Thank God." He shines against the

background of the Swiss villages, which were loutish, mean, autocratic, poverty-stricken, hungry, miserable. In a few brief months the orphanage at Stanz became the cradle of the modern elementary school. He insisted emphatically that human nature is a unity and each capacity is an essential part of the unity. He insists, "Specialized development of one side of human nature is unnatural and false. . . . Only that is truly and naturally educative which appeals to the whole of our being, heart, head, and hand together." On neglect of one of the three aspects of human nature, Pestalozzi blamed the great weaknesses of his age. Neglect of training for constructive work, that is, for the applying of knowledge, especially incensed him. "Knowing and doing are so closely connected that if one cease the other ceases with it." General education must precede the vocational. The child's powers burgeon from within. "The first instruction of the child should never be the business of the head or of the reason. It should always be the business of the senses, of the heart, of the mother."

And here, Augustine, is his epitaph— "Here Rests HENRY PESTALOZZI, born at Zurich, the 12th of January, 1746, died at Brugg the 17th of February, 1827. Savior of the poor at Neuhof, at Stanz the father of orphans, at Brugdorf and Munchenbuchsee, founder of the popular school at Yverdun, the educator of humanity; man, Christian, and citizen, all for others,

nothing for himself. Peace to his ashes. To our father Pestalozzi, grateful Aargau."

It is his directness that makes me love this Pestalozzi. He simply started taking care of beggar children, little boy and girl waifs, who would have perished otherwise. He began the rebuilding of single lives that became a group through love. He fought back against the erosion of human nature into desert. He gave freedom to the feminine side of his nature. He made the children into a family, became a mother to them.

With Juan Luis Vives, the great Spaniard, who lived from 1492 to 1540, the various emphases are different, but the story is the same. He comes to mind as one thinks of you, Augustine, as a little boy in the schools of Carthage, as one thinks of one's school days. So liberated was his spirit that he could say, "It is our rightful claim to employ these our powers [of observation and thought], in the examination of all facts and all truths, comparing and ordering them one with the other, and surveying the whole universe as it were our own domain; even though we may wander ignorantly in it and fail to view it with right apprehension." He considered in detail the education of children, both boys and girls—he was the first to think about women's education. He felt that education concerned both parents; the father should oversee everything, the mother might well be the child's

first teacher. At seven years of age, boys were to be placed in public day schools; the pupils continued, however, to live with relatives or friends, not in dormitories. Four times a year the teachers were to hold conferences at which to exchange observations regarding the progress and ability of the pupils. They were to teach every pupil the thing he was most capable of learning. Slow wits were to be preferred to quick wits, and only those students really capable were to be given higher training. The stipend of the masters should be a public charge, and no master was to receive money directly from his pupils for tuition, meals, or lodging. Great care also was to be exercised in choosing the site of school buildings, as well as in their planning, construction, and equipment. He saw as clearly as Pestalozzi three centuries later that the unity of our organism is not to be disturbed: "This is the fruit of all our studies; this is the goal. Having acquired our knowledge, we must turn it to usefulness, and employ it for the common good."

In his attitude toward the masses, Vives is quite different from the typical Renaissance scholar and much more democratic. "We scholars," he wrote, "must transfer our solicitude to the people." In another passage, Vives remarked that, if the language of the disputants of the university were translated into the speech of the people, the workmen, "with hissing and clamor and the clanging of tools, would hoot the dialecticians out of Paris." He believed in

teaching children the mother tongue, and correctly. He saw the mother tongue as a great new source of life-giving nuances and *aperçus* which Latin was unfitted for, in its clumsy rhetoric. He had faith in the future of democracy. Sensing the Norman revolt against scholasticism and the Roman hierarchy, he wrote: "I see from the depths a change is coming. Amongst all the nations men are springing up, of clear, excellent, and free intellects, impatient of servitude, determined to thrust off the yoke of this tyranny from their necks. They are calling their fellow citizens to liberty."

The inclusion of girls into plans for wider education shows in Vives a great daring, a great love and faith. It shows also and more particularly his recognition of the compulsions toward self-shaping which are the breath of life in the group that seeks one another out from mutual liking. He saw that woman could not be excluded from the intense concerns of the mind.

Comenius, as I say, was not the only man with light outgoing from him in every word and smile, at a time when no light reached through most people. He had two companions, men of equal stature and effulgence, Luis Vives and Pestalozzi. They were three men who made all the heart-wisdom the race had ever known reglow. Year after year, they go before us, they alone having reality, as it often seems.

To follow them is to enter the place where one traverses a living light.

Good ages trudge along trying to remake education. Bad ages let matters stand. I am thinking about what we Americans wish our children taught in public schools. Underneath all else, I believe, we wish them to know the story of the struggle we have had to become free, and to respond to the great wonder of our living together all of us as equals and friends, and to feel a stake in it, a heart in it, an enthusiasm for it. Each free soul is the nucleus of a free group. But liberty is both a tool and a goal. We are always uneasy for fear our children will not understand that each of us achieves liberty or prevents it for himself and for others; that others achieve or prevent it for him; that each of us in the clustered life we live, helps, or hinders, its coming and use. This book I carry in my hand,* I wish I might show it to you, because you were a teacher too, and it would interest you. It is a book of photographs of the activities of public schools when they are bent on being democratic. What is important in the schools of an American city is to do away with race prejudices; our nation is woven of all nations. Children pay little attention to differences in race and color unless trained to notice them. The children of this city sing one another's songs, study one another's background, and so, let

* *The Springfield Plan* by Alexander Alland and James Waterman Wise, New York, 1945.

us hope, grow conscious of the heritage each emigrant brings to the new world. This kind of school attempts to bring religion down from the Sabbath skies and make it fit the hungers of every day in the week by teaching brotherliness.

A nation trying to be a democracy bears in mind the care of each human being, each individual soul. It must be reverent toward the relations between the one and the many. It must try to save and protect both each of us and all of us. This book of photographs shows an attempt to make good tools for a life of trust and faith; and what you would appreciate in it is the determination of a man, or a few men, a few women, those administering the schools, to shape their world through shaping the moment of life presented to them. It may be that some measure and order is now falling from the night stars on this New England city.

Yesterday I heard a young American, thirty-one years old, say, "Whenever you ignore the fact that another man has a heart, you are going to get into trouble with that man in your dealings with him." It sounds like the fundamental statement of brotherhood. And dictatorship grows intolerable, any form of domination will in time make the air unbreathable. The first rebellion is an instinctive one in each of us. Consider the old European folk-sayings, "I obey, but I do not fulfill." and, "Under my cape I kill the king." Maybe the deepest thing in us all is the sense

of belonging to one another and the unceasing desire to belong. Perhaps what it is all coming to finally for all of us is the daily giving and sharing with everything we are capable of.

Augustine, let me open my heart to you. Let me talk of my country. It is the way I learn about all countries. No American wants to be a cipher. All of us wish to do things and make things. We are a race of makers and doers. It is the cavernous murmur of our thoughts as well as of our feelings. We come from rebels and pioneers, and rebellion and pioneering are alike the tools of people who have ideas about the kind of life we should all lead together, and the forms into which we can reshape the material of the world to suit it to our plans.

But unless we are alert, our settled life appears to give us little opportunity to act. Humdrum prejudices, worn-out superstitions, the unkindness and indifference apt to come of city life, whittle us down. Like dogs, the best of us keep licking our wounds.

Yet surely only in a settled life can the pioneer pass to the problems of human relatedness involved in the saying of our Lord that we are members of one body. For my country, it is the greatest of sayings. We have not learned to live according to it, but our nation is founded on it, on the right of all to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The exploration of such a membership in one another is our true future. Now that autumn brings the gold leaves low,

the wood smoke at evening, the haze on the mountains, the red of the sunset are talking to us all the time. Our old people, our children, the strangers we encounter are in touch with us, appealing to us, molding us. Our life flows to us from American sights and sounds, a daily life far different from that of books and the past. We need our models and exemplars, and to ponder them well; but even more we need to think and feel for ourselves the moment we are on earth.

It seems to me that we cannot shape ourselves into good human beings without helping others make themselves American and without receiving their help in turn. Together we can do it, little by little, not straight away but slowly, by dint of hope and prayer, and question and discussion, and agreement, and self-stripping, and admitting we don't know what comes next when we don't, remembering always that each of us has something only *he* can give.

The emotion of working together toward our common future will help us endure the torture of our appalling incompleteness. This torture lurks everywhere in ambush, because we are more sensitive than snakes or slugs, but not sensitive enough. And all this attitude of mind toward our future must be transmitted to the next generation, all the certainties, doubts, self-stripping. "Children are not born human, but must become human by proper training in society," as Comenius discovered. This torture of

ours takes no account of sex or creed or race; it comes to all; and our working together can take no account of them, either, except to profit and grow from sexual, religious, racial currents and incentives. There is no life for us apart, locked up in the sterility of our three-fold natures. It is in the glimpses of the future human being which we get through one another that we accustom ourselves to new and better ways of thinking and feeling.

The world we are born into is real because it is full of living things, and there is no other reason whatever for considering it real. And so each of us must choose between helping or not helping what lives, must make up his mind to serve life or to destroy it. A person who concludes that he cannot live for himself alone, will have a spiritual relation to the world and will prove his oneness with it. He will testify by what he is and does that spiritual life is inside natural life. He shows his willingness to share our common burden of suffering and thus he will come to understand that the stronger his reverence for natural life, the stronger it will be for spiritual life. The place in him where Heaven meets earth, will instruct him that one helps bring the Kingdom only by learning to be thoughtful in that human way which means to be concerned and responsible.

XIX

"The Bishop, when my mother had begged him to talk with me, refute my errors, unteach me evil things, and teach me good (for this he was in the habit of doing when he found people fitted to receive it) declined, very prudently, as I afterward came to see. He answered that I was still unteachable, being inflated with the novelty of that heresy, and that I had already perplexed divers of the inexperienced with vexatious questions, as she had informed him. 'But leave him alone for a time,' he observed. 'Only pray God for him; he will of himself, by reading, discover what that error is, and how great its impiety.' He disclosed to her at the same time how he himself, when a little one, had, by his misguided mother, been given over to the Manicheans, and had not only read, but even written out almost all their books, and had come

to see (without argument or proof from anyone) how much that sect was to be shunned, and had shunned it. Which when he had said, and she would not be satisfied, but repeated more earnestly her entreaties, shedding copious tears, that he would see and discourse with me, he, a little vexed at her importunity, exclaimed, 'Go thy way, and God bless thee, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish. . . .'"

"There had at this time come to Carthage a certain bishop of the Manicheans, by name Faustus, a great snare of the devil, and many were entangled by him through the allurement of his smooth speech. . . .

". . . when it became plain to me that he [Faustus] was ignorant of those arts in which I had believed him to excel, I began to despair of his clearing up and explaining all the perplexities which harassed me. . . . When I proposed that these subjects should be deliberated upon and reasoned out, he very modestly did not dare to endure the burden. For he was aware that he had no knowledge of these things, and was not ashamed to confess it. For he was not one of those loquacious persons, many of whom I had been troubled with, who covenanted to teach me these things yet explained nothing; but this

man possessed a heart which, though not right toward You, yet was not altogether false toward himself . . . for that, I was even more pleased with him, for more beautiful is the modesty of an ingenuous mind than the acquisition of the knowledge I desired. . . ."

—*Confessions,* Book III, Chapter 12;
Book V, Chapters 3 and 7

THE Manicheans may have been the intellectual society of Carthage, bright and conversable spirits with more magnetism for you than Christians or Stoics. The Stoics were probably not good company, and the Christians may already have become parochial. You offer so much to talk of that if I could follow out to its end each path that invites me I should never be done. It means that in talking about you I am talking about myself and about human nature. It seems inevitable that you should become involved with the hodge-podge of thought and feeling known as Manicheism. Some angle of it would be sure to catch the attention of an inquiring young man seeking to adjust himself to reality. Like the religions of the Greco-Oriental type, Manicheism was pessimistic about the natural world. Christianity is pessimistic about it too, but the resemblance is superficial.

Manicheism concerns itself with the problem of how man can free his spiritual from his material elements. It is one of those religions and philosophies which counsel conquering reality by being as little real as possible. But Christianity is not only a religion of redemption, it wishes and works for a transformation of the world, through the coming of the kingdom. It calls upon us in a dynamic way, it takes us from stagnation of life, for we are to be glad instruments of the will of the Great Spirit and are to identify ourselves with His purpose of love as the stage that precedes the bliss of this kingdom within. The God of the Manichees was abstract spirituality, purely intellectual; the God of our Lord was active and at work in man.

Monica would seize any good chance to call you to the Bishop's attention. I well understand that, and so did the Bishop. Bishops are busy people. Nonetheless, on one count I am inclined to sympathize with her. Though Manichean morality was severe and ascetic, its followers have been charged with profligacy of life, and its priesthood with immoral and even cruel practices. These charges dogged it through the four or five centuries it openly flourished. Many people think it is still in existence and still masking sinister elements with a pious and severe front. On the other hand, Monica always showed a distrust of thought as an end in itself, and I am sorry she did not understand you better in your seeking out of heretics

and controversial spirits. It seems to me a sign of health in eager young men. They rotate through group after group, sampling points of view, trying on attitudes of thought as though costumes, or masks.

XX

"Then began I assiduously to practice that for which I came to Rome—the teaching of rhetoric. . . .

"When they of Milan had sent to Rome to the prefect of the city, to provide them with a teacher of rhetoric for their city, and to dispatch him at the public expense . . . to Milan I came, unto Ambrose the bishop, known to the whole world as among the best of men, whose eloquent discourse did at that time give amply unto Your people Your blessing. To him I was unknowingly led by You, that by him I might knowingly be led to You. That man of God received me like a father, and looked with a benevolent and episcopal kindliness on my change of abode. And I began to love him, not at first, indeed, as a teacher of the truth—which I entirely despaired of in Your Church—but as a man

friendly to myself. And I listened earnestly to him preaching to the people, not with the motive I should, but trying to discover whether his eloquence came up to its fame, or flowed fuller or lower than was asserted. I hung on his words intently, but of the matter I was a careless and contemptuous spectator. I was delighted with the pleasantness of his speech, more erudite, yet less cheerful and soothing in manner, than that of Faustus. Of the matter, however, there could be no comparison; for the latter was straying in Manichean deceptions, whilst the former was teaching salvation most soundly.

". . . Whilst I opened my heart to admit 'how skillfully he spake,' there also entered with it, but gradually, 'and how truly he spake!' For first, these things also had begun to appear to me to be defensible; and the Catholic faith, for which I had fancied nothing could be said against the attacks of the Manicheans, I now conceived might be maintained without presumption. . . . I resolved, therefore, to be a neophyte in the Catholic Church, which my parents had commended to me, until something settled should result that might guide me. . . . Ambrose Monica loved most dearly; and he loved her truly, on account of her most religious conversation, whereby, in good works so 'fervent in spirit,' she frequented the church

so that he would often, when he saw me, burst forth into her praises, congratulating me that I had such a mother—little knowing what a son she had in me. . . . Nor did Ambrose know my embarrassments, nor the pit of my danger. For I could not request of him what I wished as I wished, in that I was debarred from hearing and speaking to him by crowds of busy people, whose infirmities he devoted himself to. With whom when he was not engaged (which was but a little time), he either was refreshing his body with necessary sustenance, or his mind with reading. While reading, his eyes glanced over the pages, and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and his tongue were silent. Ofttimes, when we had come (for no one was forbidden to enter, nor was it his custom that the arrival of those who came should be announced to him), we saw him thus reading to himself, and never otherwise; and, having long sat in silence (for who dared interrupt one so intent?), we were ready to depart, inferring that in the little time he secured for the recruiting of his mind, free from the clamor of other men's business, he was unwilling to be taken off. . . ."

—*Confessions*, Book V and Book VI, Chapter 3

ANOTHER bishop attracts Monica, and this bishop attracted you, her son, as well. You say that from the very first you began to love him, as a man friendly to yourself. It was thus in an important respect your love of a fellow man which brought you into Christianity, and not a miracle from above, nor philosophy, nor love of wisdom. His warm welcome affected you in a part of your nature that Faustus had not touched. His warmth opened your mind as well as your heart to the reception of his personality; your first sight of Ambrose was one of the greatest events of your life. Ambrose the Bishop had started out on the pathway of imperial preferment, going to Milan as consular prefect of Liguria and Emilia. Then the Bishop Auxentius died, and both the Arian and orthodox parties contended for the succession. Ambrose addressed them. They thought him, above all, the man for the place. What a prudent young man could consider, was that Ambrose accepted the bishopric without hesitation. He was only a neophyte, but he had himself baptized at once, gave money to the poor, settled his lands upon the church, entrusted his family to his brother, and began his study of theology. Thus might a mere seaman on a leaky and worn-out boat, exchange his position to be captain of a new and seaworthy and beautiful vessel. And that he was captain, who could deny? Did the Emperor Gratian not bow to his advice, and was not the Emperor Theodosius chastised by him?

He was occupied, too, with unimportant people and very minor matters. Trained for an executive position under the Roman Senate, he brought his ability to bear on all the detail of a bishop's office. You could reflect upon the variety of circumstances in which such a man could use his authority. Your decision to be a neophyte was natural. Each man follows his pleasure—and hero worship opens one's eyes to many things.

In Ambrose we have the great individual. We recognize him at once, in the vividness of your words, the warmth of your hero worship. He has the power of leading. He has the power of comforting. He directs the thoughts of his followers and assuages their miseries. Just a thought about such men and women—it is they who organize others into groups that work for purposes. Such movements depend for their dynamism on the unusual and gifted person. He is selfless in the service of his ideal. He draws to him the devotion of others. His power for good or for evil is enormous, and depends on the worth of his ideal.

You saw Ambrose in the crimsons and purples of his office. You heard the crowd in the cathedral chanting in unison, their many discordant voices becoming one voice; you joined in with them yourself and felt your troubled identity fade in all.

XXI

"It was about a year, not much more, since Justina, mother of the boy-emperor Valentinian, persecuted Your servant Ambrose in the interest of her heresy, to which she had been seduced by the Arians. The pious people kept guard in the church, prepared to die with their bishop, Your servant. With them my mother . . . lived in prayer. We, (Alypius and I) still unmelted by the heat of Your Spirit, were yet moved by the astonished and disturbed city."

—*Confessions*, Book IX, Chapter 7

THE facts of the situation were that the Empress Justina insisted on obtaining one of Ambrose's churches for Arian Christian worship.

Ambrose, who was not an Arian Christian but a Catholic, denied her the request and compared it to the cruelest persecutions Catholic Christianity had endured under paganism. He went further and compared her to the wife of Job, to Jezebel, and to Herodias. And all the time he swayed the populace to keep with him the power of the mob, so that the Empress and the Emperor had to give in to him. The power his faith gives a man is remarkable, and instructive as well. But it is also obvious that our Lord's religion of love was becoming a religion of power.

You felt the disturbance of the city even if you did not understand all that was at stake in the struggle between the Empress and the Bishop. It was a crisis in a chain of fearful crises. Yet it would seem that the differences between two sects might have permitted compromise. The Arians held that our Lord was neither perfectly human nor perfectly divine, while Ambrose held that he was both perfectly human and perfectly divine. Neither side took into account what we were to infer from the way in which our Lord lived his life, his message being in his deeds.

Here we observe Ambrose in action. I wish it were possible to look into his mind and see all that it contained. Did the thought come to him that he might offer the Empress a church, or have his congregation help her build one? I can well understand that there may have been a variety of reasons against such

a plan. And it is only human to protect one's own flock first. We cannot go back into those troublous times from our troublous times. But to ethical man friendliness and love when possible are the path ahead, the better path. It is vital to visualize what the perfect human attitude would be in any given emergency, apart from the concrete facts of the situation.

There was pathos on both sides. We can choose between the pathos of the dying empire versus the church, or the pathos of Catholic Christianity versus Unitarianism in their birth pangs. Justina, a firm Arian, was trying to use her son's power to establish Arian Christianity as the state religion, backed by imperial authority, police, and friends in high places. Ambrose, strongly content with what he felt to be God's power and the verity of Catholic Christianity, called to his support a devoted congregation drawn from all stations of life.

If Arianism had conquered Catholic Christianity in the strife at Milan, if it had become the religion of the West, would the history of the West have been better reading for heart and mind? Who knows? Personally, I do not feel that we are concerned here with a religious matter, but with the establishment of worldly authority.

Underneath the struggle of the great groups for worldly authority, which goes on forever, the only thing that concerns us is the attitude each group takes to the authority of conscience.

XXII

"Ambrose himself I esteemed a happy man, as the world counted happiness, in that such great personages held him in honor; only his celibacy appeared to me a painful course."

—*Confessions*, Book VI, Chapter 3

But to be a Christian you did not need to be celibate. A teacher of rhetoric or a parish priest could be married and be a Christian. To be a bishop you would have had to be celibate, though more in deference to the feeling of the laity than to any demand of the church. It comes down to your ambition, and the ambition of your mother for you. The choice was not between Christianity and marriage, but ambition and marriage.

XXIII

"These things (involved in the question of what may be the true source of joy), we, who lived like friends together, jointly talked of, but chiefly and most familiarly did I discuss them with Alypius and Nebridius, of whom Alypius was born in the same town as myself, his parents being of the highest rank there, but he being younger than I. For he had studied under me, first, when I taught in our own town, and afterward at Carthage, and I esteemed him for his innate love of virtue. . . .

"[Now after following me to Rome] Alypius was carried away incredibly with an eagerness for the shows of the gladiators. For, having long since stopped caring for such spectacles, and now detesting them, he was one day met by chance by divers of his fellow students. With a friendly violence they drew him, vehemently objecting and resisting, into the amphi-

theatre, on a day of these cruel and deadly shows. 'Though you drag my body to that place,' he protested, 'can you force me to give my mind to these shows? I shall be absent while present, and so shall overcome both you and them.' They dragged him on nevertheless, to see whether he could do as he said. When they had taken their place as they could, the whole amphitheatre became excited with the inhuman sports. Closing his eyes, Alypius controlled his thoughts. I would that he had closed his ears also! Upon the fall of a gladiator, a mighty cry from the whole audience stirred him strongly. Overcome by curiosity, and prepared to rise superior to it, no matter what it was, he opened his eyes, and was struck with a deeper wound in his soul than the gladiator in his body. The moment he saw that blood, he imbibed a sort of savageness; nor did he turn away, but fixed his eyes, drinking in madness unconsciously, and drunken with the bloody pastime. Now he was not the same as he came in, but one of the throng he came unto, a true companion of those who brought him there. Why need I say more? He looked, shouted, was excited, carried away with him the madness which would stimulate him to return and to draw in others."

—*Confessions*, Book VI, Chapters 7 and 8

ALYPIUS comes to me very brightly from the pages of your *Confessions*. I cannot regard him as proving your case that all men are evil. You have already acquainted us with the fact that his father did not like you, and that at his father's wish he stopped attending your public school in Carthage. Because his father was a follower of the Circension games, he became one also. But he did not forget you and the atmosphere of good in your classroom, and he kept returning. One day you inadvertently made a jibe about those who attended the games. What other boys would have held as a ground of offense against you, Alypius, you tell us, "took as a reason for being offended at himself, and for loving me more fervently." And he persuaded his reluctant father to let him resume his studies with you. So that one might use his conduct to prove that all men are virtuous just as logically as that all men are evil. Could we not sum it up by saying that we all have both good and evil in us?

Alypius was taken by force to the shows, and when he smelt the smell of blood his lower and more cruel nature awakened. It was to be expected. You note correctly that he would have gone unharmed if left alone. That is, he knew what was good for him, and what not. He was wise in the equilibrium of his delicate nature, in many respects, apparently, like a woman's. It is possible to say that man does not need to obey the physiological compulsions from which

no animal escapes. Psychological functions, endocrine secretions, primitive instincts do not entirely take away our will to better things. Man has something else in him, which separates him from the animal, if he cares to follow its guidance. Our purely human evolution is only beginning, and no young man then or now could easily keep his head if dragged into a cruel and half-insane mob. Endocrine secretions are not to be trifled with. None of us can feel safe from their excitations; they can take us away from the good with alarming suddenness.

Full three centuries before your time Paul urged the Philippians in the name of our Lord to think of whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Three centuries are a long time; the marvelous sentence was already old, a searching and perfect therapy for man's ailing spirit. The majority who have no ears for it too often have ears for its opposite. The life of the gang, always man's great danger in aggregates, urges us to think of whatever things are humanly irresponsible, unjust, ugly, and full of treachery. This is the reason William James (I find myself thinking of an old teacher of my own) once wrote in a letter to a friend: "The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. . . . As for me, my bed is made: I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms, and with the invisible molecular moral forces that work from

individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, and yet rending the hardest monuments of man's pride, if you give them time. . . ." *

* *Letters of William James*, Vol II, p. 90.

XXIV

"It was Alypius who prevented me from marrying, by saying that we could not live together, in undistracted leisure in the love of wisdom, as we had long desired. He himself was so chaste that it was wonderful—all the more, too, that in his early youth he had been otherwise. Feeling sorrow and disgust he had lived from that time to the present most continently. But I opposed him with the examples of those who as married men had loved wisdom, found favor with God, and walked faithfully and lovingly with their friends. From the greatness of whose spirit I fell far short, and, enthralled with the disease of the flesh and its deadly sweetness, dragged my chain along, fearing to be loosed. . . . Moreover, it was by me that the serpent spake unto Alypius himself, weaving and laying in his path, by my tongue,

pleasant snares, in which his honorable and free feet might be entangled.

"For when he wondered that I, for whom he had no slight esteem, stuck so fast in the bird-lime of that pleasure as to affirm whenever we discussed the matter that it would be impossible for me to lead a single life, and urged in my defense that there was a vast difference between the life that he had tried by stealth and snatches and my sustained acquaintance with it, to which if but the honorable name of marriage were added, he would not then be astonished at my inability to condemn that course. Then he began to long for marriage not from any bodily appetite but from a disposition to inquire into it. His mind, free from my chain, was astounded at my slavery, and through that astonishment was going on to a desire of trying it, and from it to the trial itself, and thence, perhaps, to fall into that bondage which astonished him. . . ."

—*Confessions*, Book VI, Chapter 12

As A schoolboy Eric Gill overheard one of his teachers say to another, "It is too bad little Gill is so easily led." The words burned in his mind as a warning he could do nothing about, since one

cannot change the nature one is born with. But a day came when he could lift his head and see that it is not necessarily a disaster not to be obstinate; that a yielding, trustful, easily led, easily charmed and interested nature has it own rewards, and the important thing for such a nature is to hold its treasure for a goodness of which it may be sure.

Alypius had a quieter nature than yours; his mind was more pliable, his nature more agreeable. You are happy to say so yourself. Such boys grow into good men, make loyal friends, are the salt of the earth. They go their own way largely unmolested by the evil in the world, turn easily toward what builds, and are not long interested in what tears down. An Alypius does not seek to control the atmosphere of others; he does not wish to dominate others, or to trouble them. He is too reasonable to be the prey of passion, even if capable on occasion of irregularities; he does not pull his house down about him. If undisturbed by others, he follows a quiet path. You are never more honest than when you accept the responsibility of leading him into a way of life which might not have occurred to him without so much talk about it.

But I wish I might have been a listener with Alypius to this talk of yours about sexual love. Your brief account of it contains remarkable overtones. You say that your relation with your mistress lacked only the honorable name of marriage, and I wonder

if this remark may not be ironic and at whom or what the irony is directed. Nonetheless you fall into the pitfall of believing, apparently, that sacredness lies in the outward covenant rather than in the inward. Our Lord warned us of this pitfall; in the parable of the Good Samaritan he showed us the irrelevance of any other tie than the human. And yet I am certain of your meaning here. I did not hear the tone of your voice, but if I am right, how magnificent your irony is!

Sexual love, the relation of the sexes, was only one of many problems occupying your attention. What you searched for is the explanation of the evil in the world. As you listened to Ambrose more and more, he satisfied you less and less. Ambrose was in love with good, and he turned his eyes away from evil so as not to see how much there was of it and how black it was. He even said that men exaggerated the amount of evil in the world. I can almost hear your comment, "If the God of Ambrose also feels that evil is insignificant, he is no God for me." You do not let us forget that evil was a great force in you, which you controlled only by daily vigilance.

But it is possible to make too much of the problem of evil. A good working definition is all we need at the moment, for nothing subtle is involved in the mishaps of Alypius. Surely, what helps man toward spirit and away from brute, is good; what detains him in the brute, is evil. The causes of our choosing

the wrong path may be most complex and difficult to understand; but nothing of that sort is involved here, either.

I keep turning over in my mind your words, "to which if only the honorable name of marriage were attached," for here unrolls the panorama of a difficult country and you betray a sensitiveness akin to ours today. We pass beyond the relation of man and woman as such. What is involved is the reality of the relation between one person and another in an extraordinary variety of instances. A civilization produces standard types of people and of relation; some are accepted, some offer difficulty. The difficulty is from the point of view chiefly of business, church, or state, or family; each is quick to sense a threat to its security. Yet this same standardization is a great danger to the future. Of course, we should proceed thoughtfully, but we should not discourage those who present unusual qualities or who make necessary unusual kinds of association for they may well be "the 'mutant' forms which represent the future. We must seek them out and help them individually. This is a delicate point in the moral education of civilised peoples." *

I have said I hoped that our communions, Bishop, would go into the smallest matters, and nothing could be much smaller than a wondering whether the inflection of your voice in a remark made cen-

* Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, p. 214.

turies ago meant this or that. Yet only the authority of conscience in support of human feeling makes us real in seeking one another out, in fidelity to real relatedness. We must be free; we must free others or assure others of their freedom. And with those we disagree with and wonder about, it is perhaps of the utmost importance.

XXV

"And many of us friends, consulting on and abhorring the turbulent vexations of human life, had considered and now almost determined upon living at ease and separate from the turmoil of men. And this was to be obtained in this way: we were to bring whatever we could severally procure, and make a common household, so that, through the sincerity of our friendship, nothing should belong more to one than the other; but the whole, being derived from all, should as a whole belong to each, and the whole unto all. It seemed to us that this society might consist of ten persons, some of whom were very rich, especially Romanianus, our townsman, an intimate friend of mine from his childhood, whom grave business matters had then brought up to court; who was the most earnest of us all for this project, and whose

voice was of great weight in commending it, because his estate was far more ample than that of the rest. We had arranged, too, that two officers should be chosen yearly, for the providing of all necessary things, whilst the rest were left undisturbed. But when we began to reflect whether the wives which some of us had already, and others hoped to have, would permit this, all that plan, which was being so well framed, broke to pieces in our hands, and was utterly wrecked and cast aside."

—*Confessions*, Book VI, Chapter 14

A DESERT island, teeming with the kind of fruits and flowers each of us has in mind, is an image that dogs everyone's footsteps. At least, I suppose so. Let's talk about it as a part of ourselves, apart from the question of how it is to be done financially—which is a matter to be considered by itself, for people who plan to escape do not always have a rich fellow-townsman like Romanianus to defray the expense.

The poet Han Yu, of the T'ang dynasty, has left us a poem called "Mountain Stones." * He climbed

* See *The Jade Mountain, Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty*, tr. by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-Hu, New York, 1929.

a mountain to sleep in an old monastery, from this need of the spirit which we all know; and in the morning when he came down he lost his way. A bright mist turned brook and mountain green and purple, he passed by great pines and oaks, he trod pebbles barefoot in the swift water, which, "rippling, purified his ear." He says, "These are the things which, of themselves, make life happy." And he goes on to inquire—

Why should we be hemmed about and hampered
with people?
O chosen pupils, far behind me in my own country,
What if I spent my old age here and never went back
home?

There is no hint that he *did* linger in the forest to escape the toughness of reality; it was only a wish for peace, such too as we all know, only a wish to transcend our human nature, a pathetic, half-playful turning toward natural surroundings in the hope that they might give more permanence to the fleeting moments when we feel part of a life greater than ourselves. The passage recalls your words, "I love a kind of light, and melody and fragrance, and meat and embracing, when I love my God, the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embrace of my inner man; where there shines in my soul what space cannot contain, and there sounds, what time bears not away,

and there smells, what breathing disperses not and there tastes, what eating diminishes not, and there clings, what satiety divorces not. This is it which I love, when I love my God."

The unforgettable words of Han Yu's, "These are the things which, of themselves, make life happy," take us into the land of our dreams and prayers. Is there an atmosphere in which we all can blossom—have a roof over our heads, eat three meals a day, have steady work, above all find in life its secret joys? Underneath the problems of economics, and politics, and sociology, is a problem that has to do with the part of us we call the soul, the spirit, our relations with one another. Is there an atmosphere in which we can become harmless to one another?

I think over my own life; I recall a month of May long ago when my wife went to a downtown hospital. The hospital stood near railroad switching yards, and the fringe of park about it was no shelter from the noise. The intersecting and crowded streets contributed to the din also. And the hospital itself was noisy, the elevators particularly so. It was the year after the First World War, and there was still a shortage of antiseptics. The use of gasoline, as in part a substitute for them, made my wife suffer then and later. The woman in the next room died. The persons who fumigated the neighboring room neglected to seal the door into my wife's room, and during

the night the fumes entered it. She could not reach the telephone, and for a long time made no one hear by calling. Things were going wrong for many people at that time, and not to add to the general burden, my wife maintained an air of calm and love. The nurses used to come to her room because, they said, it was a peaceful place. The old woman who cleaned the room related her life story, and not a cheerful one; but there was the afternoon when a butterfly came in the window.

We all go through discouraging times, and many lead lives sufficiently tragic. But I do not recall this incident because it was hard; I wish to make another point. My wife and I look back to this time as to a fountain from which since has flowed health of spirit. In an atmosphere of things going wrong for many of us, there came to us the certainty of something that never went wrong for anyone.

I was a teacher then, like you, and some afternoons I had no classes and could reach the hospital quite early and read aloud to my wife. It seems to me now we read of great figures, sunk in themselves, self-sufficient in an inwardness as vast as all outwardness, silent with the silence of eternity. And I recall too that we read about a hospital planned to heal mind and body together, unlike the particular hospital where my wife lay for weeks. Yet in that particular hospital our minds and hearts found healing.

Today there are great crusades, and reason for

furthering them. But we can always go deep inside us, and touch eternity in the present moment, no matter what its horrors. The Kingdom of Heaven is now. If we do not remember this truth while we are fighting for better things, we will only be making the world a better hospital. It might be possible to create a world, for instance, where switch engines are noiseless, steel mills smokeless, where street cars run on elastic tires, and hospital elevators do not rumble, creak, and slam, and no gongs go off in corridors. But all this might be done for a young couple like ourselves, who lost their baby, and so to whom it would be only incidental how much silence and material comfort there was in the world; for whom their reciprocal future would depend on whether they could enter the Kingdom in their hearts and the hearts of their friends.

"As much as a man is before God so much is he, and no more," said St. Francis. We are not dependent on monasteries and hospitals and asylums and silent streets and elastic tires. We are not to grow in the direction of our aids and comforts and ease; our path lies elsewhere; it is to learn to put ourselves second, not first, to think of others, not of ourselves. And for the greater glory of man, woman, child—which means, for the greater glory of the mysterious Love-Source of our world, who from the time we

were part of the green scum of algae has been attracting us as our magnet, our homecoming, our Lord.

Sometimes a person is like a tree that has been cut down. The roots are still strong, and out of what is left new sprouts come and grow with whatever frustration and pain. I admire certain friends of mine. They would be themselves, living for the greater glory of man, woman, child, no matter what their external world was like.

There is much to say about attempts to withdraw from the painfulness of reality and the sufferings of others—with the idea of finding an atmosphere in which we can bear our fruit. Of the writer who in our time traveled over the world with forty trunks looking for a spot of peace, and finding none. Of the dream of Brook Farm. Or of the Oneida community. Of the ten days Boccaccio immortalized, in the pleasant villa where the young men and women told stories and beguiled one another while the plague raged in nearby Florence. Or of the young Tuscans who clubbed together with all the money they could lay their hands on, two hundred thousand gold florins, to leave the world and the plague, and as long as the money lasted, live the life they dreamt about, of horses and dogs and hawks, fishing and hunting and riding, no priests, and girls but no wives (de-

lightful indeed, yet so strange is human nature that it is open to the objection suggested in the story of the little boy attending the newfangled school, who said to his teacher, "Teacher, do we *have* to do what we want to do, today?"). Or of all the hermits, from China to Africa, who went into the wilderness to meditate. And of those other people who cannot flee the unplanned sprawling cities which they loathe, and the sufferings of others, the constant awareness of which they cannot endure since they can do nothing about it, and who at heart are most certainly hermits and exiles.

There in the hospital we entered a world of timeless figures the soul of man has created for his hungers, and we clung to them, and to the images of cascades, willow trees, mountains, and we longed to hear tree-toads in the dusk, and to see glowworms under the great arches of elms. But without self-mutilation there is no withdrawing from our responsibilities to the world of our fellows, for these are part of the systole and diastole of the heart. Han Yu went back to his students, and you set yourself to your tasks in the church, and you both bore a dream henceforth within you. Life with our possibilities limited in the pathetic ways of Brook Farm or the *Decameron*, or the young Tuscans, would still be a hospital, or at least a sanitorium, or in a mild sense a lunatic asylum.

The statesman and painter, Wang Wei, says in a poem to a friend of his bound home after failing an examination:

In a happy reign there should be no hermits;
The wise and able should consult together. . . .

And here is the gist of the whole matter.

Reality in your time was as grim as now, and nowadays the judicious are slow to blame the weak, or weakened, for trying to evade, in whatever way, this painful world which is the work of us all. Men and women of ability and good intentions go down this path of evasion. But what makes us all happier is the spirit which from of old has sought in us what we had lost, and brought again what we had driven away from us. That we should have good will toward one another is the message we have heard from the beginning. If we learned to listen to it, it would be a happy reign, and there would be no hermits—or perhaps we should all be hermits, in the eternity within. Our Lord made nothing more clear than that our heaven lies concealed in the present moment.

XXVI

"It seemed to us that this society might consist of ten persons, some of whom were very rich, especially Romanianus, our townsman, an intimate friend of mine from his childhood . . . who was the most earnest of us all for the project, and whose voice was of great weight in commending it, because his estate was far more ample than that of the rest."

—*Confessions*, Book VI; Chapter 14

You were not particularly concerned by where the money was to come from to operate a group withdrawn from actual life, but the vital thing is that a communal life strongly drew your attention. When the conditions of life are hard, peo-

ple often go into a monastic life. At times it has become a tremendous burden to the industrious, but thus the most precious aspects of the spirit may at times be saved. After your death, in the long centuries when your fame was paramount in the West, no fewer than sixty different monastic bodies turned to you for help in the matter of living, thinking, and working together. Nothing could show more clearly that you were a group person, despite the fact that we think of you today chiefly as a giant wrestling with his nature. We fail to see all that your moral struggles imply.

Chief perhaps among the religious groups which deduce their community rules from your sermons or writings were the "Hermits of Saint Augustine," or Begging Hermits; the "Friars Preachers," or Dominicans; the "Knights Templars"; the Premonstratensians; and the "Canons Regular." The Hermits who bore your name, the Augustinians, began their monastic life together in Tagaste in the fourth century, and were no doubt closer to your spirit than most of the other monastic orders who turned to you for help. Their history shows good wheat growing from the seed you sowed.

These Augustinians, both as hermits and as communities of churchmen, had as their ideal the spreading through the Christian world of the principles of a life truly religious and also of earthly usefulness. For nine centuries they lived quietly, either alone

or in small groups in out-of-the-way places, or more numerously together outside of cities, meditating, copying manuscripts, laboring in the fields, irrigating and reclaiming the waste land, sowing and harvesting. They spread all through Italy and to the north, and over to the British Isles, in a rather free and charming way, without plan or organized direction, fulfilling their humble roles. In 1256, Pope Alexander IV grouped them together in orderly fashion, and incorporated them into the semi-military structure of the church. Nevertheless, despite their incorporation into the vast body, many of them kept to their own direction, intermingling the humble life of the fields with the equally humble service of the arts. They were interested, as you were, in the practice and teaching of science, art, philosophy, law, letters, and poetry. Some of them are extremely prominent in that far-off medieval world, in these fields. In modern times the order has turned toward more literal missionary work.

When I reflect on your interest in groups, I can't help feeling that a man does not always see the light he is standing in. He might want to use that light to read books by, not to take it to the dark world.

It seems as though you wanted to jump at once to the very end of the path of our life on earth, when if our dreams justify us and come true we shall all be living at peace with ourselves and one another.

When I put myself in your place I wonder whether

you did not know a need of getting away from your mother and your mistress. The need of going off with nine other men, since Romanianus was willing to foot the bill, offered such a chance to escape. Often there is no way for people who feel they must have solitude to defray the expense of getting it. But to many of us solitude more and more becomes a stark necessity of the soul. Certain natures require a withdrawn life, and I am sure there is an irreducible element of value to society in natures who can live only for meditation. I doubt whether there are many such natures, however, and they would soon die if others did not take care of them. Damaged by the circumstances of their youth, or by war and disaster, most certainly there are natures who require such protection; we have lately been reminded of it by an unwonted number of volumes from such persons telling of the steps which led them to take monastic orders. Society can well afford shelter to them. In the engrossing quiet of their days and nights lies their opportunity for growth out of the desire to be protected into the desire to protect others, through their devotions Christianity remembers these persons, but it is not a religion for them only, nor for monks and priests only—redemption is for everyone, the possibility of it. Our Lord did not come to us to say that if our circumstances permitted it, we ought to withdraw from the world and devote ourselves to self-perfection. He did not say to the world's laborers

that they had not yet arrived at true knowledge, but were bound upon the wheel of things since labor binds us to the excesses of the physical world every day. What he had to say was quite different, and he bade those who had great possessions be careful, for the soul's sake. He did not have any ideas about dividing money up evenly; he approached the problem rather from the angle that if we had any love in us we would take care of one another.

Now we hear the you, involuntary, unconscious almost, whom we greatly need today. It is the half-articulate voice of the episode of the pears, of Alypius at the games, of the dream of the procession of the continent.

Church, state, family are to be considered task forces sent out by the central Mystery of our human life in the never-ending war for our survival.

Our Mystery is the place of hope in our despair, joy in our grief. It is the germ of our health and our growth. It is our yesterday, today, and tomorrow without division.

Our Mystery is our root, and from it come the main vines of church, state, and family. None of them is or ever can be root for us.

Our Mystery has many names; a name one can begin to understand is the nucleus of freedom, the free individual; the free individuals. Freedom is close to our secret.

My thoughts when I consider you during the days you taught rhetoric are apt to see you as anxious indeed for the society of a group where you could match your wits with others and hear what was going on in the world about you, for such an atmosphere would make you part of the times and free you from your introspective habits. There are in the nature of life two kinds of groups, those of co-workers and those of persons who seek each other out merely because they wish to do so. The motive of these latter is to enjoy a life in which the individual is accepted just as he is; the satisfaction extends from person to person. Censure or the desire to change others are absent, since they would interfere with the pure pleasure of human company. You had this pleasure at least at one time, and no one has ever described it more eloquently. I see in this project of yours and your friends to form a studious or monastic group, a wish to realize and explore the possibilities of the free group. Greece and Rome at their height had both known the free group, and much of their greatness came from this fact. You were entitled to it by your nature and abilities, but to find it either in North Africa or Italy

was another matter. The age was tolerant of intellectual activities, but intolerant of free groups because of the general insecurity. Your resort to the Manichees was a venture in this direction.

Your interest in group life is one of our surest bonds with you, for the reason that the more one thinks about the individual the clearer it becomes that nobody can be considered by himself. Lives intertwine. I do not think of you as a man all by himself, but as Augustine, plus Monica, plus your mistress and son, plus Alypius, plus Faustus and all the others who had a share in your molding.

I imagine you accepted your mother's ambition to marry you well in the hope that out of an established connection with money behind it there might come intercourse in a free group. Our ambitions are not necessarily linked up with the wish for power over others; we may be wishing for freedom among others, just pushing up into the sun like saplings. It may even be that your not going through with the plan came from perceiving that your hope was to be disappointed. I don't know anything about it, of course; but I feel your longing for mental companions on every page of the *Confessions*, and I have no doubt that your constant solicitations of the Great Spirit and dissatisfaction with yourself sprang in part from loneliness. The truth is that you had no

group except a rather loose set of family ties, and your students and the friends who were seeking a religious adaptation as a means of facing the troublous times. You were quite mutilated as a result.

Groups of those who work together tend to depart from the needs of individual personality, because of the goals to be attained and the hope for their efficient attainment, but the free groups always at bottom are dependent on the play of the people as they are, as they were born, as they have molded themselves. These groups are therefore full of expression, in ideas or in impressions, and their members are happy through being able to be themselves. Ideas and feelings given rein to in such an atmosphere may appear useless, and yet they are not lost sight of, once articulated, for they go into the formation of a group consciousness and personal character, and into the mental awareness of the working groups, to which of course they are carried back, since all of us belong to both kinds of groups.

Such a monastic life as you planned with Romanianus, and which you later experienced at Hippo with your clerics, would partake of the nature of both groups since there was work to do and also personal needs to be considered. How free the expression of ideas and feelings would be, I have no idea. Nor can I picture a complete absence of censure or of the desire to improve other people. The development of personality in such a life would perhaps go

along certain lines, sound moral ones, let us say. But all sound moral lines do not go in the same monastic direction, and it is obvious that certain compulsions might not be lacking. I can see good points in monasticism as a temporary training for everyone, but it would appear that the continuation in it could not benefit any but those very delicate natures among us who need always to be shielded.

However the spirit of man may be viewed, in the free group only can it be free. It is immensely important that your picture of a good atmosphere for pursuing one's studies reveals the joy of this freedom. In that passage I like particularly the words, "To talk and laugh together . . . to differ at times without discord, as if a man differed with himself . . . to teach one another and to learn, by turns. . . ." Here we feel the very deep sweetness of companionship, yet nothing can be so beautiful as the free group, to which we may come with every part of ourselves and in the personal happiness of being integrated. This joy is still possible in my own country today and in the countries of western Europe; it is not possible in the immense areas of the world where an economic theory or superstition makes it a life-or-death matter to think for oneself.

Where there is no free group for the worker groups to measure themselves by from the point of humanity, society naturally remains static. Society

can advance only by producing absolutely free individuals.

Show me a civilization in which there are no free groups and I will show you one that is taking us back to the beast. To take us back to the beast is the only absolute evil. To awaken us to the knowledge that we can bear the future onward and free ourselves from the tyranny of bestial powers once necessary but now outgrown, is absolute good.

I give you credit, Bishop, for wishing woman to be all she could be, friends all they could be, life itself all it could be. I give you credit for doing your best, through your capacity for hero worship, to select a free group from your surroundings.

The free group is everywhere and nowhere. Everybody should belong to it in some fashion; everybody should belong to the working group, too. The free group does not have to be maintained at anyone's expense; it is not isolated, but consists of self-supporting, independent people. When we are working for our living and working for our aims and ideals, and then can enter a different world and be ourselves on the basis of person to person, psyche to psyche, exchanging our thoughts and feelings, we are free. If this free world should be eliminated, we would all be eliminated so far as we were real. Thus

the true stronghold of what is best in life is in the free group, and thus church and state and every other organization should find it the defender of what is good in them, and the hostile critic of what is bad. The free group only can produce the free individual, and it exists as the climate for him, for her.

I believe you are to be viewed as a study in loneliness. Whole books could be written in analysis of the tensions which resulted in your struggle to find something to belong to. They would prove better than I can that you were a precursor of the free group, in that the work of conquering oneself must largely precede a life of mingling with others.

It is the free group which most of all can help a man come into spiritual relationship with the world, and prove his unity with it by his life. I believe that the play of developed personalities contains those forces which urge man to meditate upon his relation to the universe, and not stand outside of it seeking explanations—that pitfall of the intellectual whose heart remains asleep.

I admire it in the *Confessions* that you say your important things without lifting your voice or making a gesture.

The free group becomes an enchanted circle, or a magic ring, when people who esteem one another talk straight because of their esteem.

It is nine-tenths dream, one-tenth actuality—and I think at times it is, in degrees, sketches for the Kingdom. It is rostrum, confessional, audience by turn, for each of us.

One way to think of the worker groups is as comrades of the hunt. They fill the air with their fanfares. If life were only hunting together, marching together, working together, climbing mountains together, it could not have the ultimate delights in it. There is nothing illusory about the importance of the other activities, of course, except the importance ordinarily ascribed to them. But at the core of us living things is the need of delight, the need of closing the magic ring so that nothing of our delight should ebb away into the sands of utilitarian purposes. Hunters, marchers, workers, climbers need surcease from their efforts. They need what has no purpose except of being together with those we like, delighting in one another, watching one another as here for a moment, reclaimed by their source the next moment.

Augustine, your life trembled on the chord of the universal. In truth, it oscillated between two eternal verities. It went to and fro between two poles of being which represent the maximum tension a thinking creature can bear within him. One of these magnetic poles is represented by your words, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till

they find rest in You." The other pole is represented by the cry that came from you at the wrench of your mother's death—you regretted that there should end "our most sweet and dear custom of living together." Between these two expressions pulsates your rhythm, and ours.

It seems to me plain that what you cried out at the time of Monica's passing was not due solely to her loss. It came from many losses, and it preceded your own departure to the dedicated life in which living together differed immeasurably from the way of the world. It is the most treasurable phrase we have from classical antiquity, and it is unlike Greek and Roman utterances. It was born of a new kind of heart, in which our relation to our Father in Heaven and to our kindred on earth was the animating fire. It is a heart which said the things about living together so many monastic orders followed, in entering a new milieu.

It is not the greatest thing in the world to put together a system of thought. The greatest thing is quite another, to leave a saying or two which are of endless significance to mind and heart.

You did not see the light you were standing in. We do not see the light we are standing in, either. It is inevitable, but just as we can see the light you could not see, so later comers will see the light that blinds us.

You responded vividly to your experiences of the predatory gang, and of the congenial group. It did not occur to you to search into these two experiences. It has only lately occurred to us to do so. Perhaps one does not look into such complex phenomena till it becomes a life-and-death matter. It has become so now; as I have said, if our free world should be eliminated, we should all be eliminated as far as we are real.

The nucleus of free people is a matter so delicate that I wonder whether we can ever see it except through the eyes of the spirit. It springs from our Lord's accustoming us to the idea of the Invisible as our Heavenly Father, that we are leaves and branches on a single tree. It springs from the idea he made permanent from the primitive rites of oneness by extending it from the physical to the moral world. The idea of freedom and joy together springs from his sayings as love may spring from two clasped hands. Yet even though we may not be able to track it down scientifically, everybody recognizes the significance of the images, and blood leaps in the wrist. But the kind of group we are attempting to describe is hinted at in novel after novel, play after play, in memoirs, poems, meditations; and it is plain as day that, marking it as its characteristics from afar, are these facts about it, that in its realm both as men

and women, we stay whole, can judge of our works and days. That is, it is the world in which we know, and act upon the knowledge, that we have life in our keeping.

XXVII

"Active efforts were made to get me a wife. I wooed, I was engaged, my mother taking the greatest pains in the matter, that when I was once married, the health-giving baptism might cleanse me; for which she rejoiced that I was being daily fitted, remarking that her desires and Your promises were being fulfilled in my faith. At which time, verily, both at my request and her own desire, with strong heartfelt cries did we daily beg of You that You would by a vision disclose unto her something concerning my future marriage; but You would not. . . . yet the affair was pressed on, and a maiden sued who wanted two years of the marriageable age; and, as she was pleasing, she was waited for.

"Meantime my sins were being multiplied, and my mistress being torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, my heart, which

clave to her, was racked, and wounded, and bleeding. And she went back to Africa, making a vow unto You never to know another man, leaving me my natural son by her. But I, unhappy one, who could not imitate a woman, impatient of delay, since it was not until two years' time I was to obtain her whom I sought —being not so much a lover of marriage as a slave to lust—procured another (not a wife, though), that so by the bondage of a lasting habit the disease of my soul might be nursed up, and kept up in its vigor, or even increased, unto the kingdom of marriage. Nor was that wound of mine as yet cured which had been caused by the separation from my former mistress, but after inflammation and most acute anguish it mortified, and the pain became numbed, but more desperate."

—*Confessions*, Book VI, Chapters 13 and 15

You were still suffering when you wrote this passage ten years after the events it narrates. You are ever mindful to say nothing against women, and it was a fixed rule in the case of your mother and your mistress. You make a refreshing contrast to various great figures in Roman and mod-

ern history, and I have heard it argued that you set an example for the treatment of one's mother which has characterized provincial Christianity. In modern times various farseeing women have warned their sisters against permitting this constant coddling and cushioning of their sensibilities.

Obviously the *Confessions* is in a remarkable way the story of a mother and her son. Your mistress under Roman law would have been a wife with secondary privileges. She was good enough to share your bed and keep house for you, good enough to live with you a dozen years and bear you a son. But she was not good enough to be your wife. She had no dowry; she had come of poor people.

It was a Roman view of marriage. Your mother never questioned it, you did not oppose her; you considered it inevitable that she should seek you a wife with a dowry. Obviously, she was a Christian woman who failed to respond to the view of our Lord that all unions and personal relations should be real, and nobody used as a convenience or a substitute; but our Lord's view, being extraordinarily in advance of the times (as it still is), was succumbing to Roman ways, and not Roman to Christian.

Christianity was becoming a "spiritual" religion, i.e., a religion that did not apply to every day and its encounters and relations. The point was not here on earth, but off somewhere in space, in a place called Heaven.

In this story written years after you parted from your mistress, when you were a changed man and, as it seems to me, a less human one, you still quivered; and so do your readers reading it. People suffer when they cannot be themselves. To act in accordance with our own sense of right and wrong, we must be free. You do not write like a free man. You seem a badly bewildered and resentful, even rebellious man. I feel that you truly loved your mistress, and I am not deceived by your constant insinuations that you discarded her as a personal escape from sin, on which you must congratulate yourself. You protest too much, but your heart is on your sleeve. You mention your tortured dreams more than once. But this incident is one of the little things which have had terrific consequences. One of the little things which you and I have been communing about.

At puberty you were attracted to sexual pleasure in a normal fashion. In your middle or later 'teens you became the father of a son. Monica opposed any marriage for you, as a clog on your future. In your twenty-ninth year you went to Italy, and apparently took your mistress and your boy with you, but avoided taking your mother. We have no reason to feel from anything you say that your mistress and your mother were ever particularly friendly. In your conversations with Alypius about sexual experience, you say of your union that it would be acceptable to

the world if only the honorable name of marriage were added to it. To you, the validity of union lay in the outward, not the inward, reality of it. You say of Ambrose that you thought him a fortunate man, except for his celibacy. You were still normal in your view of woman up to the time that your mother arranged a marriage for you with a suitable Italian child. You acquiesce in this arrangement without interest, as the correct formula. But it immediately produced a conflict within you. And it became part of another conflict, the struggle as to whether to join the Catholic Christian church. You speak of having bad health at this time. And you missed your mistress a good deal after she was "torn" from your side as "an impediment" to your marriage. The phrasing, the use of the passive verb, invites attention. I take it to mean that you do not accept the responsibility of sending her home to Africa. You quote her vow to God on her departure, that she would never know another man. This vow suggests that she had fallen back on the one form of relationship still open to her, namely some form of companionship with you in the Great Spirit. We hear no more of the young girl who was to take her place. Instead, there is a brief interlude in which you try to supplant your mistress with another. The tension of your supplications of the Invisible increases, and you are in misery and despair. Little by little the steps to your conversion grow clear, and the conversion itself is actually brought

off. The moment of the conversion is signalized by your obediently taking up the Scriptures and reading an admonition which warns you against "chambering and wantonness." The nature of the warning throws your frame of mind at the moment into a strong light. Then comes the familiar gesture of devaluing what one has lost in separating oneself from it, which really amounts to devaluing oneself. After your conversion you refer to your mistresses as "those toys of toys, those vanities of vanities" and see them beckoning you to mysterious and impermissible delights—such a reference to her who had lived with you a dozen years seeming to me, at least, "cross" and fantastic. Your pronounced male resistance to the notion that mating with woman was wrong, and your pallid agreement with your mother as to a "correct marriage," were transformed little by little into the idea that the great Spirit really demanded the sacrifice of sexual love. The sacrifice of this natural joy became the particular point of your supplication of God.

I wonder, then, what was your conception of God. In your pages he is often like a famous physician, whom you hang upon to help you through the fevers of life. This physician you now suppose to demand of you a drastic operation, namely the complete eradication of your chief conflict. The creator who created us male and female is supposed now to recommend that you eliminate the female from your existence, and thus become only part human yourself.

Yet it is by battling temptations, as you yourself say everywhere, that one becomes strong. Man must have antagonists; he prospers by the fight of life. What would be the point of running away from one's fighting partner, and how could it be regarded as a victory? We are in very deep waters here. A conflict can hardly be regarded as a disease waiting a cure; it is a practical question, which must reach some answer, if only in a compromise. Entangled in it are portions of your personality which are still to come into being and to bear their fruit. To give up this positive value, inherent in one's conflict, is to force one into a negative attitude, bitterness, say, or an antagonism to life. It is to unlatch the doors of the soul, tear away all leaves and foldings, allow the desert sand to enter on every wind. With the tremendous secret life-giving problem gone, there can be only activities of less significance.

I must conclude, dear friend, that you have made of the Great Spirit a shallow and lazy physician. He has no regard for you as a person, but prescribes a general and easy therapy, as if to calm you momentarily was what mattered. But a good doctor knows that in the very cause of the patient's mental trouble there lie the seeds of his healing. Surely, it is only good judgment to work at our relationships, instead of cutting them away in self-amputation.

A hundred years ago (1848), Elizabeth Cady Stanton met Lucretia Mott on a street in Seneca Falls, New York, and began talking women's rights, the subject she had discussed with her the last time they were together, in London. From talk to action was now but a step; there followed in that village the first convention for women's rights, and Mrs. Stanton's was the great speech of that occasion. Mrs. Stanton, Bishop, is a great admiration of mine. I have heard a good deal about her from the women of my family and the young women of my youth. She was an active woman; a letter to her from Susan B. Anthony conjures up a domestic scene during those days of woman's struggle (apparently she wrote Miss Anthony's speeches for her): "I beg you, with one baby on your knee and another at your feet, and four boys buzzing, whistling, and hallooing ma, ma—set yourself about this address. I want to speak twice at Avon, Clifton, and Ballston Springs this summer. Load my gun, leaving me to pull the trigger and let fly powder and ball."

When the women suffragists met at Seneca Falls in the early summer of 1848, they drew up a list of woman's grievances against man. "He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law civilly dead. He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns. He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her. He has created a false public senti-

ment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women. He has so framed the laws of divorce as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women." And so on. But Mrs. Stanton and Lucretia Mott added at the end of the grievances a fifteenth grievance, which ran as follows: "He has endeavored in every way he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life."

I remember a young woman who when she first read the fifteenth grievance, remarked, "Of course, the fifteenth is the cause of all the others." Woman is offended more deeply by being pushed down than by not being lifted up, and this is her plea for man's just appreciation of her as a fellow creature with aptitudes and capabilities and depths of rightness analogous and equal to his.

Rousseau in his *Emile* (1762) says, "The education of women should always be relative to that of men. To please us, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to advise us, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable, these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught from their infancy." As one reads this appreciation of woman as man's guide and servant, it is surprising to recall that Rousseau did not avail himself of her services for his own children, but put them in an orphan asylum. He tells us that when

he did so he felt he was behaving as a good citizen. He felt that if children were reared in common "in the bosom of equality" and "imbued with the laws of the state and the precepts of the General Will" and constantly reminded "of the tender mother who nourishes them [the state], of the love she bears them, of the inestimable benefits they receive from her, and of the return they owe her," they would learn "to cherish one another mutually as brothers. . . ." * Today we know better than Rousseau how tender a mother the state becomes when given full power, and can see that his omission of woman from consideration is no accident, but part and parcel of the pulverizing effect of the belief in centralized omniscience on associated living.

Eighty-six years after Rousseau wrote the words, Mrs. Stanton and Lucretia Mott and others were sitting in the little frame church in Seneca Falls breaking with every shred of this traditional attitude toward women. The reason was the coming of the industrial age, and the compulsion upon women to enter the active world. This event meant more opportunity than man had ever offered her, to become herself. It meant more implications than one could grasp at once. Intelligent men took too long in grasping them. The lesson our political intelligence might have taught us waited for the tidal wave of feminism,

* *Economie Politique.*

which cannot be viewed as having as yet revealed its nature or full strength.

In my letter to you I try to describe, Augustine, certain results of the coming of the machine; but who could adequately picture what it has meant to modern times? In the first place it meant the emergence of a new class in society, the factory owners, whose power was entirely economic. For a time this class appeared to deprive both church and state of all power. It struck at the roots of family life among the agricultural class even when they stayed away from the factories. When city families or families drawn to the city to work in the factories became wage earners, the inadequate pay given the man practically destroyed his authority as head of the family. Woman, having to become a wage earner too, was taken out of her traditional functions of relatedness. Children had to become wage earners, and lost their childhood. Ownership of industry created problems going into every direction, of the gravest nature, and menacing all institutions and groups, even hereditary landowners. The church has perhaps never recovered from the shock. The state, to survive, has had to assume much of the power of the owners and to invent intricate harnesses to restrain monopoly and extortion. The human beings involved in the maelstrom have aligned themselves in new groupings in order to survive. And these

unions and alliances have had to invent new weapons of defense.

The machine changed the relations of men and women. Woman was called upon for feats of adaptation to preserve the will to cherish, which is the root of her nature. No help could come to her from her fellow man. Church and state were slow in the small amount of help they gave her. The history of the race can show no page equal in spiritual promise to the way in which she has met her disasters. She has not solved her problems, but she has brought them into the open and stated them clearly.

Yet I wonder whether Mrs. Stanton in her fifteenth grievance was not making a demand which men are hardly in a position to fulfill. It is a great crime to destroy anybody's self-respect. It is true that men have not figured out a way to treat women so as to increase instead of vitiating her confidence in her own powers. But women have not figured out such a way to treat other women. It is a human question, and the center of our attempts to make the world better. Even forgetting the devastation caused by the machine, the progress of the race in this direction is so slow as hardly to be noticeable. One can hardly imagine a world in which each person made it his business to increase the self-respect of those with whom he lives and works. Ours is a society built less upon the uses of love than upon

those of impersonal and therefore quite often loveless activity.

If we changed Rousseau's program so as to make it apply to man in relation to his sisters as well as woman in relation to her brothers, it would read as follows: "Our education should always be relative to others. To please others, to be useful to others, to make others love and esteem us, to educate them when young, to take care of them when grown, to advise them, to console them, to render their lives easy and agreeable, these are our human duties at all times, and what we should be taught from our infancy."

The program still says nothing about our sterner gifts to one another of honesty and truth, perhaps, but it recognizes the fact that we are here to live among one another. And it is not only the self-respect and confidence of others which we have in our keeping, it is their health, their sanity, their very lives. It is what theorists like Rousseau and Marx destroy when they destroy the little associations, in the belief that the state can replace each of us in mutual aid and love.

Whatever touches the receptivity of men and women toward the fullness of each other, concerns joy as well as justice. Justice is essential, but joy is what renews hope; without hope we are nothing. And joy is at the very heart of our Lord's words

about his teaching of relatedness. "If ye know these things, happy are ye," he says to us. "Happy are ye," even now, at this moment. I believe that Mrs. Stanton, in her London speech, gave the right answer for the sexes. "Our task," she said, "is to create a way of living in which boys and girls and men and women work together at as many of life's tasks as possible." She did not mean that men and women were interchangeable, nor that given a certain task one sex would be as good as the other. She meant simply what she said, that they should work together when it was possible. It is not always possible for a woman to work beside a man, or a man beside a woman. It is requiring time for woman to find out her capabilities and her tendencies in regard to work. It might come down to an individual matter, Augustine. It seems that when a woman finds nothing to nourish her womanhood in her occupation she changes it, and keeps changing it until she finds work that answers to her nature. It seems that men should help her in her search. It would be hard to imagine any occupation of man or of woman which would not benefit from reciprocal comment at least. It would appear possible almost always for the two heads and the two hearts to be concerned together. For example, Rousseau's paragraph might have been shrewder if he had consulted Madame de Warens about it. Consider your own case, Bishop, in regard to religious dogmas, such as predestination to salva-

tion or infant damnation; the male-mind working by itself has made some atrocious blunders, whether in the omniscient church or the omniscient state.

Your mistress, in that far-off Roman world, was at a colossal disadvantage beside you with no key to the accumulated experience of the race, no full preparation to hold your hand and look with you into the future.

The unavailingness of the masculine mind operating without the feminine is written large in the condition of today. Woman's reverence for life and her powers of nourishing do not balance man's instinct for power. They are not allowed to. The way has not been prepared for them to do so. Even in the hearts of some women the clearing of the way has only just begun. Men who find their maleness bankrupt as a spiritual force, long for the assistance of women to whom peace means, as Elin Wägner said, not only "peace on earth but peace with the earth."

What I rejoice over in Mrs. Stanton is the idea of concern and comradeship together; it is a preliminary to perceiving the image of woman accurately. To help each other, the sexes must know each other. Patriarchy is done for and no good. It is true that we may yet see woman in her negative as well as positive aspects as we have never dreamt we should see her. She is being born again, is delivering herself of herself.

We think of God as male instead of female be-

cause during the patriarchal age we could not imagine God not being a man. But now that patriarchy has outlived its practicability and is following matriarchy into oblivion, and a new age which might be called filiarchy, the age of the child, begins, we feel that the Divine Spirit is more and more animated by the maternal. As Mother Julian said long since, "Mercy is a pitiful property which belongeth to the Motherhood in tender love; and grace is a worshipful quality which belongeth to the royal Lordship in the same love." For the sexes to get accurate images of each other, would be to stop being negative. Understanding paves the way for acceptance of each other's faults and weaknesses. I mean cheerful and warm acceptance—not cold acceptance. I think I mean that working together might help us to be more philosophical about each other's imperfections. Acceptance is a constructive act. A happy home, it is a safe surmise, is built on mutual acceptance—and a happy home is the best model the world has to copy, on the long road toward becoming a home for all (though for that matter any vital human relationship between two people can be a true home and a true model).

Heaven cannot turn loose in this singular world people so very different as men and women without their having constant friction—is it not so, Augustine?—and even though friction may at times shoot out sparks and so become "a source of light," still

it requires a complex spirit of self-forgetfulness, self-mockery, good sense, good humor, politeness of the heart, to make these contraries go along in double harness—they who are always bothering one another with all their self-importance and self-complacence, their self-pity, their feelings of inferiority and superiority; bothering one another more mysteriously with their dreams and needs, their formidable attractions and shinings, because of the hunger of each for the love of the other, and their actual need to be in each other's arms.

XXVIII

"I was . . . weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighborhood house, chanting, and oft repeating, 'Take up and read; take up and read.' Immediately my countenance was changed, and I began most earnestly to consider whether it was usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, restraining the torrent of my tears, I rose up, interpreting it no other way than as a command to me from Heaven to open the book, and to read the first chapter I should light upon. For I had heard of Antony, that accidentally coming in whilst the gospel was being read, he received the admonition as if what was read were addressed to him, 'Go and sell what you have, and give it to the

poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow me.' And by such oracle was he forthwith converted unto You. So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I put down the volume of the apostles, when I rose thence. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell—'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put yourself on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.' No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended—by a light, as it were, of security into my heart—all the gloom of doubt vanished away."

—*Confessions*, Book VIII, Chapter 12

One immediately thinks of the conversion of Paul, in which his entire outlook upon life changed, and from opposing the religion of our Lord and persecuting its followers he became one who suddenly understood it, saw its solution of life's spiritual problem, and gave himself to explaining and extending its message. The voice of the Lord spoke to him saying, "Why persecutest thou me, Saul?"

Paul's conversion was a tremendous event. Yours was an incident in one's inner life, apparently correcting a lack of self-discipline.

You did not regard conversion—if I understand your view as you explain it elsewhere—as a thing that takes place all at once. Rather, the mind changes and turns toward good slowly, bit by bit, piece by piece, after the paroxysm of the moment, its tissues and membranes slowly accustoming themselves to their previous sudden transformation.

XXIX

"For on that side toward which I had set my face, and whither I trembled to go, did the chaste dignity of Continence appear unto me, cheerful, but not dissolutely gay, honestly alluring me to come and doubt nothing and extending her holy hands, full of a multiplicity of good examples, to receive and embrace me. There were there so many young men and maidens, a multitude of youth and every age, grave widows and ancient virgins, and Continence herself in all, not barren, but a fruitful mother of children of joys, by You, O Lord, her husband. And she smiled on me with an encouraging mockery, as if to say, 'Can you not do what these youths and maidens can? Or can one or other do it of themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God' . . . And I blushed beyond measure."

—*Confessions*, Book VIII, Chapter 11

THE purpose of your group was to create a Christian atmosphere through each person's doing his best with himself as a follower of our Lord. That is, it was a group of individualistic well-doers. It came together less from mutual liking than from free acceptance of a way of living and working with one another. The church has always fostered such groups and has thus fostered an atmosphere good for human advancement, an atmosphere in which friendly groupings have been more and more possible.

And yet, the most characteristic sign of modern times and the one that strikes terror to the spirit is the loneliness of the individual.

XXX

"The delights of the ear had more firmly entangled and subdued me; but You did loosen, and free me. Now, in those melodies which Your words breathe soul into, when sung with a sweet and attuned voice, I do a little repose; yet not so as to be held thereby, but that I can disengage myself when I will. . . . At other times, I err in too great strictness; and sometimes to that degree, as to wish the whole melody of sweet music which is used to David's Psalter, banished from my ears, and the Church's too. . . . Yet again, when I remember the tears I shed at the Psalmody of Your Church, in the beginning of my recovered faith; and how at this time, I am moved, not with the singing, but with the things sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and modulation most suitable, I acknowledge the great use

of this institution. Thus I fluctuate between peril of pleasure, and approved wholesomeness; inclined the rather (though not as pronouncing an irrevocable opinion) to approve of the usage of singing in the church; that so by the delight of the ears, the weaker minds may rise to the feeling of devotion. Yet when it befalls me to be more moved with the voice than the words sung, I confess to have sinned criminally, and then had rather not hear music."

—*Confessions*, Book X, Chapter 33

It is not a matter of life and death to me whether you or anybody else cares for music. But I care for it myself, and so I wish to be sure that nobody takes any of it away from me. Truly, I regret that you wished at times that the pleasant songs to which David's Psalter is set could be banished from the church. I can't see why you want the Psalter taken away from others. I am glad you concluded the matter by inclining to the use of music in the church. But your reason for it, namely that it would stimulate the weaker minds toward devotion, seems to me (if I may say so), unbearably patronizing.

Bishop, we saw you separating from your mistress a while ago, though it was a shelter for her and for

your boy, and part of your own protection too against a great aggregate (the church). And now you brush aside a whole group of little associations, all those loving music of a kind not sacred and for church use. Was this wise? Are you not delivering yourself hand and foot into the power of the church, and would that be any better than into the power of the family or of the state? Our Lord said, "When two or three are gathered together in my name, there shall I be also." He was the spirit of relationship, and he said two or three, not two or three millions. Why should he object to little gatherings which bring peace and joy? Would he not desire all the gatherings possible that teach us to share?

XXXI

"As the day now approached on which she was to depart this life . . . it fell out . . . that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, from which the garden of the house we occupied at Ostia could be seen; at which place, removed from the crowd, we were resting ourselves for the voyage, after the fatigues of a long journey. We then were conversing alone very pleasantly; and 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' we were seeking between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which You are, of what nature the eternal life of the saints would be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man. But yet we opened wide the mouth of our heart, after those supernal streams of Your fountain, 'the fountain of

life,' which is 'with You'; that being sprinkled with it according to our capacity, we might in some measure weigh so high a mystery. . . .

"We were saying, then, if to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced—silenced the phantasies of earth, waters, and air—silenced fancies and imaginary revelations, every tongue, and every sign, and whatsoever exists by passing away, since, if any could hearken, all these say, 'We created not ourselves, but were created by Him who abideth forever. . . .'

"On the ninth day, then, of her sickness, the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine, was that religious and devout soul set free from the body.

"I closed her eyes; and there flowed a great sadness into my heart, and it was passing into tears, when mine eyes at the same time, by the violent control of my mind, sucked back the fountain dry, and woe was me in such a struggle! But, as soon as she breathed her last, the boy Adeodatus burst into wailing. . . .

"What, then, was that which did grievously pain me within, but the newly made wound, from having that most sweet and dear habit of living together suddenly broken off?"

—*Confessions,* Book IX,
Chapters 10, 11, and 12

"THAT most sweet and dear habit of living together" is one of your two main themes; the other is the phrase which begins your confessions: "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You." On these themes you make your unforgettable variations. They are the most beautiful expressions that have come down to us from Greco-Roman letters.

XXXII

"When the time had come to give in my name for baptism, we left the country and returned to Milan. Alypius had decided to be born again in You at the same time, for he was already endowed with the humility that your sacraments require, and had brought his body so powerfully under control that he could tread the icy soil of Italy with bare feet, which required unusual fortitude. We also took with us the boy Adeodatus, carnally begotten by me in my sin. You had made him well. He was barely fifteen, yet he was more intelligent than many a grave and learned man. In this I am but acknowledging to You Your own gifts, O Lord my God, Creator of all and powerful to reshape our shapelessness; for I had no part in that boy but the sin. That he had been brought up by us in Your way was because You had inspired us,

no other. I do but acknowledge to You Your own gifts. There is a book of mine called De Magistro; *it is a dialogue between him and me. You know, O God, that all the ideas which are put into the mouth of the other party to the dialogue were truly his, though he was but sixteen. I had experience of many other remarkable qualities in him. His great intelligence filled me with a kind of awe; and who but You could be the maker of things so wonderful? But you took him early from this earth, and I think of him utterly without anxiety, for there is nothing in his boyhood or youth or anywhere in him to cause me to fear. We took him along with us, the same age as ourselves in Your grace, to be brought up in Your discipline; and we were baptized, and all anxiety as to our past life fled away."*

—*Confessions,* Book IX, Chapter 6

YOUR son appears to have passed through his childhood, boyhood, and puberty with nothing to cause you worry, and so he presents a contrast to you. That he should have been such a charming and lovable youth is inevitably a tribute to his mother as well as to you. It seems to me that his

mother stays always just out of the reach of your pages, representing love. You must have intended it. A writer so full of nuance as you, knowing what to say, what not to say, must be read carefully.

Augustine, the death of one's son is an affliction which changes one's relation to society. Without one's son, sensitive spirits like you make sons of others, and thus regain the peace of mind of racial continuity. Thoughtful people as they grow older live for the race. In a sense we all lose our children; the edge of the nest draws them. In the beginning is our end, as in the end is our beginning—was it not Mary of Scotland who said this truth? The most sweet and dear habit of living together was already drawing you toward the life of the rectory, and with the death of your boy you turned in sadness to an impersonal fatherhood.

XXXIII

". . . and I perceived myself to be far off from You, in the region of unlikeness, as if I heard Your voice from on high: 'I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon Me; nor shall you convert Me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be converted into Me.' "

—*Confessions,* Book VII, Chapter 10

It is one of the utterances of your spirit which make you so excessively great. Most of the time you are an ordinary man, and then suddenly you pour out words which lift your stature mountain-high. You speak for every human being in the world at such moments. We meet you in the

world of tears; you are there, in the core of our music, our poetry. Our deepest, least knowable part is our religious spirit. Our various religions have been responses to it. Our mystical aspiration is the most striking character in the drama of our natural history. It has always floated like a dream, like a summer cloud, in the heavens of our awareness. So far back as we recognize ourselves in ancient man, it is what we know ourselves by.

Hail and Farewell

MODERN men, like detectives, have investigated the beginnings of life on this planet, and the beginnings of our planet itself. I wish it were possible for me to take you to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, for there we might see the story of Genesis inscribed in a startling way. Shall we pretend that it is somehow possible for you to accompany me in my car on this six-hundred-mile journey? Certainly you are with me in my thoughts. I think we need to get away from all the detail of your school days and your life, for a bigger view of things. What there is to say about your school days, and everybody's school days—frankly, I don't know how to say it; it is a thing to be said so quietly, so overwhelmingly, that I would like the Grand Canyon itself to say it.

Let us start out on the highway this very moment, you the ordinary man with the extraordinary man

within you, seated beside me. And this very moment is eternity; we must struggle to see it as eternity, we must be sure that eternal life is not only to come, we are living it from the moment we die to ourselves. For our Lord has made this great fact most clear to us. The moment we put ourselves second and others first, we enter the resurrection in eternity. It is right now. Our awareness that each moment is indestructible is right now.

We are going along the ground, which is like the floor of a vast ocean of air. We are at the bottom of pure translucent air-currents, and our car would seem to an onlooker yonder a sub-atmospheric beetle weaving its way between boulders and ravines, on a road unwinding to the sunset. We would watch the sun rise through this water-like air, and the stars come out and take their courses. The surges of the west wind would beat our cheeks through the car windows. The red-tailed hawk, the raven, the golden eagle would soar and swim above us, the road runner dart ahead and along the shoulders of the highway. It would be the world of men who lived long centuries before either of us. In this region we feel much nearer those early men than you felt in Carthage or in Rome. For their descendants still live in villages so much like the earth that we hardly notice them as we pass near them, or in little huts made of the cedars and piñones they stand among.

I understand you far better than I do these no-

madic people through whose land we journey; I understand you better than I would a Chinese, a Japanese, a Hindu, even though they were my contemporaries. It can only mean that the kind of civilization in which I live my life is directly descended from Roman civilization. The homes in which we live are modeled on Roman houses; our laws are formed upon Roman laws. Our acceptance of war and the advancement in its science are completely Roman. The "habit of empire" which afflicts European and American nations follows the course Rome pursued. When even the life of an individual today can be so close a counterpart of a Roman's life, one is reminded that our picture of the religion of Jesus is a Roman picture.

Our Lord balanced the opposites in our nature. He made allowance for error and deviation. It never occurred to him to believe that man was made of anything outside of nature, for to him the most heavenly things were natural. And the medicine men of these nomadic people through whose land we are riding, may or may not be actively toiling and preaching with words for a better world. It is more likely that their activity is intense and circumscribed. They are observing in the careful ways that lead to praise, the handiwork of our Creator. They do not regard his handiwork as culminating in themselves or in mankind, but rather they direct their meditation to the beauty, the strangeness, and the mystery

of the world. They are a wild and free people, beautiful on their horses. They often show a reverence for life modern man knows nothing about.

Yonder to the south rises the Enchanted Mesa, ivory in the sunlight. Once a young woman went there with her family and resolved to climb it. With barked shins and hands, and clothes torn, she climbed it, and she came down with a poem, * certain lines of which made me think of you—a pure terse statement of the best you had to give us, and one of the greatest and most comforting of truths—

Holds us also
That which we strove against
In climbing. . . .

For as you say of your impossible masters at the grammar school, "by the instrumentality of those who did not well by me, You did well for me." So it is, by the instrumentality of our struggle, our plastic and rhythmic struggle against what is difficult in us and in others and in nature, the Eternal, if we permit it, does well for us, very well indeed. But in this poem there are other lines which do not make me think of you—

The heart soars
Lifted upon its own roots. . . .

* Peggy Pond Church, "Familiar Journey," Santa Fe, 1936.

but do make me think of him of Assisi, and the colossal comfort he is to us. That the heart lifts from its own roots is the greatest of all truths, and what we want is the truth. But you too take form, my beloved Bishop, and far more than most men you hold your form; and although light does not come through you sometimes, at other times most piercingly it does.

It is the moment now to speak of Francis, the saint of them all who most bears seed for our future. Sometimes I forget to be tender with you, Augustine; there is too much of you in me, and I am more afraid of self-pity than you were. But it is better to be tender, better to say to myself, "This Augustine-part of me speaks out of failure and despair; it is driven wild by difficulties which keep it from the Great Spirit. It speaks truth when it says that the main thing is to reach to unity and oneness, and so find peace for the heart. Let it struggle, organize, draw up systems—only, let it never give orders to others. It is feeling which asks the great questions and which knows despair, and it is reason which tries to answer them. Let the mind give reasons, not orders; let it advise and counsel our feeling."

In this way I try to keep the Augustine-part of me in its proper place. For I am a Westerner; I could not exist without being of near kin to you, Bishop. But by itself the Augustine-part of me, those qualities in me which I see in you, cannot find the way to peace, cannot make me good for myself or for any-

body else. Left to its own devices, it would only lose me in Stygian organizations and dogmas, in constant introspection, in the unawareness and non-regard of others which ensues. Francis is not naturalized in our Western hearts; he remains strange to us. We must grow toward him through you, Augustine; all our history shows it. We can grow toward Francis through you, Augustine, for you were stopped on your path by the same mountain range that stops us. You could exclaim through your tears, "this most sweet and dear habit of living together"; but even with all your talents for paternal relationship you could not keep our living together sweet and dear. Nor can we. To live together we must find the right way, and Francis, who was truly close to our Lord, shows us how. The group life which stopped you, Augustine, and which stops us, did not stop Francis. He took to it as his natural element. He merely gave back to his father what he found hindrance in inherited culture and dogma, and walked out of the Bishop's office, as he said "naked and light," and "in the gay science" of a sure esteem for earth and man the vessel of earth.

The Augustine-part needs the Francis-part more than anything else. We are cut off from our fellow man, from our brother sun, our sister water, our brother wind, our brother fire, our mother earth. Francis called them his family and the garments of the Lord. It is not necessary to wear a brown robe

and talk a certain kind of talk to be a Franciscan. A Franciscan is one of the great types of creatureliness into which the Great Spirit divided us. But the day of Francis is coming; I see little figures and likenesses of him suddenly appearing here and there. Into that Pittsburgh where I spent my young manhood he is entering more and more. In a beautiful new Baptist church on Bellefield Avenue he, or one of his order, is in the carving of the pulpit; he is in the stained glass of the Heinz chapel; he is in a private garden in Sewickley; in painted wood in the antechapel at the convent in Millvale. He is elsewhere, too; he has a small and quiet chapel in New York, close to a great railway station. With his peculiar calm and comfort for us moderns, he is newly arriving everywhere. This coming of Francis of Assisi into our sight and our thoughts, in statues and painting and glass, is one of the wonders of the new world. It is the spread of a spirit which three generations ago was only the name of a far-off holy man no one knew much about. This is now going on, Augustine; it may be a first sign of the deepest agitation for centuries. Francis is a point of reconciliation, not of dissension. To mention his name is never to start an argument. White, brown, black, we are all interested in him, wondering and curious. He frees us from dialectic, from abstract thought, from the riddle of the universe and the riddle of ourselves. He frees us from our own tangles and times of lostness in words,

for with him it was not a case of talking and theology. His every thought had to throw itself into action; it is into a world of deeds not of words that he leads us. These deeds were to be the gathering of stones to rebuild the one church, which is not visible but spirit. His is a nest for all. He started no revolution and meditated no purges, he had nothing to do with any any quarrel or schism, he worked within the existing order, changing it little by little, and content to trust entirely to this way of change.

On the other side of the road sleeps the Painted Desert, preparing us for the Grand Canyon. One moment it looks like a million painted butterflies, the next like a million gray-blue rhinoceroses perished here in a herd thousands of years ago, their mummified bellies a lichen-like greenish-red. And as for the rest of the landscape, as for the San Francisco Peaks, a hundred miles away a moment ago, there was a white cloud over them rising in the blue sky, and all this scene has long been dear to men, to the Apache and Navajo in particular, and they have woven across it in the way of men with their familiar land, a thousand stories. In the dramatis personae of these stand two great characters, Coyote and Turkeycock, surrounded by others shrewdly drawn, Road Runner, Big Owl, Bobcat.*

* Grenville Goodwin, *Myths and Tales of the White Mountain Apache,* American Folk-Lore Society, 1939.

The mind from which these stories come is so primitive that we would have nothing from the Greeks or Romans to match them. They make the sixteen centuries between you and me seem like sixteen years. As communication they bear the stamp of our own humanity; they deal with situations ever recurrent, mirthful, melancholy, or just plain practical. I recall one about a man of whom his friends and relatives grew tired. For one called upon to face that worst of all desperations, the way out is often suicide; collective disapproval is a form of attention that can burn one up like fire, so dependent are we on friendship and affection. (A young Navajo not long ago killed himself because his brother refused him a drink at a party.) The man in my story was a friend of Turkey, and talked matters over with him. Both decided the thing to do was to get into a hollow log, plug up the ends, roll it into the water, and let the water carry them as far as it went. When they got out of the log, they found they had reached a good place to farm, and Turkey laid it down as a maxim that one should start making use of the land wherever the land was good.

The young man said, "Yes, but I have no seeds to plant, and I don't know where I can get any."

"All that you want we have right here," said Turkey, and both fell to leveling and scratching up the ground.

When they had cleared it, Turkey shook his body

and out from his feathers fell white, blue, yellow, red, and brown corn, and beans as well. The story goes on for a long time, with Turkey helping the man and giving him gifts, so that the man felt happy about Turkey and liked him more and more.

The mention of the river in this story shows how people who live in riverless countries dream of rivers, rivers big enough to bear logs along on their currents. The outcast desperate man who perseveres until he reaches land that is arable has the help of Turkey; but who can say what Turkey represents in that early human mind? All we know is that Turkey was the man's friend, or benefactor, or God, and a part of nature rather than outside it or above it.

My dear Bishop, we have reached the Canyon. It is a night of full moon. We see the moonlight in the great gulfs, casting shadows which closely resemble the Katchina gods of the nearby Hopi Indians. Morning comes; we sit in the sun, and gaze into depths that vibrate color. Not the slightest sign of life exists in the mother-rock down there, strata the formation of which took billions of years—years in which the planet was being formed in a great struggle of the incandescent gases. These gases cooled and condensed into meteoric masses of stone and metal. The atmosphere was no doubt hundreds of miles high, and the heaviest masses sank to the gravitational center and became our *terra firma*. There was little

scope for life as we think of it today; there was too little free oxygen, free nitrogen, carbon dioxide.

Vapor that trailed over the stony mass hid it from the sun. The rains lasted for centuries; hissing steam gave way to fresh water which filled hollows and gulches. In this growing sea must have lived the first life. The rocks down in those tremendous bursts of color which bear the first record of life show that this father and mother life was cellular, like all life today. It was aquatic plants. It was microscopic bacteria. From the archeozoic age, a billion years ago, life has been a vast oxidation. How did it first appear on this planet? Anyone is entitled to a guess; no one witnessed the historic event. Who knows? You may well wonder where you were before you were in your mother. Where were any of us? We have no idea. All we know is that we are here.

The story that begins in the Jurassic and Tertiary levels of the Grand Canyon, Augustine, tells us that we are children of nature, and a certain kind of children, mammals. In the animal kingdom, we belong to the highest vertebrates, warm-blooded, born of the mother's body, nourished with her milk. Thus in human life the mother and father make the babe together, with their love; and after the babe is born, they continue making, shaping, protecting the young life with their love, when they have the chance, through the long years required by a human being to

mature. That it takes those long years has been man's unconscious guide in personal and tribal life. It is a fact; it warns him that any civilization which does not center its activities about the mother and the babe will vanish. It is a fact too which helps man notice what is destructive, even murderous, in daily life and in religion. Sooner or later he notices it, and he acts to change it.

When we peer into the colored canyon for light upon the inward mystery of ourselves, we are told what our Lord himself told us, that human life must center its faith in love and in children, or it will leave no trace. It is a good deal for the history of earth to tell us. Yet I am not sure that it is all.

If a person does not fear to look into the canyon and see distance such as he has never seen elsewhere, depth such as he has never dreamt of, and if he becomes lost in shades of gentian and cherry and trout-like silver, watches the unceasing change of hue and form in depth, distance, color, he will have feelings that do not well go into words and are perhaps more real on that account. Through the beautiful obscurities of color he may feel inexpressible realities shining. Or an evanescent thought may come to him, fragile, far away, and yet destined more than great events to shape his own life and sometimes the lives of people near him.

The body of man, the body of earth, they may be

part of the same reality. And so, lying beside the Grand Canyon of the Colorado this sunny morning, looking into deeps filled with the quiet and the color of the Ancient of Days, let us in our fancy place the very greatest historical figures, Alexander, Akbar, on the rim of the gulf across from us; they disappear, only a telescope can find them and their irrelevancies. But Francis of Assisi keeps his stature; he collects beautiful stones yonder to mingle with the stones of the Umbrian countryside in the walls of the church eternal. And you, my Bishop? At least, nothing can ever dwarf you when you say, "You have made us for Yourself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You," or when you speak of ". . . our most sweet and dear habit of living together." I wish, almost, that you might have said these words in a million ways, and said nothing else! There is so much to say and too little time to say it in. And so much to listen to, in the stillness of our eternity. And there is never time to listen, really listen, unless one sacrifices the transient and the unimportant to hear it.

We are mammals. We bear children. We beget and conceive the future. We have eluded blind alley after alley where the other mammals lost their way and their secret hope. We are part of the great mystery we call earth, are bound from the past to the future, have learned a few things about cherishing and nourishing that future we bear within us, in the eternity we live in. Now, after earth has said the quiet

overwhelming thing it has to say about your school days and all school days, and what should be taught all schoolchildren, we see the figure of our Lord standing before us still, only more wonderful, because more honestly ours. They were right, the medieval artists and decorators of books, who pictured him walking among the creatures and the flowers. He is here in the Canyon too, among the clouds and crevices and flowerlike colors. He told us to hold our children in common love in the world of the kingdom in which we can *right now* take care of one another. The teaching of earth blossoms in what he said.

You were afraid to encourage men, dear Augustine, for fear that a little encouragement would go to their heads and, becoming proud and self-sufficient, they would fall. This fear, acting with other elements in your nature, tended to make you limit the possibilities of our life together. But today we need to feel that we have limitless possibilities for good. We do not need to be made to feel fettered, blinded, blindfolded. We cannot afford to feel so. Self-centeredness is holding us back.

You and I have been talking about murder, among other matters. We have seen that the impulse to kill is not a simple one, but comes from many forms of disloyalty and of irreverence for life. I was looking for positive and helpful elements in your great humanity. I have found what I was looking for in that constant

oscillation of your heart toward the sweet and dear habit of our living together. I have seen you fail the instinct as regards family existence, and try to repair the damage by forming other clusterings. And I have seen you extraordinarily sensitive to the venomous nuclei of human life, the wicked groupings that destroy us. Your life-story corresponds with tragic exactitude to our own.

I am drawing my letter to a close. But let us talk a little more about children, for today the world of children is a bad one. The wars have done so much damage to childhood in many lands that we almost despair of repairing it. In Russia during the twenty-five years following the Revolution there were thousands of wild children. They had various songs, and one of them was:

I am a lost boy,
Lost am I forever,
Gone father and mother,
Gone sister and brother,
I wander all alone. . . .

The USSR established various places for the recovery of such children as good citizens. Wild Boy Colony 66, established in the villa of a murdered aristocrat outside Leningrad, was guarded merely by one old peasant aged eighty; the children had not found the life of crime one to which they wished

to return. In the bad days their hunger had forced them to hunt in packs, like wolves, and they had killed when necessary to get food. They lived in cellars of palaces, unused sewers, and caves beneath city walls, as in our American depression children lived a similar life in the subways of New York.

In the United States, the boy and girl tramps took to the road because of the hard times that followed the panic of the autumn of 1929. A teacher of sociology in one of the state universities dressed himself as a hobo and went along. He met and talked with hundreds of them, and concluded that four-fifths had left home because there was no money to provide for them. A boy named Joe seemed typical of these children. He told the disguised teacher his story as they lay on the floor of a box car (the car smelling of wheat, and they were both hungry).

"My father didn't exactly kick me out," said Joe, "but he gave me lots of hints. He hasn't worked steady in the last three years, and there's seven of us at home. I'm the oldest, seventeen. Two years ago I worked six months for a grocer who gave me food instead of money. Then he closed up. I couldn't find anything else, and the old man kept giving hints. Last fall they cut down on our relief. We had to go to bed because the house was so cold. I cut nine cords of wood for a man and he gave me two. That wasn't so bad and I thought I could stay until Christmas, and I

got the kids a duck. Then, before the old man could start giving me any more hints, I cleared out." *

Joe could have stayed at home if either he or his father had had work. He left his family to help them, as he might have jumped overboard from a lifeboat too heavily loaded. He was not a wild boy, but he became one. In the case of other children, one reflects that the difficulties and desires of adolescence are grave enough even in a well-ordered world, but when the home is fundamentally disturbed, their situation becomes desperate.

From what this sociologist had to say about wild children stealing food and clothing, it was clear the the country found wild children a problem impossible to cope with. Yet we are a nation familiar with the teachings of our Lord, which the Christian church has always carried with it. Under normal conditions, the children would have been at work or in school, and so would present no difficulty even to our community life, still half Greco-Roman.

There were not so many of these children as in Russia; but at a time when there were two hundred thousand wild children in America, Congress was still so baffled as to what to do that it ignored their plight. In Russia the wild children numbered three quarters of a million. The government divided them into three classes, the simply homeless and starving, those

* Thomas Minehan, *Boy and Girl Tramps of America*, New York, 1933.

who had taken to crime, and the defective and mentally ill; and they were treated in accordance.*

To continue speaking of children, I read recently the following story: On Whitmonday, May 26, 1828, a youth of sixteen years shuffled and tottered into the streets of Nuremberg with a mysterious letter to the captain of the guard. Medical examination showed deformities of thigh and ham from which it was concluded that he had been kept for many years in a space too small for him to stand up. He knew a few words of German. He moaned and whimpered these words on every occasion, so they had no precise meaning for him. He could sign his name, but write nothing else. He had been fed only bread and water, for he refused all other kinds of food with horror. His demeanor was that of a child of two or three, with the body of a young man. He looked at objects without noticing them, stared at people and the world and suffered all to pass by without his being affected by them. His face was without expression, and did not seem human, though the features were human enough. He used his hands and fingers only with difficulty. He had a name (bua) for all humans. and another name (ross) for all fowls, birds, and beasts; he saw with pleasure white horses and fowls; black objects dead or alive made him afraid.†

* Lowell Ames Norris, "America's Homeless Army." *Scribner's Magazine*, May, 1933.

† *Caspar Hauser*, tr. from the German of Anselm von Feuerbach, Boston, 1832.

Pestalozzi, who made so much luminous in the shadows of life, never wearied of saying, "Man, formed of the dust of the earth, grows and ripens like a plant rooted in the soil." Caspar Hauser was like a plant that had never had a chance. He was like a plant that comes up under a board, and tries to grow, and stretches out its length flat and white and leafless. When you take the board away, and the plant has the light of the sun, it changes rapidly, turns green, puts forth leaves, tries to stand upright. So it was with Caspar after his long banishment from human nature. The burgomaster told the jailer who had charge of him to take him into his own home. There the jailer's children, a daughter aged three, and a boy aged eleven, played with the sixteen-year-old lad. At first Caspar preferred the little girl, being like her of a three-year-old mentality; but he grew so fast in the atmosphere of home and human interest, that in a few months he was playing with the eleven-year-old boy on equal terms, and it was from this boy and in the group life of the family that he learned to talk. A young professor named Daumer became interested in helping him, and in time he grew as much like other people as could be expected—at least of one who had no childhood and no love as a baby. The magistrate Anselm von Feuerbach, who wrote a small volume about Caspar, says of him that in maturity he had one particular ability, he was a good horseman. As a young child he had apparently been

given a toy horse to play with, and during his first months in the home of the jailer, people gave him hobby horses. One of the milestones in his self-education was the day he came to the conclusion that these beasts were not really alive, because they did not eat the grain he gave them.

A documented story about a child mistreated a century ago in a far-off country has advantages over stories I might tell you, Bishop, about children not valued and not cherished. It is much less perplexing.

The present moment of world history is difficult to face. No war ever left so many orphaned or homeless children. In 1946, Czechoslovakia was trying to care for fifty thousand parentless children, and Greece sixty thousand. Yugoslavia had half a million children without one or both parents and Poland had the same estimated number. Millions of Chinese children have never known anything but terror and insecurity born of war. They need food to live, but if they get it they will need what the children of Europe need more than anything, the assurance of affection and firm human and family ties. Though much is being done to provide food and clothing, the problem is so vast that we have not envisaged a big enough way to handle and solve it.

After the Second World War, the hospitals of New York City made an effort to find temporary

homes for some two or three hundred babies. In some cases the fathers of these babies had been killed and the mothers were not yet able to make a home to receive them. Or the fathers might be detained in the armies of occupation, or the mothers might be ill, or, as in a few cases, dead, with no relatives at hand. A future home was waiting for each child, but it was imperative to place them in a temporary home as soon as possible. "Without affection," said the woman in charge of the bureau, "babies become listless and passive. They don't look cherished, but they will improve—oh, so very much—with affectionate care."

She told of one child, nine-months-old Donald, who "just lay there, like a poor little lump, white-faced, not creeping or lifting himself or even turning over. He was taken into a foster-family, and at first accepted every change with indifference. But soon he began to demand attention and affection and changed into a very happy little boy. He became normal to the extent of being at times very, very naughty."

It would seem that the one thing a little mammal of the human species is always in need of, and without which he grows listless or worse, is care and love. And it is true of human beings at any stage, high-school children, and middle-aged people, and aging people. I mean, Augustine, they need this care and

love from one another, to receive it and to give it.

We have been talking about little things for a long time. I suppose I shall always be sending you thought-letters, Augustine. But now,

Farewell.