

treasures of wisdom and knowledge,²⁰⁶ has redeemed me with his blood. Let not the proud disparage me,²⁰⁷ for I am mindful of my ransom. I eat it, I drink it,²⁰⁸ I dispense it to others, and as a poor man I long to be filled²⁰⁹ with it among those who are fed and feasted. And then do those who seek him praise the Lord.²¹⁰

Book XI

Time and Eternity

Chapter 1

1. Eternity belongs to you, O Lord, so surely you can neither be ignorant of what I am telling you, nor view what happens in time as though you were conditioned by time yourself.¹

Why then am I relating all this to you at such length? Certainly not in order to inform you. I do it to arouse my own loving devotion toward you, and that of my readers, so that together we may declare, *Great is the Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise*.² I have said already, and will say again, that it is out of love for loving you that I do this, even as we pray for things though Truth tells us that *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him*.³ We confess to you our miseries and the mercies you have shown us in your will to set us free completely, as you have begun to do already; and by so confessing to you we lay bare our loving devotion. Our hope is that we may cease to be miserable in ourselves and may find our beatitude in you; for you have called us to be poor in spirit, to be meek, to mourn,

²⁰⁶ *Your only Son, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge*: See Colossians 2:3.

²⁰⁷ *Let not the proud disparage me*: See Psalm 118(119):22.

²⁰⁸ *I eat it, I drink it*: See John 6:55, 57; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 11:29. Here the Eucharist is represented as the antidote to pride: as an ordained priest, Augustine is charged to dispense it; as a sinful Christian, he longs to receive it.

²⁰⁹ *as a poor man I long to be filled*: See Luke 16:21.

²¹⁰ *those who seek him praise the Lord*: See Psalm 21:27(22:26).

¹ *Eternity belongs to you, O Lord, . . . conditioned by time yourself*: In confessing his life in God, Augustine sees that while memory makes the recalling of such a narrative possible, it is time through which he must cross. Analysis of memory (Book X) thus leads to the contemplation of time (Book XI) because memory comes into being only as the soul traverses forward (just as the future comes into being only as the soul looks ahead), and it is this traversing which Augustine will call "time". Book X ended with Jesus Christ introduced as Mediator, and since the Eternal has now broken into time, time must next be treated and, in so doing, Augustine shows us how sequence leads to duration, movement to rest, time to eternity.

² *Great is the Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise*: Psalm 47:2(48:1); 95(96):4; 144(145):3, echoing the *Confessions*' opening line.

³ *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him*: Matthew 6:8.

serving him she brought forth fruit for you by patience,¹⁴⁰ to win him for you in the end. Inspire others, my Lord, my God,¹⁴¹ inspire your servants who are my brethren, your children who are my masters, whom I now serve with heart and voice and pen, that as many of them as read this may remember Monica, your servant, at your altar, along with Patricius, sometime her husband. From their flesh you brought me into this life, though how I do not know. Let them remember with loving devotion these two who were my parents in this transitory light, but also were my brethren under you, our Father, within our mother the Catholic Church,¹⁴² and my fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem, for which your people¹⁴³ sighs with longing throughout its pilgrimage, from its setting out to its return. So may the last request she made of me be granted to her more abundantly by the prayers of many, evoked by my confessions, than by my prayers alone.

Book X

Memory

Chapter 1

1. Let me know you, O you who know me; then shall I know even as I am known.¹ You are the strength of my soul; make your way in and shape it to yourself, that it may be yours to have and to hold, free from stain or wrinkle.² I speak because this is my hope,³ and whenever my joy springs from that hope it is joy well founded. As for the rest of this life's experiences, the more tears are shed over them the less are they worth weeping over, and the more truly worth lamenting the less do we bewail them while mired in them.⁴ You love the truth⁵ because anyone who "does truth" comes to the light. Truth it is that I want to do, in my heart by confession in your presence, and with my pen before many witnesses.⁶

Chapter 2

Motives for confession

2. But the abyss of the human conscience lies naked to your eyes, O Lord,⁷ so would anything in me be secret even if I

¹ then shall I know even as I am known: See 1 Corinthians 13:12; 8:2-3; Galatians 4:9.

² free from stain or wrinkle: See Ephesians 5:27.

³ I speak because this is my hope: See Psalm 115(116):10; 2 Corinthians 4:13.

⁴ the more tears are shed over them . . . the less do we bewail them while mired in them: Disordered loves invert our priorities by placing lesser over higher goods. As a result, Augustine notes here, the things we spend so much energy worrying about are, in the end, not so important, while the concerns that should motivate our every heart's beat are usually the first things to be put off until tomorrow.

⁵ You love the truth: See Psalm 50:8(51:6).

⁶ anyone who "does truth" comes to the light . . . before many witnesses: See John 3:21; Ephesians 4:15.

⁷ lies naked to your eyes, O Lord: See Strach 42:18-20; Hebrews 4:13.

¹⁴⁰ brought forth fruit for you by patience: See Luke 8:15.

¹⁴¹ my Lord, my God: See John 20:28.

¹⁴² our mother the Catholic Church: certainly an echo of that other great North African bishop Cyprian (d. 258): "You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother" (*On The Unity of the Catholic Church* §6).

¹⁴³ fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem, for which your people: See Hebrews 11:10, 13, 14.

were unwilling to confess to you? I would be hiding you from myself, but not myself from you. But now that my groans bear witness that I find no pleasure in myself, you shed light upon me and give me joy, you offer yourself, lovable and longed for, that I may thrust myself away in disgust and choose you, and be pleasing no more either to you or to myself except in what I have from you.⁸

To you, then, Lord, I lie exposed, exactly as I am. I have spoken of what I hope to gain by confessing to you. My confession to you is made not with words of tongue and voice, but with the words of my soul and the clamor of my thought, to which your ear is attuned; for when I am bad, confession to you is simply disgust with myself, but when I am good, confession to you consists in not attributing my goodness to myself, because though you, Lord, bless the person who is just, it is only because you have first made him just when he was sinful.⁹ This is why, O my God, my confession in your presence is silent, yet not altogether silent: there is no noise to it, but it shouts by love. I can say nothing right to other people unless you have heard it from me first, nor can you even hear anything of the kind from me which you have not first told me.

Chapter 3

3. What point is there for me in other people hearing my confessions? Are they likely to heal my infirmities?¹⁰ A curious lot they are, eager to pry into the lives of others, but tardy when it comes to correcting their own. Why should they seek

⁸ I find no pleasure in myself . . . what I have from you: This is far from some sort of Buddhist self-denial: for the Christian, the self must always "thrust away" any illusion of autonomy (not to mention loneliness or need to be self-sufficient), as each of the baptized must understand himself no longer as a separate "I" from Christ, but now a "we" dwelling in each of God's children. Augustine here is calling for us not to destroy the self but to see it as inherently relational. Is this not why Jesus taught us to pray incessantly, "Our Father"?

⁹ you have first made him just when he was sinful: See Psalm 5:13(12); Romans 4:5.

¹⁰ heal my infirmities: See Psalm 102(103):3; Matthew 4:23.

to hear from me what I am, when they are reluctant to hear from you what they are? And when they hear from me about myself, how do they know that I am speaking the truth, since no one knows what goes on inside a person except the spirit of that person within him?¹¹ If, on the contrary, they hear from you about themselves, they will be in no position to say, "The Lord is lying." Is hearing the truth about oneself from you anything different from knowing oneself? And can anyone have this self-knowledge and still protest, "It is not true," unless he himself is lying?

Yet charity believes without stint,¹² at least among those who are bonded together by charity,¹³ and so I also confess to you, Lord, in such a way that people to whom I can offer no proof may discern whether I confess truthfully. I cannot prove it, but all whose ears are open to me by love will believe me.

4. All the same, my inward healer, make clear to me what advantage there is in doing this. When the confession of my past evil deeds is read and listened to—those evil deeds which you have forgiven and covered over¹⁴ to make me glad in yourself, transforming my soul by faith and your sacrament—that recital arouses the hearer's heart, forbidding it to slump into despair and say, "I can't." Let it rather keep watch¹⁵ for your loving mercy and your gentle grace, through which every weak soul that knows its own weakness grows strong.¹⁶ It is cheering to good people to hear about the past evil deeds of those who are now freed from them: cheering not because the deeds were evil but because they existed once but exist no more.¹⁷

¹¹ no one knows what goes on inside a person except the spirit of that person within him: See 1 Corinthians 2:11.

¹² charity believes without stint: See 1 Corinthians 13:7.

¹³ among those who are bonded together by charity: See Colossians 3:14.

¹⁴ evil deeds which you have forgiven and covered over: See Psalm 31(32):1.

¹⁵ keep watch: See Song of Solomon 5:2; Matthew 25:1-13.

¹⁶ your gentle grace . . . every weak soul that knows its own weakness grows strong: See 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

¹⁷ It is cheering to good people to hear about the past evil deeds . . . exist no more: Only in Christianity can admittance of such past sin elicit joy. Augustine is aware of how his bringing to light all that he has done and experienced should

But then what profit is there, O my Lord, to whom my conscience confesses every day, more secure in the hope of your mercy than in its own innocence—what profit is there, I ask, if through these writings I also confess to other people in your presence not what I have been, but what I still am? The desirability of confessing the past I have recognized and stated; but there are many people who desire to know what I still am at this time of writing my confessions, people who know me without really knowing me, people who have read my works or know me only by hearsay. None of these have laid their ears to my heart, though it is only there that I am whoever I am. They therefore want to hear from my own confession what I am within, where they can venture neither eye nor ear nor mind. They want to hear and are ready to believe me: will they really recognize me? Yes, because the charity that makes them good assures them that I am not lying when I confess about myself; that very charity in them believes me.

Chapter 4

5. But what do they hope to gain, those who want this? Do they wish to congratulate me when they hear how much progress I am making toward you by your gift, and to pray for me when they hear how badly I am dragged back by my own weight? To people like that I will disclose myself, for it is no small gain, O Lord my God, if thanks are offered to you by many people on our account¹⁸ and many pray to you for us. Yes, let a fraternal mind love in me what you teach us to be worthy of love, and deplore in me what you teach us to be deplorable. But let it be

be occasion for gratitude. In a mysterious way, such confession is Christ's example at John 20:21, where showing his paschal wounds elicits joy from the apostles (as opposed to sorrow or revenge, as most wounds would). When the Father brings us to himself and heals what has been wounded, we should rejoice and therefore not wallow in shame but let others see the power of God to heal and to raise.

¹⁸ thanks are offered to you by many people on our account: See 2 Corinthians 1:11.

a brotherly mind that does this, not the mind of a stranger, not the minds of alien foes who mouth falsehood and whose power wreaks wickedness;¹⁹ let it be a brotherly mind which when it approves of me will rejoice over me, and when it disapproves will be saddened on my account, because whether it approves or disapproves it still loves me. To such people I will disclose myself: let them sigh with relief over my good actions, but with grief over my evil deeds. The good derive from you and are your gift; the evil are my sins and your punishments. Let them sigh with relief over the one and with grief over the other, and let both hymns and laments ascend into your presence from the hearts of my brethren, which are your censures.²⁰ And then do you, Lord, in your delight at the fragrance which pervades your holy temple, have mercy on me according to your great mercy²¹ for the sake of your name.²² Do not, I entreat you, do not abandon your unfinished work, but bring to perfection all that is wanting in me.²³

6. So then, when I confess not what I have been but what I am now, this is the fruit to be reaped from my confessions: I confess not only before you in secret exultation tinged with fear²⁴ and secret sorrow infused with hope, but also in the ears of believing men and women, the companions of my joy and sharers in my mortality, my fellow citizens still on pilgrimage with me, those who have gone before and those who will follow, and all who bear me company in my life. They are your servants and my brethren, but you have willed them to be your children and my masters, and you have ordered me to serve them if I wish to live with you and share your life. This command of yours would mean little to me if it were only

¹⁹ not the mind of a stranger . . . whose power wreaks wickedness: See Psalm 143(144):11.

²⁰ hymns and laments ascend into your presence from the hearts . . . which are your censures: See Revelation 8:3–4.

²¹ have mercy on me according to your great mercy: See Psalm 50:3(51:1).

²² for the sake of your name: See Matthew 10:22; 24:9; John 15:21.

²³ do not abandon your unfinished work, but bring to perfection all that is wanting in me: See Philippians 1:6.

²⁴ tinged with fear: See Psalm 2:11.

spoken, and not first carried out in deed as well.²⁵ So I do likewise, and I do it in deeds and in words; I do it under your outstretched wings²⁶ and would do it in grave peril, were it not that under those wings my soul is surrendered to you²⁷ and to you my weakness known. I am a little child, but my Father lives for ever and in him I have a guardian suited to me. He who begot me is also he who keeps me safe; you yourself are all the good I have, you are almighty and you are with me before ever I am with you.

To such people, then, the people you command me to serve, I will disclose myself not as I have been but as I am now, as I am still, though I do not judge myself.²⁸ In this way, then, let me be heard.

Chapter 5

7. For it is you, Lord, who judge me. No one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him,²⁹ yet there is still some part of him which remains hidden even from his own spirit; but you, Lord, know everything about a human being because you have made him. And though in your sight I may despise myself and reckon myself dust and ashes³⁰ I know something about you which I do not know about myself. It is true that we now see only a tantalizing reflection in a mirror,³¹ and so it is that while I am on pilgrimage far from you³²

²⁵ This command of yours . . . carried out in deed as well. See John 13:1–17.

²⁶ under your outstretched wings: See Psalm 16(17):8; 35:8(36:7).

²⁷ my soul is surrendered to you: See Psalm 61:2(62:1).

²⁸ I do not judge myself: See 1 Corinthians 4:3.

²⁹ No one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him: See 1 Corinthians 2:11.

³⁰ I may despise myself and reckon myself dust and ashes: See Job 42:6; Sirach 10:9; Genesis 18:37.

³¹ see only a tantalizing reflection in a mirror: See 1 Corinthians 13:12.

³² I am on pilgrimage far from you: See 2 Corinthians 5:6. Again the metaphor of distance is employed: in holiness we allow God to draw near to us; in sinfulness we distance ourselves from God. Ironically, sinners are less than themselves because they are overtly present to themselves, while saints are more alive and more themselves because they see themselves in God.

I am more present to myself than to you; yet I do know that you cannot be defiled in any way whatever,³³ whereas I do not know which temptations I may have the strength to resist, and to which ones I shall succumb. Our hope is that, because you are trustworthy, you do not allow us to be tempted more fiercely than we can bear, but along with the temptation you ordain the outcome of it, so that we can endure.³⁴ Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face.³⁵

Chapter 6

Looking for God in creatures

8. I love you, Lord, with no doubtful mind but with absolute certainty. You pierced my heart with your word, and I fell in love with you. But the sky and the earth too, and everything in them—all these things around me are telling me that I should love you; and since they never cease to proclaim this to everyone, those who do not hear are left without excuse.³⁶ But you, far above, will show mercy to anyone with whom you have already determined to deal mercifully, and will grant pity to whomsoever you choose.³⁷ Were this not so, the sky and the earth would be proclaiming your praises to the deaf.

But what am I loving when I love you? Not beauty of body nor transient grace, not this fair light which is now so friendly

³³ I do know that you cannot be defiled in any way whatever: as opposed to his earlier Manichean views where (the good) god could be defiled and disgraced.

³⁴ you do not allow us to be tempted more fiercely than we can bear . . . so that we can endure: See 1 Corinthians 10:13.

³⁵ until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face: See Isaiah 58:10; Psalm 89(90):8.

³⁶ those who do not hear are left without excuse: See Romans 1:20.

³⁷ will show mercy . . . and will grant pity to whomsoever you choose: See Romans 9:15; Exodus 33:19.

to my eyes, not melodious song in all its lovely harmonies, not the sweet fragrance of flowers or ointments or spices, not manna or honey, not limbs that draw me to carnal embrace: none of these do I love when I love my God. And yet I do love a kind of light, a kind of voice, a certain fragrance, a food and an embrace, when I love my God: a light, voice, fragrance, food and embrace for my inmost self, where something limited to no place shines into my mind, where something not snatched away by passing time sings for me, where something no breath blows away yields to me its scent, where there is savor undiminished by famished eating, and where I am clasped in a union from which no satiety can tear me away. This is what I love, when I love my God.³⁸

9. And what is this?

I put my question to the earth, and it replied, "I am not he"; I questioned everything it held, and they confessed the same. I questioned the sea and the great deep,³⁹ and the teeming live creatures that crawl,⁴⁰ and they replied, "We are not God; seek higher." I questioned the gusty winds, and every breeze with all its flying creatures told me, "Anaximenes was wrong: I am not God."

To the sky I put my question, to sun, moon, stars, but they denied me: "We are not the God you seek."

And to all things which stood around the portals of my flesh I said,

³⁸ But what am I loving . . . when I love my God: The history of ancient philosophy is brought into conversation here because one of the first questions asked by the pre-Socratics concerned the ultimate principle of reality (the *arche*) out of which came all other things. Anaximenes of Miletus (d. ca. 528 B.C.), for example, argued that air was the primal substrate out of which all other things, hardened and thus individuated, arose; Heraclitus (d. ca. 475 B.C.) thought it must be fire, Thales (d. ca. 546 B.C.) settled on water, and others on various theories of matter.

³⁹ I questioned the sea and the great deep. See Job 28:14.

⁴⁰ Teeming live creatures that crawl: See Genesis 1:20.

"Tell me of my God.

You are not he, but tell me something of him."

Then they lifted up their mighty voices and cried,

"He made us."⁴¹

My questioning was my attentive spirit, and their reply, their beauty.

Then toward myself I turned, and asked myself, "Who are you?" And I answered my own question: "A man." See, here are the body and soul that make up myself, the one outward and the other within. Through which of these should I seek my God? With my body's senses I had already sought him from earth to heaven, to the farthest place whither I could send the darting rays of my eyes; but what lay within me was better, and to this all those bodily messengers reported back, for it controlled and judged the replies of sky and earth, and of all the creatures dwelling in them, all those who had proclaimed, "We are not God," and "He made us." My inner self⁴² recognized them all through the service of the outer. I, who was that inmost self, I, who was mind, knew them through the senses of my body; and so I questioned the vast frame of the world concerning my God, and it answered, "I am not he, but he made me."

10. Surely this beauty is apparent to all whose faculties are sound? Why, then, does it not speak the same message to all?

⁴¹ He made us: See Psalm 99 (100):3. Creation's mutability raises the perceptive mind to immutability; beautiful creatures bring the ardent seeker to Beauty itself. Augustine's theology of creation presumes that all creatures imitate the Son in that all things must turn toward the Father to receive existence. In this way all creation comes to be through the Son and his eternal reception of the Father: "Thus the Son as the beginning (cf. John 1:1) implies his being the source of creation as it comes into being from him while still imperfect, while his being the Word implies his conferring perfection on creation by calling it back to himself, so that all things may be given form by adhering to the creator, and by imitating in its own measure the form (i.e., the Son) who adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father" (*Literal Commentary on Genesis* 1.4). In their imitating the Son, then, all creatures can point us to the Father (see Conf. XIII.2.3, pp. 409-10).

⁴² My inner self: See Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16.

Animals, both small and large, see the beauty, but they are not able to question it, for in them reason does not hold sway as judge over the reports of the senses. Human beings have the power to question, so that by understanding the things he has made they may glimpse the unseen things of God;⁴³ but by base love they subject themselves to these creatures, and once subject can no longer judge. Creatures do not respond to those who question unless the questioners are also judges: not that they change their voice—that is, their beauty—if one person merely sees it, while another sees and inquires, as though they would appear in one guise to the former, and differently to the latter; no, the beauty appears in the same way to both beholders, but to one it is dumb, and to the other it speaks. Or rather, it speaks to all, but only they understand who test the voice heard outwardly against the truth within. Truth tells me, "Neither earth nor sky nor any bodily thing is your God." Their own nature avers it. Do you not see, my soul? Nature is an extended mass, smaller in any one part than in the whole. Even you, my soul, are better than that, for you impart energy to the mass of your body and endow it with life, and no corporeal thing can do that for any other corporeal thing. But your God is to you the life of your life itself.

Chapter 7

11. What is it, then, that I love when I love my God? Who is he who towers above my soul? By this same soul I will mount to him. I will leave behind that faculty whereby I am united to a body and animate its frame. Not by that faculty do I find my God, for horse and mule would find him equally, since the same faculty gives life to their bodies too, yet they are beasts who lack intelligence.⁴⁴

There is another power by which I do more than give life to my flesh: with this I endow with senses the flesh that God has

⁴³ by understanding the things he has made they may glimpse the unseen things of God. See Romans 1:20.

⁴⁴ they are beasts who lack intelligence: See Psalm 31(32):9.

fashioned for me, commanding the eye not to hear and the ear not to see, giving to my organ of seeing and my organ of hearing and to all my other senses what is proper to them in their respective places and for their particular work. Their functions are diverse, but I, the one mind, act through them all. This power too I will leave behind, for horse and mule have it too, since they also have sensory organs throughout their bodies.

Chapter 8

Looking for God in himself: the fields of memory⁴⁵

12. So then, I will leave behind that faculty of my nature, and mount by stages toward him who made me.⁴⁶

Now I arrive in the fields and vast mansions of memory, where are treasured innumerable images brought in there from objects of every conceivable kind perceived by the senses. There too are hidden away the modified images we produce when by our thinking we magnify or diminish or in any way alter the information our senses have reported. There too is everything else that has been consigned and stowed away, and not yet engulfed and buried in oblivion. Sojourning there I command something I want to present itself, and immediately certain things

⁴⁵ Looking for God in himself: the fields of memory: As Book X unfolds, keep in mind that memory for Augustine is a much more expansive term than how we use it today as the place where we keep past images and experiences. For anyone working out of the Platonic tradition, the memory borders on the divine and the eternal, transcending space and time. It is where all the experiences of one's life's story are held together in a single moment. Furthermore, the memory also bridges the two worlds inhabited by the human person, as the mind applies eternal images to temporal realities. The memory hence enjoys a uniquely special role in Augustinian theology because it is here one is most enabled to behold God. Similarly, Augustine's theology of memory holds a central place in the *Confessions* because it is the memory that enables each of us to tell our life's story.

⁴⁶ So then, I will leave behind that faculty of my nature, . . . him who made me: As the search for a fuller and fuller understanding of the divine continues, Augustine now sees how he must properly transcend creation, including his own limited mental capabilities, and thus be brought by grace up through creatures to God's very self.

emerge, while others have to be pursued for some time and dug out from remote crannies. Others again come tumbling out in disorderly profusion, and leap into prominence as though asking, "Are we what you want?" when it is something different that I am asking for and trying to recall.⁴⁷ With my mental hand I push them out of the way of my effort to remember, until what I want becomes clear and breaks from cover. Then there are remembered items that come to hand easily and in orderly sequence as soon as they are summoned, the earlier members giving way to those that follow and returning to their storage-places, ready to be retrieved next time I need them. All of which happens when I recite anything from memory.

13. Preserved there, classified and distinct, are all those impressions which have been admitted through the entrances proper to each: light, colors and bodily shapes through the eye; all kinds of sound through the ears; various odors through the gateways of the nostrils; flavors through the entrance of the mouth; and through the pervasive sense of touch whatever is felt as hard or soft, hot or cold, smooth or rough, heavy or light, external to the body or inside it. The huge repository of the memory, with its secret and unimaginable caverns, welcomes and keeps all these things, to be recalled and brought out for use when needed; and as all of them have their particular ways into it, so all are put back again in their proper places.

The sense-impressions themselves do not find their way in, however; it is the images of things perceived by the senses that are available there to the person who recalls them. Who can tell how these images are fashioned, obvious though it may be through which senses they were captured and stowed away within? For when I am sitting quietly in the dark I can bring up colors in my memory if I wish, and distinguish white from black and any others I select. No sounds burst in to intrude on these images acquired through my eyes, which I am considering, though

⁴⁷ trying to recall. The phenomenon of forgetting is a humorous riddle. Augustine musing on how if something really fell into oblivion, how is it then ever later recalled?

sounds too are present there, lying hidden and stored in a place by themselves. I can summon them equally well, if I wish, and find them present at once, and though my tongue and throat are silent I sing as much as I like. Images of color, which are just as truly present, do not thrust themselves in on my song or interrupt it while I am enjoying this other treasure, which has flowed into me through my ears. Similarly I can recall at will anything drawn in and hoarded by way of my other senses. I can distinguish the scent of lilies from violets even though I am not actually smelling anything, and honey from grape-juice, smooth from rough, without tasting or feeling anything: I am simply passing them in review before my mind by remembering them.

14. This I do within myself in the immense court of my memory; for there sky and earth and sea are readily available to me, together with everything that I have ever been able to perceive in them, apart from what I have forgotten. And there I come to meet myself. I recall myself, what I did, when and where I acted in a certain way, and how I felt about so acting. Everything is there which I remember having experienced for myself or believed on the assertion of others. Moreover, I can draw on this abundant store to form imaginary pictures which resemble the things I have myself experienced, or believed because my own experience confirmed them, and weave these together with images from the past, and so evoke future actions, occurrences or hopes; and on all these as well I can meditate as though they were present to me. In that same enormous recess of my mind, thronging with so many great images, I say to myself, "That's what I will do!" And the action I have envisaged follows. "Oh, if only this or that could be! Pray God this or that may not happen!" I say to myself, and even as I say it the images of all these things of which I speak pass before me, coming from the same treasure-house of memory. If they were not there, I would be quite unable to conjure up such possibilities.

15. This faculty of memory is a great one, O my God, exceedingly great, a vast, infinite recess. Who can plumb its depth?

This is a faculty of my mind, belonging to my nature, yet I cannot myself comprehend all that I am. Is the mind, then, too narrow to grasp itself, forcing us to ask where that part of it is which it is incapable of grasping? Is it outside the mind, not inside? How can the mind not compass it? —

Enormous wonder wells up within me when I think of this, and I am dumbfounded. People go to admire lofty mountains, and huge breakers at sea, and crashing waterfalls, and vast stretches of ocean, and the dance of the stars, but they leave themselves behind out of sight. It does not strike them as wonderful that I could enumerate those things without seeing them with my eyes, and that I could not even have spoken of them unless I could within my mind contemplate mountains and waves and rivers and stars (which I have seen), and the ocean (which I only take on trust), and contemplate them there in spaces just as vast as though I were seeing them outside myself.⁴⁸ But I did not suck them into myself when I looked at them with my eyes, for it was not these things themselves that entered me, but only the images of them; and I know which impressions were made on me through which of my bodily senses.

Chapter 9

16. The immense spaces of my memory harbor even more than these, however. Here too are all those things which I received through a liberal education and have not yet forgotten; they are stored away in some remote inner place, which yet is not really a place at all. However, in this case it is not images of the realities that I harbor, but the realities themselves; for everything I know about literature, or skill in debate, or how many kinds of questions can logically be formulated, lodges indeed in my memory, but not like an image which remains after I have turned away from some object perceived externally, nor

⁴⁸ *Enormous wonder . . . as though I were seeing them outside myself.* Why do so many people stand in awe at visible creation, as beautiful as it is, but never stop deeply enough to marvel at the vastness and profoundness of their own souls? Perhaps this is the question the *Confessions* wishes to ask each of us.

like the trace of a sound that has faded, by means of which a voice that has penetrated my ears can still be recalled as though audible when it is audible no longer, nor like a fleeting scent that is blown away by the wind after affecting our nostrils, but leaves an image of itself in the memory which we can savor again later by remembering it, nor like food, which is certainly no longer present as a flavor in the stomach but can still be tasted in the memory, nor like anything which is felt by bodily touch and can still be touched by our memory when the object is no longer in contact with our bodies. None of these objects is admitted into the memory in its own right; only the images of them are captured with astonishing speed, put away in wonderful compartments, and brought out again in a wonderful way when we recall them.

Chapter 10

17. When I hear that there are three classes of questions—namely, whether something exists, what it is, and what qualities belong to it⁴⁹—I do, to be sure, retain images of the sounds by which these words are composed; and I know that those sounds were borne upon the breeze with some noise, but have now fallen silent. But through no bodily sense whatever have I made contact with the realities themselves, for I have never seen these realities anywhere except in my own mind. What I have stowed away in my memory is not the images of these things but the things themselves. Let them say how they found their way into me if they can, for when I check every physical gateway in myself I find none by which they can have entered. My eyes tell me, “If those things were colored, it was we who reported them”; my ears declare, “If they made some sound, we gave you the information”; my nostrils say, “If there was a smell to them, we let them through”; my sense of taste replies,

⁴⁹ *three classes of questions . . . what qualities belong to it.* As creation exists because it imitates the Son's reception of the Father, each creature likewise manifests a triadic structure reflecting the Trinitarian life of God—that is, each creature reveals a trinity: it exists, what it is, and how it fits into the overall order of the cosmos.

"If they had no flavor, don't ask me"; touch says, "If they had no bodily substance, I did not handle them, and if I did not handle them, I told you nothing." From what source and by what route did they enter my memory? I do not know, for when I learned them I did not take them on trust from some stranger's intelligence but recognized them as present in my own, and affirmed them as true, and entrusted them to my memory for safekeeping so that I could bring them out again when I wished. This means that they were there even before I learned them, but not remembered. Where and why did I recognize them and say, "Yes, that's how it is; that is true," when these things were stated? Surely because they were already in my memory, but so remote, so hidden from sight in concealed hollows, that unless they had been dug out by someone who reminded me, I would perhaps never have been able to think about them.⁵⁰

Chapter 11

18. We are therefore led to conclude that when we learn things which are not imbibed through the senses as images, but are known directly in their own reality inside the mind, as they are in themselves, and without the intervention of images, we are collecting by means of our thought those things which the memory already held, but in a scattered and disorderly way. By applying our minds to them we ensure that they are stacked ready-to-hand in the memory, where they may be easily available for habitual use, instead of lying hidden, dispersed and neglected, as hitherto. How many things of this kind are

⁵⁰ they were already in my memory, but so remote . . . never have been able to think about them: So perhaps forgetting is not placing something into nothingness, but simply misplacing it for a time. Forgetting, I think, amazes Augustine because it symbolically captures both the beauty and the frustration of an eternal creature living in time. Behind this inquiry is the paradox of Plato's *Meno*: How can one recognize something as true, if one never had had contact with that truth before? For Plato, all education is really a form of recollection, as particular truths in this world only trigger glimpses of the perfectly real the soul knew rightly before it fell into the body. As a Christian, Augustine refuses to believe in the preexistence of the soul and so must locate the source of truth elsewhere, namely, in the soul's proper encounter with God and the world.

carried in my memory! Such things have been found and placed ready-to-hand in the way I have described, and so it is said that we have learned them and now we know them. If I have ceased to recall them for a fair stretch of time, they sink back again and slip away into distant caverns, and then they need to be pulled from the same places (for there is no other home for them) as though newly thought out, and herded together to become knowable once more: that is to say they need to be collected again, which is why we call this activity *cogitatus*, or collecting one's thoughts. Cogo is related to *cogito* as *ago* is to *agito* and *facio* to *facito*. The mind, however, has claimed this verb as properly applicable to itself, so that only what is "collected," within the mind, what is "herded together" there, and there only, is properly said to be "thought."⁵¹

Chapter 12

19. The memory also stores countless truths and laws of mathematics and mensuration, no single one of which was impressed upon it by bodily sense, for they have no color, sound or smell, nor have they been tasted or handled. I heard the sound of the words that indicated these truths when they were under discussion, but the sounds are one thing and the truths themselves something else. The words sound one way in Greek and differently in Latin, but the truths are neither Greek nor Latin, nor spoken entities of any kind.⁵² I have seen a draughtsman's geometric lines, and even though they are infinitely fine, like a spider's thread, the mathematical lines they represent are something quite different, not the images of those lines which

⁵¹ Cogo is related to cogito . . . properly said to be "thought": The professional rhetorician continues to open up a word's meaning, here linking the verb "to think" or "cogitare", *cogitare*, from the Latin verb "to gather together", *cogere*.

⁵² *sound of the words* . . . spoken entities of any kind: Augustine provided the field of semiotics, the study of signs and language, with many of its foundational principles. Worked out mainly in his works on how to explicate Scripture properly (e.g., *On Dialect*, *On the Teacher*, *On Christian Doctrine*), Augustine distinguishes between the words (*signa, verba*) used and the realities (*res*) that such words attempt to convey.

my fleshly eye has observed. Everyone knows these truths, without a physical representation of any kind being involved. One recognizes them within oneself. With all my bodily senses I have apprehended the numbers of things as we count them; but the principle of number is something entirely different, and without it we could not think mathematically at all. This principle is not an image of the things counted, and therefore has a much more real existence. Let anyone who cannot see it laugh at me, but allow me to pity him for laughing.

Chapter 13

20. Not only do I retain all these things in my memory: I can also keep in my memory the way in which I learned them. I have heard many completely erroneous arguments urged against them, and these too I retain in my memory. Erroneous they were, yet my memory is not in error as I recall them. Further, I can remember discriminating between the truth and those erroneous arguments against it, and I see that my discrimination between them today is distinct from the discrimination I often practiced at various times in the past when I thought about them. So I remember that I have often understood these matters, and I also store in my memory what I discern and understand now, so that later on I may remember that I understood it today. It follows that I have the power to remember that I remembered, just as later, if I recall that I have been able to remember these things now, I shall undoubtedly be recalling it through the faculty of memory.

Chapter 14

21. The same memory also records emotions previously experienced in the mind, not in the same way as the mind experienced them at the time, but in the mode proper to the power of memory. I remember having been happy, without feeling happy now; I recall my past sadness but feel no sadness in so doing; I remember having been afraid once, but am not frightened as I remember; I summon the memory of how I once

wanted something, but without wanting it today. Sometimes the opposite emotion is present: I can happily remember some sadness I suffered which is now over and done with, or sadly recall lost happiness. There is nothing strange about this where the previous experience was one that simply involved the body, for the mind is one thing and the body another;⁵³ it is therefore unremarkable if in my mind I joyfully recall some former bodily pain. Mind and memory, however, are one and the same. This is why when we instruct someone to remember a point we say, "Be sure to bear that in mind"; and when we forget we say, "I didn't have my mind on it" or "It slipped my mind." So we call memory itself "mind." This being the case, how does it happen that when I happily recall my past sadness, my mind is experiencing joy while my memory is of sorrow, and yet while the mind is happy in the joy it contains, the memory is not saddened by the sadness in it? Does the memory not belong to the mind? Who would maintain that? It is truer to say that the memory is like the mind's stomach,⁵⁴ while joy and sorrow are like delicious or bitter food. When they are committed to memory they are transferred to the stomach, as it were, and can be kept there, but cannot be tasted. It is absurd to think the operations of memory and stomach are really alike, yet they are not in all respects dissimilar.

22. But now suppose I produce something else from my memory: I state that there are four passions that disturb the

⁵³ *mind is one thing and the body another*. Later scholars have tended to use lines like this to make Augustine out to be antihuman. As an intelligent Christian, however, he can never deprecate matter, but he does at times use less than helpful phrases to discuss the characteristics proper to the human mind and those proper to the human body. He knows his flesh is his dear and eternal friend throughout eternity ("*caro amica mea*" [Sermon 14.15]) and that the torments of one's body will, at Christ's Resurrection, be turned into ornaments (playing cleverly off the move from *tormentum* to *ornamentum* in a typical Latin flourish; see Sermon 240.3). In this section, his two points are thus simply that (1) the body and mind have separate and distinguishable characteristics and that (2) he will be using mind (*mens*) and memory (*memoria*) interchangeably in what follows.

⁵⁴ *memory is like the mind's stomach*: a wonderfully earthy image and one that will (in the next paragraph) be even more exploited, likening human recall to how cattle regurgitate their stomach's contents.

soul—desire, joy, fear and sadness; for purposes of disputation I state whatever analysis of them I have formulated by dividing each according to species and genus; I find in my memory what I am to say and it is from there that I produce my statement; yet when I run through these passions from memory I suffer no emotional disturbance from any of them. Before they were recalled and brought out for inspection they were there: that is why they could be fetched by the act of remembrance. Perhaps, then, these things are produced from the memory in the same way that cattle can bring food back from the stomach for chewing the cud. But in that case why does the disputant (that is, the person who remembers) not taste the sweetness of joy or the bitterness of grief in the mouth of his thought? Or is this precisely the point of difference between two activities, the point where the analogy breaks down? Who indeed would discuss these passions if every time we mentioned sadness or fear we were forced to mourn or feel frightened? And yet we would be in no position to discuss them unless we found in our memory not just the sound of their names, as images derived from sense-impressions, but the very notions of the things themselves. These we have received through no gateway of the flesh; the mind itself has become aware of them by undergoing its emotions and has committed them to memory, or else the memory has retained them of its own accord, though they were not expressly entrusted to it.

Chapter 15

23. It is not easy to say whether this process occurs with the help of images or not. I speak of a stone, or the sun, when these objects are not present to my senses, and unquestionably the images of them are available in my memory. I name a bodily pain: it is not present to me, because nothing is hurting; but unless the image of it resided in my memory I would not know how to speak of it, nor would I be able in an argument to distinguish it from pleasure. I name bodily health when I am myself in a healthy condition; in this case the object itself is present

to me, yet if its image were not also retained in my memory, I would be quite unable to recall what the sound of its name signified; and similarly sick people would not know the meaning of any statement about health if the same image were not retained by the power of memory, even though the thing itself is lacking in their bodies.⁵⁵

When I speak of "numbers"—ideal numbers in the light of which we count—it is not the images of them that are present in my memory but the numbers themselves. I speak of "the image of the sun," and this is precisely what is in my memory, for what I recall is not an image of that image, but the primary image itself: it is this which springs to mind immediately in my act of remembering. I name "memory," and recognize what I am naming; but where can this act of recognition take place, except in the memory? Does this mean that memory is present to itself through its image, and not in itself?⁵⁶

Chapter 16

24. Now when I name "forgetfulness" and similarly recognize the thing I am naming, whence comes my recognition, if not from an act of remembering? I do not mean recognition of the sound of its name, but of the thing signified, for if I forgot that, I would be unable to recognize the meaning of the word. So when I remember "memory," memory itself immediately makes itself available; but when I remember "forgetfulness," both memory and forgetfulness are promptly present: memory since by means of it I remember, and forgetfulness since that

⁵⁵ if its image were not also retained in my memory . . . the thing itself is lacking in their bodies: Another paradox of memory is that we can recall images and states of things mentally without actually effecting those same realities. Again, this is not a dualist, anti-incarnational anthropology but simply the admittance that the mind can entertain the realities the body cannot.

⁵⁶ Does this mean that memory . . . and not in itself? For Plato, the realm of mathematics is the first true reality the soul encounters as it makes its way upward out of the material order (see *Republic* VI.509D–513E). Augustine's point echoes this: we can intellectually count without actually having to picture or image the number of material things counted.

is what I am remembering. But what else is forgetfulness but loss of memory? How then can it be present so that I can remember it, when its very presence deprives me of the power to remember? What we remember, we retain in our memory. If we did not remember forgetfulness, we would never recognize the reality which is being referred to when we hear its name; hence forgetfulness is retained by the memory. It must be present, otherwise we would forget it, yet when it is present we forget! Are we to understand, then, that forgetfulness is not in itself present in the memory when we remember it, but present only through its image, since if it were immediately present in its reality it would make us forget, not remember? In the end, who can fathom this matter, who understand how the mind works? *the laboring over myself*

25. This much is certain, Lord, that I am laboring over it, laboring over myself, and I have become for myself a land hard to till and of heavy sweat.⁵⁷ We are not in this instance gazing at the expanses of the sky or calculating the distances between stars or the weight of the earth: the person who remembers is myself; I am my mind.⁵⁸ It is not surprising that whatever is not myself should be remote, but what can be nearer to me than I am to myself? Yet here I am, unable to comprehend the nature of my memory, when I cannot even speak of myself without it. How am I to explain it, when I am quite certain that I remember forgetting? Am I to say that something I remember is not in my memory? Or am I to say that forgetfulness is in my memory for the very purpose of preventing me from forgetting? Either alternative is completely absurd. Is there a third possibility?⁵⁹ I might say that when I remember "forgetfulness" it is only the image of forgetfulness that is

⁵⁷ land hard to till and of heavy sweat: See Genesis 3:17, 19.

⁵⁸ I am my mind: As we have seen, it is primarily the mind's ability to gather and understand reality (the particularly human process Augustine is calling "memory") that gives one's life coherence and meaning.

⁵⁹ Is there a third possibility? Moving quickly, Augustine has already provided three options into how forgetting is possible: (1) simply, that what has been forgotten has dropped out of the memory; (2) a principle called "forgetfulness" is

held in my memory, not forgetfulness itself. But what right have I to make that assertion, in view of the fact that when an image of something is imprinted upon the memory, the thing itself must have been present first, so that the image can be derived from it and imprinted? That is how I remember Carthage: that is how I remember all the places where I have been and the faces of people I have met, and that is how I remember all the information reported by my other senses, and the health or pain of my own body: when these objects were to hand my memory abstracted from them images which I would be able to contemplate as truly present and review in my mind, when later I remembered those objects in their absence. It would follow, then, that if "forgetfulness" is kept in the memory not in its own reality but by means of its image, it would need to have been present so that its image could be abstracted. But when it was present, how did it inscribe its image in my memory, when its very presence blotted out even what it found already registered there?

Nonetheless in some way, some way which is incomprehensible and defies explanation, I am certain that I do remember forgetfulness—that very forgetfulness beneath which what we remember is submerged.

Chapter 17

26. O my God, profound, infinite complexity, what a great faculty memory is, how awesome a mystery! It is the mind, and this is nothing other than my very self. What am I, then, O my God? What is my nature? It is teeming life of every conceivable kind, and exceedingly vast. See, in the measureless plains and vaults and caves of my memory, immeasurably full of countless kinds of things which are there either through

something coexistent with memory, and "here" all forgotten things are in fact stored; and (3), like (2), this databank called "forgetfulness" is not really a separate reality in the mind but only an image of it. This is the position he now sets out to explain.

their images (as with material things), or by being themselves present (as is the knowledge acquired through a liberal education), or by registering themselves and making their mark in some indefinable way (as with emotional states which the memory retains even when the mind is not actually experiencing them, although whatever is in the memory must be in the mind too)—in this wide land I am made free of all of them, free to run and fly to and fro, to penetrate as deeply as I can, to collide with no boundary anywhere. So great is the faculty of memory, so great the power of life in a person whose life is tending toward death!

What shall I do, then, O my God, my true life? I will pass beyond this faculty of mine called memory, I will pass beyond it and continue resolutely toward you, O lovely Light.⁶⁰ What are you saying to me? See, I am climbing through my mind to you who abide high above me; I will pass beyond even this faculty of mine which is called memory in my longing to touch you from that side whence you can be touched, and cleave to you in the way in which holding fast to you is possible. For animals and birds also have memories; they would not otherwise return to their accustomed lairs and nests, rather than randomly to others, and indeed they would never be able to grow accustomed to anything without memory. I will therefore pass beyond memory and try to touch him who marked me out from the four-footed beasts and made me wiser than the birds in the sky;⁶¹ yes, I will pass beyond even my

⁶⁰ I will pass beyond this faculty of mine called memory. . . . O lovely Light: See Ecclesiastes 11:7. Following Plotinus—on this point (see *Enneads* V.1.3), Augustine argues that there is no intervening nature between the human soul's highest faculty (located in the memory) and God himself—that is, "since the human person participates in wisdom according to the inner man, as such he is in the image of God in such a way that he is formed without the interposition of any other nature. Therefore nothing is more closely united to God, for man knows and lives and exists and thus is unsurpassed among created beings" (*On Eighty-Three Varied Questions*, 86). Later he argues that the divine image in the human soul, of all God's creatures, "has received God's direct imprint and there is no other nature interposed between him and itself" (*On the Trinity* XI.5.8).

⁶¹ four-footed beasts and made me wiser than the birds in the sky: See Job 35:11.

memory that I may find you . . . where? O my true good, O sweetness that will never fail me, that I may find you . . . where? If I find you somewhere beyond my memory, that means that I shall be forgetful of you. And how shall I find you, once I am no longer mindful of you?

Chapter 18

27. A woman had lost a coin; she searched for it with a lamp,⁶² and unless she had had some memory of it she would not have found it, for when it was found, how could she have known that this was it, if she did not remember it? I remember losing many things myself, and looking for them and finding them, and this is how I know, because when I was searching for one or another of them, and someone said to me, "Perhaps this is it?" or "Is that it?" I went on saying, "No, that's not it," until what I was looking for was offered to me. Unless I had remembered that thing, whatever it was, I would not have found it even when it was handed to me, because I would not have recognized it. This is what always happens when we look for something we have lost and then find it. If some article chances to drop out of view, but not out of memory, such as any kind of visible object, the image of it persists within us and the thing is sought until it comes to light again; and when it has been found it is recognized by comparison with this inward image. We do not say that we have found the lost object unless we recognize it, and we cannot recognize it if we do not remember it. The thing had disappeared from our sight, but was held in our memory.

Chapter 19

28. What follows? When the memory itself loses some item, as for instance when we forget something and try to remember, where are we to search in the end but in the memory itself? And if some other thing is offered us there, we brush it

⁶² A woman had lost a coin; she searched for it with a lamp: See Luke 15:8.

aside, until the thing we are looking for turns up. When it does, we say, "That's it!" which we would not be in a position to say if we did not recognize the object, and we could not recognize it if we did not remember it. Yet we had undoubtedly forgotten. Is this the explanation: that the thing had not fallen out of the memory entirely? Can it be that the part which was retained gave a clue to the part which had vanished, because the memory was aware that some item was absent from the full complement it was used to turning over and, feeling itself to be lame and lacking something that normally belonged to it, demanded that the missing element be restored? Suppose we see with our eyes or consider in our mind a certain person known to us, but cannot remember his name, and try to recall it. Any other name that presents itself will seem quite irrelevant to him, because we are not used to associating him with that, and so we reject it. Then at last the right one comes up, and this fits satisfactorily with our habitual knowledge of the person. From where does it emerge, if not from the memory itself? This must be the case, because even if someone else reminds us, we recognize it again only because it springs from our memory: we do not believe what we are told as though this were a piece of fresh information, but remember and agree that what we have just been told is correct. If it has been entirely blotted out from the mind, we do not remember even when reminded. If we remember that we have forgotten something, we have not forgotten it entirely. But if we have forgotten altogether, we shall not be in a position to search for it.

Chapter 20

Universal desire for happiness

29. How then am I to seek you, Lord? When I seek you, my God, what I am seeking is a life of happiness. Let me seek you that my soul may live,⁶³ for as my body draws its life from my

⁶³ Let me seek you that my soul may live: See Psalm 68:33 (69:32); Isaiah 55:3.

soul, so does my soul draw its life from you.⁶⁴ How, then, am I to seek a life of happiness? It is not mine until I can say, "This is all I want; here is happiness." I must know how to seek it. Should it be by way of remembering, as though it were something I have forgotten but am still aware of having forgotten? Or by thirsting for a life still strange to me, either because I have never known it or because I have so completely forgotten that I do not even remember that I have forgotten? What is a life of happiness? Surely what everyone wants, absolutely everyone without exception? But if they all want it so badly, where did they come to know it? Where have they seen it, that they are so enamored of it? Evidently we possess it in some fashion.⁶⁵ A person who possesses it is happy in one way, actually happy; in a different manner others are made happy by hoping for happiness. These latter possess happiness in a less perfect way than the former, who are happy in the reality itself, but they are better off than people who are happy neither in possessing the reality nor in hoping for it. Yet even these would not so strongly desire happiness unless they possessed it in some degree, and there can be no doubt that they do desire it. In some mysterious way they must know it, therefore, and hence truly possess it through some kind of cognition. What I am attempting to find out is whether this resides in the memory, because if it does, that must mean that we were happy once upon a time—though whether each of us was happy individually, or we were all happy in the man who committed the first sin, in whom we all died and from whom

⁶⁴ my body draws its life from my soul, so does my soul draw its life from you: This is the order of the Augustinian cosmos: body, soul, God.

⁶⁵ How, then, am I to seek a life of happiness? . . . we possess it in some fashion: In one paragraph, Augustine unites Plato's emphasis on memory, Aristotle's claim that the human search for happiness is a universal and indispensable reality (which Augustine would have read through Cicero's *Hortensius*, fragment 36), with the Christian teaching that all humanity is present in Adam and Eve. How could every human soul desire beatitude if every human soul has not somehow "already" experienced it? We must all have had some sort of acquaintance with it, otherwise we would not desire it.

we are all born to misery,⁶⁶ I am not now inquiring. I am simply posing the question: Does the life of happiness exist in the memory? We should not love it if we had no acquaintance with it.⁶⁷ When we hear the word we all acknowledge that what we want is the reality behind the name, for the sound in itself holds no attraction for us. If a Greek hears it mentioned in Latin, he does not find it delightful, because he does not understand what has been said; we, on the contrary, are delighted, just as he would be if he heard it in Greek, because the reality itself is neither Greek nor Latin. Greek-speakers, Latin-speakers and peoples of every other tongue are all athirst with longing to gain it. This proves that it is known to everyone, and if they could all be asked in some common tongue whether they wish to be happy, they would undoubtedly all reply that they do. This affirmation would not be possible if the reality spoken of were not held in their memories.

Chapter 21

30. Do they retain it in their memories in the same way as someone remembers Carthage after visiting it? No: the happy life is not seen with the eye, since it is not a corporeal object. Perhaps in the way we remember numbers, then? No, for a person who has knowledge of these does not still seek to gain it; but while we have knowledge of the happy life and therefore love for it, we still long to obtain it in order to be happy. Then in the way we remember eloquence, perhaps? No again. It is true that on hearing the word "eloquence" even people who are not yet eloquent remember the reality, and many of them desire to make it their own; this proves that some knowledge of

⁶⁶ the man who committed the first sin, . . . from whom we are all born to misery; See 1 Corinthians 15:22.

⁶⁷ Does the life of happiness exist . . . if we had no acquaintance with it: Augustine's sense of humanity's real and collective communion in our protoparents, Adam and Eve, was strong and runs throughout his thought in sometimes surprising ways. Here, for example, his argument for the universal thirst for happiness rests on his theory that in Adam every human soul throughout the millennia was brought into existence with some primordial taste of Eden.

eloquence is in them, but that is only because they have been exposed through the medium of their bodily senses to eloquence in others, and have appreciated it and desire to be similarly eloquent (though to be sure they would not appreciate it unless some knowledge of it were in them already, and they would not want it for themselves if they had no appreciation of it). But we do not experience the happy life in other people through any kind of bodily sense. Are we aware of it, then, in the way that we remember enjoyment? This may be the case, for even when sad I remember my earlier enjoyment, as I can remember leading a happy life even when I am miserable, yet I have never made contact with my enjoyment through any bodily sense: I have never seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched it; in my mind alone I experienced being happy, and the knowledge of it stuck fast in my memory, so that I am able to remember it, sometimes with contempt and at other times with longing for the various things which I recall having enjoyed. I was formerly flooded with a kind of joy in depraved actions which I now recollect with loathing and disgust. Sometimes, though, it was good and honorable things that I enjoyed, and when I recall these I am stirred by desire for them, even if perhaps they are no longer present, and then it is in sadness that I recollect my earlier joy.

31. So where and when did I experience my life of happiness, so as to remember, love and desire it? This desire is not confined to me alone, nor to me and a few others; absolutely all of us want to be happy. Unless we had some sure knowledge of it, our wills would not be so firmly set on gaining it. But how can this be? If two men are asked whether they wish to undertake military service, it may happen that one of them will reply that he does, and the other that he does not, whereas if they are asked whether they wish to be happy, each of them will immediately say without hesitation that this is what he longs for; and in fact the choice of military service by the one and the refusal of it by the other are directed to no other end than happiness. Is this, perhaps, because one person finds enjoyment in one way and another differently? Thus all agree that

they want to be happy, just as they would, if questioned, all agree that they want to enjoy life, and they think that a life of happiness consists of this enjoyment. One person pursues it in this way, another in that, but all are striving for the same goal, enjoyment. And since no one can claim never to have enjoyed anything, enjoyment is discovered in the memory and recognized there when the life of happiness is mentioned.

Chapter 22

32. Far be it, Lord, far be it from the heart of your servant who confesses to you, far be it from me to think that enjoyment of any and every kind could make me happy. A joy there is that is not granted to the godless,⁶⁸ but to those only who worship you without looking for reward, because you yourself are their joy. This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, about you and because of you.⁶⁹ This is the life of happiness, and it is not to be found anywhere else. Whoever thinks there can be some other is chasing a joy that is not the true one; yet such a person's will has not turned away from all notion of joy.

Chapter 23

33. We cannot therefore assert without qualification that everyone wants to be happy, because people who are unwilling to find joy in you, in which alone the happy life consists, obviously do not want the happy life. Perhaps, though, all men and women do want it, but by reason of the struggle of flesh against spirit and spirit against flesh, which hinders them from doing what they want to do,⁷⁰ they fall back on what their strength permits, and make do with that? But is this because

⁶⁸ A joy there is that is not granted to the godless: See Isaiah 48:22.

⁶⁹ This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, . . . because of you: With all his talk of happiness, this is as close to a definition of beatitude Augustine comes to providing: rejoicing in God.

⁷⁰ struggle of flesh against spirit and spirit against flesh, . . . doing what they want to do: See Galatians 5:17.

** life of happiness to joy is to have what is good*

they do not want that other thing, for which strength is lacking, ardently enough to find the necessary strength? I think so, because when I ask everybody which they prefer: joy over the truth or joy over what is false,⁷¹ they are as unhesitating in their reply that they prefer to rejoice over the truth as in their declaration that they want to be happy. Now the happy life is joy in the truth; and that means joy in you, who are the Truth,⁷² O God who shed the light of salvation on my face,⁷³ my God.

Everyone wants this happy life, this life which alone deserves to be called happy; all want it, all want joy in the truth. I have met plenty of people who would gladly deceive others, but no one who wants to be deceived. Where else, then, did they come to know this happy life, except where they also came to know about truth? Since they do not wish to be deceived, they must love truth; and when they love the happy life, which is nothing else but joy in the truth, they are unquestionably loving truth also; but they could not be loving the truth unless there was some knowledge of it in their memories. Why, in that case, do they not rejoice over it? Why are they not happy? Because they are more immediately engrossed in other things which more surely make them miserable than that other reality, so faintly remembered, can make them happy. For a little while yet there is light for human beings: let them walk in it, yes, let them walk, lest the darkness close over them.⁷⁴

34. Why, though, does "truth engender hatred," why does a servant of yours who preaches the truth make himself an enemy

Why does truth engender hatred?

⁷¹ joy over the truth or joy over what is false: See 1 Corinthians 13:6. If happiness is rejoicing in God, perhaps some do not desire to be happy, as some do not wish to place their life in God's. To get out of this aporia, Augustine next argues that happiness is sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly defined, depending ultimately on what one loves and therefore what one seeks in life.

⁷² you, who are the Truth: See John 14:6.

⁷³ O God who shed the light of salvation on my face: See Psalm 26(27):1; 41:12(42:11); 42(43):5.

⁷⁴ while yet there is light . . . let them walk, lest the darkness close over them: See John 12:35.

happiness is joy in God

to his hearers,⁷⁵ if the life of happiness, which consists in rejoicing over the truth, is what they love? It must be because people love truth in such a way that those who love something else wish to regard what they love as truth and, since they would not want to be deceived, are unwilling to be convinced that they are wrong. They are thus led into hatred of truth for the sake of that very thing which they love under the guise of truth. They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate it when it accuses them.⁷⁶ In this attitude of reluctance to be deceived and intent to deceive others they love truth when it reveals itself but hate it when it reveals them. Truth will therefore take its revenge: when people refuse to be shown up by it, truth will show them up willy-nilly and yet elude them. Yes, this is our condition, this is the lot of the human soul, this is its case, as blind and feeble, disreputable and shabby, it attempts to hide, while at the same time not wishing anything to be hidden from it. It is paid back in a coin which is the opposite to what it desires, for while the soul cannot hide from truth, truth hides from the soul. Nonetheless, even while in this miserable state it would rather rejoice in truth than in a sham; and so it will be happy when it comes to rejoice without interruption or hindrance in the very truth, upon which depends whatever else is true.

Chapter 24

In memory he knows God

35. How widely I have ranged through my memory seeking you, Lord, and I have not found you outside it; for I have discovered nothing about you that I did not remember from the time I learned to know you. From that time when I learned about you I have never forgotten you, because wherever I have

⁷⁵ *a servant of yours who preaches the truth . . . an enemy to his hearers*: See John 8:40; Galatians 4:16.

⁷⁶ *They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate it when it accuses them*: See John 3:20; 5:35.

found truth I have found my God who is absolute Truth, and once I had learned that I did not forget it. That is why you have dwelt in my memory ever since I learned to know you, and it is there that I find you when I remember and delight in you. These are my holy delights, and they are your gift to me, for in your mercy you look graciously upon my poverty.

Chapter 25

36. But whereabouts in my memory do you dwell, Lord, in which part of it do you abide? What kind of couch have you fashioned for your repose, what manner of temple have you built yourself there? You have honored my memory by making it your dwelling-place, but I am wondering in what region of it you dwell. As I remembered you I left behind those parts of it which animals also possess, because I did not find you there amid the images of material things. I came to those regions of memory to which I had committed my emotional states, but I did not find you there either. Then I arrived at that place in my memory where my mind itself is enthroned, for indeed the mind must reside there, since it can remember itself; yet not even there were you to be found. Just as you are not any corporeal image, nor any of the emotions that belong to a living person, such as we experience when we are joyful or sad, when we desire or fear something, when we remember or forget or anything similar, so too you are not the mind itself: you are the Lord and God of the mind, and though all these things are subject to change you abide unchangeably⁷⁷ above them all. And yet you have deigned to dwell in my memory from the first day that I learned to know you. What am I doing, inquiring which place in it is your place, as though there were really places there? Most certain it is that you do dwell in it, because I have been remembering you since I first learned to know you, and there I find you when I remember you.

⁷⁷ *you abide unchangeably*: See Psalm 101:27 (102:26).

Chapter 26

37. If that is so, where did I find you in order to make acquaintance with you at the outset? You could not have been in my memory before I learned to know you. Where then could I have found you in order to learn of you, if not in yourself, far above me? "Place" has here no meaning: further away from you or toward you we may travel, but place there is none. O Truth, you hold sovereign sway over all who turn to you for counsel, and to all of them you respond at the same time, however diverse their pleas. Clear is your response, but not all hear it clearly. They all appeal to you about what they want, but do not always hear what they want to hear. Your best servant is the one who is less intent on hearing from you what accords with his own will, and more on embracing with his will what he has heard from you.

Chapter 27

38. Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong, I, misshapen. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you, those things which would have no being were they not in you. You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance, I gasped, and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *Late have I loved you, . . . you touched me, and I burned for your peace:* This is the most celebrated prayer in the *Confessions*, but as intentionally beautiful as

Chapter 28

39. When at last I cling to you⁷⁹ with my whole being there will be no more anguish or labor for me,⁸⁰ and my life will be alive indeed, because filled with you. But now it is very different. Anyone whom you fill you also uplift, but I am not full of you, and so I am a burden to myself. Joys over which I ought to weep do battle with sorrows that should be matter for joy, and I know not which will be victorious. But I also see griefs that are evil at war in me with joys that are good, and I know not which will win the day. This is agony, Lord, have pity on me! It is agony! See, I do not hide my wounds; you are the physician and I am sick; you are merciful, I in need of mercy. Is not human life on earth a time of testing?⁸¹

Who would choose troubles and hardships? You command us to endure them, but not to love them.⁸² No one loves what he has to endure, even if he loves the endurance, for although

Augustine composed it, he also structured it didactically, taking his reader through his own search for God, as beginning (wrongly) in the things outside of him, only to discover God was already within. Furthermore, this initial experience of the divine is what causes further desire, further seeking, an interplay of already holding but still ardently desirous, already knowing but still seeking more. Perhaps with this first line in mind, "so ancient and so new", Saint Jerome wrote Augustine late in 418 and conveyed how "you are known throughout the world; Catholics honor and esteem you as the one who has established the ancient Faith anew" (*Letter* 195); emphasis added.

⁷⁹ *When at last I cling to you:* See Psalm 62:9(63:8).

⁸⁰ *with my whole being there will be no more anguish or labor for me:* See Psalm 89(90):10.

⁸¹ *Is not human life on earth a time of testing?* See Job 7:11, Old Latin.

⁸² *You command us to endure them, but not to love them:* This distinction between use (*uti*) and enjoyment (*frui*) was introduced earlier (see *Conf.* VIII.3.7, note 42, p. 202). All created reality is to be used to draw us closer to God, but God alone can be enjoyed. In other words, without denying its goodness or dignity, Augustine argues that no creature is an absolute end in and of itself; all creatures must be icons unto the divine. This is not to separate, say, love of neighbor and love of God but to place them properly together: in loving God we will necessarily love our neighbor, but if we seek to "love" neighbor only, not only do we fail to love God, we shall one day see that the "love" we had for our neighbor was all along only a form of self-indulgent concupiscence.