

Augustinian Studies

A Publication of Villanova University

Augustinian Studies is a journal devoted to the study of Saint Augustine. The Editors welcome contributions from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, including history, philosophy, and theology. Although the primary emphasis of the journal is the study of Augustine himself, articles illuminating aspects of Augustinian studies more broadly conceived (for example, studies of other persons, groups, or issues in Augustine's time, or the extent that such studies bear on or contribute to an understanding of Augustine's life or thought. The annual Saint Augustine Lecture, given each Fall at Villanova University, is published in the pages of this journal. *Augustinian Studies* also prints substantive review articles on appropriate publications.

Augustinian Studies is committed to fostering gender-inclusive scholarship and expression. In the preparation of manuscripts, authors are requested to follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Full titles of Augustine's works, rather than abbreviations, are preferred. Book, chapter and paragraph numbers are to follow the style of the critical edition used. Translated citations from Latin authors should supply the original language in the note.

Articles are to be submitted in manuscript form (one clean, double-spaced copy with endnotes)—preferably along with a disk copy. In order to allow manuscripts to be evaluated in ignorance of the author's name and institutional affiliation, the editor requests that such information be given in an accompanying letter and not on the manuscript itself. A decision will normally be reached within four months of receiving a paper. Manuscripts will be returned upon request.

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to Augustinian Studies, Villanova University, Villanova, PA 19085. All correspondence regarding subscriptions, renewals, back issues, sample copies and related matters regarding the journal's distribution should be addressed to Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0189; telephone (800) 444-2419 (US and Canada) or (419) 372-2419; fax (419) 372-6987; email: lechar@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Annual subscription cost is \$28.00.

© 1999 by *Augustinian Studies*. All rights reserved. Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 79-141613. ISSN 0094-5323

Augustinian Studies

The 1998 Saint Augustine Lecture

The Confessions of Saint Augustine:
What is the Genre of this Work?
Frances Young

1

Articles on the Trinity

Martyrdom and Docetism in Hilary of Poitiers's *De Trinitate*
Mark Weedman

21

Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine's *De Trinitate* I
Michel René Barnes

43

Augustine's *On the Trinity* in Gregory Palamas's
One Hundred and Fifty Chapters
Josef Lössl

61

Articles

The Development of Augustine the Bishop's Critique of Astrology
Thomas O'Loughlin 83

Ad Regnum Caritatis: The Finality of Biblical Interpretation
in Augustine and Ricoeur
Derek Simon 105

1998 St. Augustine Lecture

The Confessions of St. Augustine: What is the Genre of this Work?¹

Frances Young

Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology

University of Birmingham, England

The aim of this paper is to set *The Confessions* against the wider background of patristic literature, especially Eastern texts, so as to illuminate the character of this work and challenge some easy assumptions.

We begin with Augustine's work itself. Relatively innocent readers of *The Confessions* may be forgiven for assuming it is the first self-conscious autobiography ever written. It is plausible, after all, that this text generated "the introspective conscience of the West,"² and the title, "Confessions," would encourage us to

1. This paper was first delivered as the 1998 St. Augustine lecture at Villanova University. Footnotes are kept to a minimum. The content owes much though not all to my book *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Latin texts of Augustine are found in *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. English translations quoted here are acknowledged in footnotes.

2. The phrase is borrowed from the title of a famous article by Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," originally published in the *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215; republished in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Fortress, 1976; SCM 1977). It is not entirely irrelevant here since his argument was that Augustine radically changed the way Paul's letters have been read in the West.

think that Augustine set the trend in self-exposure. Readers expect here the individual self displayed reflecting upon its own inner development, and deduce that that self-awareness created autobiographical narrative.

That temptation might, however, be resisted by a more sophisticated readership which knew that in the ancient languages "confession" was about confessing God and meant praising or extolling the divine Name. Indeed, a slightly less innocent reader, one who opened the covers and read the first paragraph, would soon discover that the work is an extended prayer. However, as the work proceeds, confession of God becomes confession of a misspent youth, together with testimony to God's providential rescue and celebration of conversion to a new life. To that extent Augustine anticipates the autobiographical testimony tradition of my own Methodist evangelical forebears, and people may be excused for retaining something of their innocent assumptions even as they read the work.

The attentive and thorough reader, however, will eventually be disabused of those assumptions. For the climax of this thirteen-volume work consists of four books with no autobiographical content at all. On reaching the end, no reader will be surprised to hear that scholars have long since puzzled about the role of those books, or that their existence has retrospectively challenged the attribution of the description "autobiography" to the work as a whole. There is a serious issue about the *genre* of *The Confessions* at a time when the significance of *genre* for the evaluation of a literary work has become paramount.

Literary genres do not spring from nothing. So whether we find the description "autobiographical" convincing or not, it is important to search for precedents. Conveniently for us, Georg Misch of Göttingen produced at the beginning of the century a comprehensive history of autobiography in antiquity.³ A work of this kind inevitably bears the marks of its own time. Looking back from the so-called postmodern perspective, one of the characteristics of "modernity" we now discern is individualism, its focus on the original mind of an author, on the subjective self, on self-expression in the creative arts. It is not surprising that writing in the period of high modernity the account of ancient autobiography that Misch provides is one that details the development of self-consciousness, with Augustine as the climax. But what is convenient for us is the meticulous collection of relevant material, irrespective of whether we

3. Georg Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, 2 vols., ET (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949–50). Originally published in German in 1907, the English translation is of a later edition.

share the same analytical perspective. For Misch is prepared to track down autobiographical elements in all kinds of different literary material, and little that is similar to *The Confessions* can have escaped his attention.

So where are the most significant precedents to be found? Misch's work is strictly chronological, and we can ignore his earliest material, from Egypt, Babylonia and elsewhere. When we come to Plato and Isocrates, however, we are dealing with the beginnings of the literary deposit which directly or indirectly was Augustine's heritage, and there would seem to be two significant kinds of precedents. One is apologetic writing produced to explain and defend from criticism a person's past; the other is the meditative literature that emerges from the philosophic tradition and is most obviously instanced in the work of Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor who was also a Stoic philosopher. Roughly speaking Misch's view seems to be that autobiography flowered in late antiquity as ecclesiastical controversy provoked development of the former and Christian devotion reinforced the mystical tendencies of the latter. Neoplatonic spirituality he saw shading into Christian mysticism in Synesius of Cyrene, and as far as apologetic is concerned the then newly discovered work of Nestorius known as *The Bazaar of Heraclides* provided Misch with an obvious example.

More or less contemporary with Augustine we have the so-called autobiographical poems of Gregory Nazianzen. For Misch, Neoplatonic self-communion is the fundamental characteristic that Gregory and Augustine have in common, though both in different ways marry together elements of the apologetic and philosophic traditions. My view, however, is that the precedents so far adduced are not sufficient to account for the work of either of these authors. Only when we discern another important factor can we achieve an adequate literary analysis and account for the puzzle of Augustine's last four books. The fundamental point is this: even if we agree to describe as autobiographical the telling of one's own story, the object of such narrative was not at all what the modern reader might suppose nor what Misch assumed. It was not about individual self-expression, nor about the search for the inner core of one's particular subjectivity, the supposedly real self to be discerned when the layers are stripped off. So if it had nothing to do with psychological self-analysis, what was it? Radically different from Augustine's *Confessions* though Gregory's work is, I shall use it to tease out this other dimension, then show how recent discussion of Augustine's work points in the same direction, and finally address some potential objections to my thesis.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *De Vita Sua*,⁴ and Typology

Written in retirement toward the end of his life, Gregory's poetic account of his life has a strong apologetic flavour—indeed the Neoplatonic strains are found in other poems, not here. The tone is usually that of self-justification, of attack on enemies, of setting the record straight about his own actions and motivations. He wants to stop the flow of false reports, because he knows that people in power can divert blame onto their victims and whitewash their own actions. The apologetic motive is clear.

Nor is it surprising if we consider the course of Gregory's rise and fall. He had been called to Constantinople, the Eastern capital, when it was dominated by Arians, to form a Nicene congregation. Gradually with his eloquence and orthodoxy he had built up a following in the church of the Anastasis. A new Emperor had arrived, the Arians had been routed and Gregory installed in the Cathedral. But his triumph was short-lived. Enemies exploited his previous consecration as bishop of a nondescript little place in Cappadocia and, recognising that he was in breach of a Nicene canon, he resigned his see as well as the chairmanship of the Council of Constantinople in 381. He retired to fulfill his dream of ascetic withdrawal from the affairs of the world. Gregory's poetic narrative tells of his origins, his family, his education, the days in Athens as a student and his friendship with Basil, their search for the right way of life, how Gregory came to be ordained as priest and consecrated as bishop, episodes which bring out the love-hate relationship he had with his father and his closest friend, but all this is mere background to his defence of what happened in Constantinople. A poem of some 2000 lines devotes three-quarters of its length to the successes and failures of about eighteen months. This is primarily an apologetic work.

And yet in the prologue are other clues. He adopts the verse form as a kind of play and a consolation, and uses the metre of tragedy. He presents himself as one

... who is completely devoid of falsehood,
and who has suffered greatly amid many twists of fortune,
out of which there has arisen a greater understanding. (lines 17–19)

He explains that "greater understanding" in terms of an appreciation of the transitoriness of earthly life:

4. For text and translation (quoted here), see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poems*, ed. Caroline White, Cambridge Medieval Classics 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Everything ends in disaster: even good things are by time
outworn. Little or nothing remains,
as when the earth is swept away by heavy showers
and pebbles are all that is left. (lines 20–23)

Such clues point to the other element at which I have hinted. The particulars of the narrative may have apologetic aims but the overarching story has in Gregory's mind the universal dimensions of tragedy, and so the poem has a didactic purpose. It is to be a source of instruction and pleasure for the young, says Gregory (line 7); and that means he sees it as all literature was seen in antiquity, as an educational vehicle. He is providing an exemplary narrative, a story that carries moral truths about human life.

To describe it thus is to give it a classical flavour, fully justifiably, but we need to go further. Gregory's poem is saturated with biblical allusions which indicate an extraordinary melding of the narrative of his life with the stories of scripture. His father was a second Abraham and became one of Christ's shepherds. Hannah and other biblical mothers, though unmentioned, provide the model of his own mother's story: his birth was the outcome of her prayers and vows, she had a vision revealing his name, she immediately dedicated him to God, or as Gregory put it,

. . . to God

I was offered like a lamb or a sweet calf,

a noble sacrifice and one endowed with reason—

I would hesitate to say, like a second Samuel,

if I did not have in mind the longing of those who offered me. (lines 88–92)

Rather generalised comments about his youthful passion for language and literature leads Gregory into justifying the selection of events for his narrative and introducing the next episode as an example of youthful hot-headedness. But despite its manner of presentation, its purpose is surely not just to instance impetuous rashness in setting sail from Alexandria at the wrong time of year. Near Cyprus a storm comes up. Gregory draws on all his literary expertise to pen a dramatic description, but the point is that God's providence protected him, and Christ was already his Saviour, despite the fact he had not yet been baptised. This is both explicit and implicit, implicit in the narrative parallels with Jonah, explicit in the prayers he reports. The prayers call on the miracle-working God who destroyed the Egyptians and allowed his chosen people to cross the Red Sea, defeated Israel's enemies through the raised hands of Moses

(a long-standing traditional "type" of Christ on the cross), and brought down Jericho's walls by a trumpet-led procession. Recalling his mother's dedication, Gregory claims membership of the band of disciples and begs Christ to awake from sleep and still the storm. Gregory implies that it was his prayers which saved the entire ship's company. We note the intertextuality, the scriptural shaping of the narrative, analogous to what we noted before in the account of his parents and his birth.

We could go on and mention how Gregory's father begs him for his support with allusions to Aaron helping Moses and Samuel assisting Eli; how Gregory describes Christ's support when he had to face the magistrates early in his time in Constantinople by reference to Daniel in the lion's den, to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire, to Jonah and the whale; how the Exodus plagues and the waves of the Red Sea provide ways of describing his problems with Maximus, the enemy from Egypt; and many more examples, some so subtle they are less easily detectable. But enough has been said to make the basic point. Biblical narratives provide plots, motifs, exemplars, precedents, in the light of which Gregory is able to make sense of his own life. At the heart of his autobiography lies what I would call a typological imagination.

To understand this we need a little further exploration. Typology is a slippery concept, not least because of the history of its use in this century. It is not an ancient term but was coined in the nineteenth century,⁵ at least partly as a result of the post-Reformation reaction against allegory; it is loaded with attempts to define non-allegorical ways of recognising deeper meanings, and associated since the work of Daniélou with a strong emphasis on history. Thus events, such as the Exodus, evidenced providential parallels with aspects of the Christ-event, so that they became prophetic. Prophecies grounded thus in history were supposedly more acceptable to the modern mind than prophecies found by the riddling twists of allegory. In my view all this is simply a red herring. With the postmodern emphasis on the shaping of narrative and intertextuality we are in a position to understand better what the ancients were up to.

Already within the Bible, stories were given significance by relation to other narratives. As Greek became the language of early Christianity, the term

5. A. C. Charity, *Events and their Afterlife: The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 171, note 2. For further discussion of the points made in this paragraph, see my article "Typology," in *Crossing the Boundaries, Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce and David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 29–48, and my book, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Tradition*, chapters 7 and 9.

typos was used for a tale which bore the "stamp" of another. The Fathers were ready enough to adopt this (probably semitic) notion of prophetic "types" in scripture. They also understood scriptural narratives as "types" or "exemplars" of character or moral behaviour, since the latter was a common way of reading Greek literature. Types and parables were never clearly distinguished from allegory, which was itself a recognised literary conceit, a figure of speech, like metaphor. In exegesis such non-direct and allusive ways of expression had to be identified so as to discern the true meaning. As we try to analyse the ways in which ancient exegetes handled this complex of "signs" pointing to deeper meanings, we may find the term "typology" convenient, but we must treat it as encompassing at least two significant elements: firstly, Christ and the Christian dispensation were found foreshadowed in the characters and narratives of what had become the "Old" Testament; secondly, models of Christian living and exemplars of true virtues were found in Biblical "types," that is, in the stories and heroes depicted in scripture and held up to be imitated.

This typology is all-pervasive in the homilies and commentaries of the Fathers; it is fundamental to biography and hagiography.⁶ In late Antiquity, as Patricia Cox has shown,⁷ biographies, whether pagan or Christian, were generally meant to be "literary celebrations of the virtues of eminent individuals," who were seen "through ideal traits." Wayne Meeks has demonstrated how the double purpose of Plutarch's *Lives*, to demonstrate character and encourage imitation,⁸ was adopted by Jewish writers; Philo introduces his stories of the Patriarchs by propounding the notion of persons who are "living laws," "archetypes" of which particular laws and customs are but "copies." Averil Cameron⁹ tellingly puts the point:

In a concrete sense . . . written Lives provided the guidelines for the construction of a Christian life. . . . Written lives were mimetic; real ascetic discipline in turn imitated the written Lives. Like visual art, early Christian discourse presented its audience with a series of images.

It is against this background that we note how Gregory of Nazianzus, in his panegyric funeral orations for his father, mother and brother, and in his encomia on Basil and Athanasius, had already drawn upon the Bible to provide

6. For fuller treatment, see my *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, chapter 11.

7. Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press, 1983), p. 134.

8. Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality* (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 190, quoting from C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 103.

9. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (University of California Press, 1991), p. 57.

"archetypes," both of character and of event. Clearly in telling his own life, the same element plays a significant role.

Typology in Augustine's *Confessions*?

So my next questions are these: is Augustine's *Confessions* similarly typological? and does this help to explain the final books?

That *The Confessions* presents Augustine's life as a kind of paradigm of all human life is a thesis advanced in two forms in recent scholarship. Henry Chadwick in introducing his translation in the Oxford World's Classics¹⁰ develops the notion that Augustine presents in this work an account of Neoplatonic descent and return. It is "the story of the soul wandering away from God and then in torment and tears finding its way home through conversion." This "is also the story of the entire created order." "So Augustine's personal quest and pilgrimage are the individual's experience in microcosm of what is true, on the grand scale, of the whole creation," and that explains the presence of the four last books. They demonstrate that "the autobiographical books," are "more than a memoir: they illustrate a universal truth about human nature."

Chadwick admits that "Augustine found his story especially symbolized in St. Luke's account of the parable of the prodigal son"; and that he expresses "Neoplatonic themes in language that sounds like a pastiche of the Psalter." In other words there is an interpenetration of Neoplatonic framework and biblical language. Certainly one cannot deny the Neoplatonic flavour of much of Augustine's work; but the other account of *The Confessions* as paradigm would shift attention more definitely to the influence of the biblical text, noting a change in perspective between the earlier Neoplatonic writings and this later work. This alternative proposal is that Augustine's reading of Paul had profoundly changed his view of the human predicament and here he presented his own life as a paradigm of the life of "everyman" as he now understood it.

Augustine, weighed down with ecclesiastical responsibilities, "had broken completely with the classical ideal of virtue by which he had been reintroduced to Catholicism back in Milan," suggests Paula Fredricksen.¹¹ A new

10. *St. Augustine's Confessions*, ET Henry Chadwick, World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

reading of Paul's life gave him insight into the human moral predicament. She quotes from *Ad Simplicianum*:

What did Saul will but to attack, seize, bind and slay Christians? What a fierce, savage, blind will was that! Yet he was thrown prostrate by one word from on high, and a vision came to him whereby his mind and will were turned from their fierceness and set on the right way towards faith, so that suddenly out of a marvellous persecutor of the Gospel he was made a still more marvellous preacher of the Gospel.

The Neoplatonic Augustine had defended free will and argued against moral determinism. Convinced now that no one can save themselves, Augustine allowed his reading of Paul's life to shape the telling of his own, which by hindsight becomes a paradigm of Adam's bondage and the saving grace of divine providence. And the last four books may be seen as confirming that reading of his intention.

This view is very attractive: it accounts for the change in his views while highlighting scriptural exegesis as a significant factor. But my suggestion is that we must look beyond Paul and ask to what extent Augustine's work is grounded in the common "typological" frame of early Christian narrative. To explore this we must look East again.

The Syriac poems of Ephrem may be utterly different from anything Augustine wrote, but the patterning of lives on biblical models and the shaping of biblical models so that they reflect the underlying pattern of human existence is beautifully evident in these texts. Let us take as an example the treatment of King David in the XIIIth *Hymn on Paradise*:¹²

In that king
did God depict Adam:
since he provoked God by his exercise of kingship,
God stripped him of his kingship.
The Just One was angry and cast him out
into the region of wild beasts;

11. Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine's answer to Mani, Plotinus, and Julian," *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), pp. 227-51. Cf. her article "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* NS 37 (1986): 3-34.

12. *St. Ephrem. Hymns on Paradise*, Introd. and trans. Sebastian Brock (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1990).

he dwelt there with them
in the wilderness
and only when he repented did he return
to his former abode and kingship.
Blessed is He who has thus taught us to repent
so that we too may return to Paradise.
Because it was not easy
for us to see our fallen state—
how and whence we had fallen
at the very outset—
He depicted it all together
in that king,
portraying our fall
in his fall,
and portraying our return
in his repentant return.
Praise to him who delineated
this likeness for the repentant.

As the hymn goes on, Adam becomes a type of Samson as well as David, a type of “us” and a type of Christ. Jonah and Joseph likewise exemplify the pattern of being cast out and rescued. All are fused into a single narrative of fall and redemption which is the universal story of humankind.

In the Pentateuchal exegesis of Cyril of Alexandria we can discern a similar pattern.¹³ The drama of fall and redemption is the true meaning of the Law. Various biblical narratives, such as Abraham’s migration and the Exodus, display the pattern of exile, spiritual famine and return to a better life. Thus the human predicament and its solution in Christ is the Law’s fundamental theme recapitulated in one narrative after another.

Now Augustine certainly lacks the poetic imagination of a Gregory or an Ephraim. In *The Confessions*, as in other works like *The City of God*, he moves from one philosophical question to another, and for all the collages of scriptural texts, the kind of pastiche of biblical narratives noted in the Eastern material is hardly to be found. Nevertheless interest in an archetypal narrative of

13. See further my *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, p. 262.

human existence, played and replayed through history, is transparently clear in *The City of God*, and that account is subtly anticipated in the final book of *The Confessions*, when Augustine speaks of intellectual beings in the heavenly city resting in the Spirit, while fallen spirits are restless.

As is well known Augustine's fundamental thesis in *The City of God* is that human history displays the presence of two contrasting cities created by two kinds of love: self-love which reaches the point of contempt for God, love of God carried as far as contempt for self. Those who pursue the latter are strangers and pilgrims on earth, because their citizenship is in heaven. Traced through history, and particularly the narratives of the Bible, are instances of each city and the conflict between them. Individuals find their place within the universal story, and discover that the conflict lies within themselves. Written somewhat earlier than *The City of God*, *The Confessions* works through a similar agenda: as Christ came into the history of the world, so he came into Augustine's life. Thus the later work reinforces the notion that in *The Confessions* Augustine was exploring how his own life instanced the universal pattern. The work is not simply apologetic, certainly not purely psychological or self-oriented, it is fundamentally didactic. It is about reorientation from self-love to love of God. The story instances an archetype.

So let us turn again to the final books, beginning with the last. Often billed as an allegorical interpretation of Genesis, this volume, for all its digressiveness, has as overall theme God's praiseworthiness, particularly for the outworking of divine providence. In tune with the earlier books the opening paragraph is in the first person:

You made me and, when I forgot you, you did not forget me. I call you into my soul which you are preparing to receive you through the longing which you have inspired in it. . . . Before I called to you, you were there before me. (XIII.i [10])

But from the second paragraph there is a turn to the creation as a whole, and Augustine as always focuses on God's priority, the goodness of God as alone giving worth to the creation, and the need for the whole creation to be converted to God. Both the human soul and all the spiritual creation are restless till they find their rest in God. The one is type of the other. Augustine's "I" prays more than a purely personal and particular plea, and the Genesis text points to more than genesis of the material creation. The whole creation groans and travails, as St. Paul had said, and we who have the Spirit groan too.

Later (XIII. xii-xiv [13-15]), in a remarkable collage of scriptural texts drawn from the prophets, the Gospels, the Psalms, the Apostle Paul, as well as

Genesis, Augustine plays out the same narrative with respect to the Church. Everyone shares in the reality that without the Spirit, existence is formless and dark: weighed down one groans; "his soul thirsts for the living God, like a hart for the springs of waters"; each longs for the heavenly city, and there is constant slipping back into the deep; there is testing, and yet assurance that during this wandering pilgrimage, we are already light; so we are saved by hope. In the midst of this long passage, Augustine slips back into the "I" language, only to revert to "we" again. This yearning and wandering, this internal conflict, this dependence on the grace of God, all is of a type, and the ability to abstract biblical texts for his collages suggests an implicit grasp of the way the same narrative is played and replayed in scripture.

It is hardly surprising then that Book X treats Augustine's *persona* as typical of this universal human experience. This book makes no pretence to continue the narrative which finishes at the end of Book IX with the death of Augustine's mother. Much of the book appears to be a philosophical discussion of memory, but to give that title to the book, as Chadwick does, is misleading. Augustine begins by reflecting on the purpose of writing down his confessions:

When I am confessing not what I was but what I am now, the benefit lies in this: I am making this confession not only before you (= God) with a secret exaltation and fear and with a secret grief touched by hope, but also in the ear of believing sons of men, sharers in my joy, conjoined with me in mortality, my fellow citizens and pilgrims, some who have gone before, some who follow after, and some who are my companions in this life. . . . You have commanded me to serve them if I wish to live with you and in dependence on you. (X.iv [6])

This implies that the service consists in unveiling the pattern of pilgrimage and struggle typified in Augustine's own life, present and indeed past, as the earlier books have shown.

What follows is another remarkable collage of scripture texts, pointing to the fact that as a human person one is not transparent to oneself, that God alone knows and judges, that God alone is the proper object of love, and God transcends everything else. The discussion of memory (really an exploration of mental capacities) is a foil to wonder at the mystery of human being, and points to the epistemological quest which to my mind undergirds the whole work from beginning to end. The theme of *The Confessions* is the quest for truth, and the discovery that we do not know God; rather God knows us. Book X describes the human condition as ever transitional, ever struggling with temptations and desires, yet illuminated by a God in whom confidence can be

placed, not least because Christ has died and medicine has been prepared to restore humanity to health.

With these clues, it is possible to revise one's whole view of Augustine's purpose. The episodes in his life which he earlier chooses to narrate are illustrative of the themes he discusses at length, themes which can appear digressive and tedious if we imagine the principal interest is in giving an autobiographical account. Of course there is an apologetic element, as we found also in Gregory's work. But there is also a didactic thrust, and the overall perspective is reflection on human existence and God's providence. Augustine's points away from himself to God, but to do that he has to demonstrate how God has led him to appreciate the fact that true knowledge is ignorance. By doing this Augustine makes himself an instance of the universal human story, and the work is fundamentally typological.

Objection: Augustine's lack of typology

But is this paradigmatic reading really a tracing of typology? After all, Augustine does not in *The Confessions* mirror biblical narratives in the way Gregory or Ephrem does. He does not, for example, allude to biblical mothers like Hannah in depicting the significant role of his own. When he appeals to Adam, he does so in terms of us all being in Adam, or being "sons of Adam," a view more geneological than typological, one might say. Furthermore he does not discuss typology or "types" when he examines language and signs in the *De Doctrina Christiana*—indeed, it has been suggested that he failed to appreciate one section of Tyconius's work precisely because he did not grasp that Tyconius was discussing typology.¹⁴ So is there any justification in seeing a parallel with the kind of thing noted in the Eastern Fathers, Greek and Syriac?

My response to this is threefold. First, *The City of God* justifies the proposal. There are many passages in this colossal work which show without possibility of contradiction that Augustine inherited and exploited traditional prophetic typology. In the people of God

were prefigured and foretold all things which were foreseen, by inspiration of the Spirit, as destined to come, relating to the City whose kingdom will be eternal, and to Christ, its king and founder. (XV.8)¹⁵

14. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. xviii.

15. Augustine, *City of God*, ET Henry Bettenson, ed. David Knowles (Pelican Classics, 1972).

Whether tracing the story of Abraham, Joshua or David, the traditional "types" are drawn out. Paradoxically his use of traditional "types" both reinforces and runs counter to his insistence that somehow we were all "in Adam." For that idea leads him to make a distinction between the disobedience of Adam and Eve and all that followed, despite seeing in Adam and Eve the *archetype* both of harmonious unity in plurality and of human discord, with its roots in pride and self-regard.

The project Augustine undertakes from Book XI on of *The City of God* is essentially comparable with the typological construct of Ephrem and Cyril. He tells the twofold universal story, played and replayed in human history, and as he does so traditional typological associations are drawn deeper and deeper into his narrative. If explicit in *The City of God*, why not implicit in *The Confessions*? The likelihood is the greater if we note the occasional examples there of typological parallels, such as the description of Monica in terms of the widow at Nain (VI.i [1]).

Secondly, I cross-reference Augustine's exegesis of the Psalms. In *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, a collection of pieces produced over a long period (392–418) and ranging from brief notes to full sermonic expositions, Augustine consistently refers the words to Christ and the Church. This is not simply allegorical. Archetypes of the Church are found in the temple or people of God. Exemplars of prayer are found in the psalmist's language, as Augustine identifies with the "I" of the psalmist, who becomes a "type" of the saved community.

Two passages from his comments on Ps.30 (29 LXX) are illuminating:¹⁶

(i) I, your church, imitating the first-born from the dead, now sing at the dedication of your house: "You have turned for me my mourning into joy. You have cut off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness." You have ripped away the covering of my sins, the sadness of my mortal existence, in order to clothe me in the best robe, and in never-ending joy.

Then (ii) from a comment on the text "O Lord my God, I will confess to you forever":

there is confession of praise as well as of sins. Confess then today what you have done against God, and you will confess tomorrow what God has done in return for you. . . . And God? God forgives your sins as soon as you

16. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ET in *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: Newman Press), vols. 29 and 30.

confess your guilt, to free you from the remorse of sin, that you may confess God's praise hereafter forever and ever.

These passages almost provide the text for *The Confessions*, with the implied allusion to the Prodigal and the double sense of "confess." They illuminate Augustine's constant use of the Psalms in his collages of scripture texts. But more than that, they illustrate the "typological" reading of scripture which undergirds what Augustine is doing.

Thirdly, I remind you that the ancients in general did not identify "typology" as such. They spoke of types and parables, metaphors and allegories, all pointing to the deeper meaning of the text. Augustine deals with these matters not discretely but overall in his discussion of "signs" (cf. *De Doctrina Christiana*). He may not use the word "type" or "figura" all that much; he may not self-consciously distinguish in his analysis what we choose to call "typology." But my argument, deriving from familiarity with other early Christian texts, is this: consciously or unconsciously, alongside the apologetic interest, Augustine's purpose in *The Confessions* is typological. He constructs his own life according to the biblically-shaped pattern by which he has come to understand the weakness of the human quest for God and the power of divine providence and grace, so as to provide a didactic "type" or exemplar from which others will benefit by coming to an understanding of their own lives. The particular is understood by reference to the universal and *vice versa*. Scripture provides the models after which each human story may be sculpted.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by returning to the foil for this study, the work of Misch, and making a few admissions. It is true that Misch states early on that from its outset the highest aim of ancient autobiography was to depict an ideal standard of culture or a definite type of character, cast in the form of a self-portrait (pp. 63-4). It is also true that in his account of the Stoics, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, he recognises the didactic purpose of their "soul-histories" (pp. 412 ff.). Also he notes that Gregory's life is presented as an illustration of general truths about human existence, specifying this as the tragic depiction of idealistic effort overcome by the triumph of selfishness, with retirement as a return to pure life in God (p. 610). Furthermore he explicitly distinguishes Augustine from a modern autobiographer, stating that his conscious purpose was not the narration of individual experience but the arousing of religious

emotions and thoughts (pp. 635–7). Misch thus anticipates the points I have drawn out in this study.

Nevertheless, for Misch the importance of Gregory and Augustine, whether they meant to do it or not, lies in their telling how it was for them—uncovering their experience, their feelings. The fact that the ideal of Marcus Aurelius was the harmony of personal life with the divine symphony of the universe was for Misch a negative observation. His work is a detailed account of how the didactic presentation of “type,” of a static exemplar, of a model of a particular character and lifestyle (*ethos*), was superseded by genuine self-consciousness, exposure of the inner life, and of the response of the individual to experience. My argument would be that he has turned the subject upside down, emphasising elements most attractive to high modernity, and in so doing seriously distorting Augustine’s fundamental intention, which was to show how one might turn away from the self to become God-centred.

But then my challenge has highlighted the elements most attractive to postmodernism, with its emphasis on the way we ourselves construct our own selfhood, on the cultural and indeed linguistic captivity of all experience, on mediation and intertextuality. But I would claim that these current trends in fact enable us to appreciate again the realities of Augustine’s linguistic and literary world, where literary texts and rhetorical commonplaces shaped a way of understanding the world, as well as the pattern of education and intellectual formation, whether in pagan or Christianised form.

Finally, I would hint that we have much to learn from this. For our own Christian consciousness, our own telling of our own story, might likewise with profit be shaped by scripture and by tales of the saints. By conforming to “type” we might discern in our lives the workings of God’s grace. In fact, if I dared, I could give an account of my own life, with Samuel, Jeremiah and Paul, Augustine, Gregory and John Wesley, in terms of a mother dedicating a child before birth, of miraculous rescue from death, of strange providential coincidences, of trial and testing through suffering, of Damascus Road, call and commitment. But this is not the place to pursue that further.