

ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD

STANISLAUS J. GRABOWSKI, S.T.D., S.T.M.

Catholic University of America

THE *Confessions* of St. Augustine are a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, an acknowledgment of error and vice, and an expression of theological doctrine.¹ From them we learn that there was a time in Augustine's life when "he could not imagine any substance, but such as is wont to be seen by the eyes."² He relates how in the earliest stages of his intellectual growth he imagined God "to have the shape of human flesh and to be bounded by the bodily lineaments of our members."³ Later, in the Manichean period of his meanderings, having abandoned this primitive concept, he still thought of God as something corporeal and extended—as "a mass of bodies."⁴ God was one who had "parts extended in length and breadth, or whose being was bulk."⁵

Augustine's mind at this stage of his life was incapable of forming a concept of any being that was not extended by quantity. "Whatsoever was not extended over certain spaces, nor diffused, nor condensed, nor swelled out, or did not or could not receive some of these dimensions, I thought to be altogether nothing."⁶ He was of the opinion that whatever did not occupy a place in the universe could not be something. "Whatsoever I conceived, deprived of this space, seemed to me nothing, yea altogether nothing."⁷

There was, however, in this period of his search for God a certain progress, inasmuch as Augustine enlarged his material God to ever greater proportions. He realized progressively that God must be a supreme being and as such had to be some sort of unlimited being. In the final progress of this stage Augustine saw God as a huge entity encompassing in a physical way the whole universe and penetrating it. In fact, His unbounded substance extended beyond it through in-

¹ Cf. J. M. Le Blond, *Les conversions de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950), p. 5 ff.; P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950), p. 14 ff.; J. F. Harvey, *Moral Theology of the Confessions of St. Augustine* (Washington, D. C., 1951), p. xvii ff.

² *Confes.*, VII, 1, 1 (*PL*, XXXII, 733; ed. Skutella, 124).

³ *Confes.*, V, 10, 19 (*PL*, XXXII, 715; ed. Skutella, 92).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Confes.*, III, 7, 12 (*PL*, XXXII, 688; ed. Skutella, 45-46).

⁶ *Confes.*, VII, 1, 2 (*PL*, XXXII, 733; ed. Skutella, 125).

⁷ *Confes.*, VII, 1, 1 (*PL*, XXXII, 733; ed. Skutella, 124-25).

finite spaces. God appeared to him like a sea extending itself everywhere without limits, while the universe was like a huge but finite sponge encompassed about and saturated by the waters of the sea.⁸

Augustine tried to justify this vagary by analogies drawn from the material universe. Light and air, though rarefied substances, are nevertheless material. Air does not hinder the light from penetrating it, and the rays of the sun fill the air with their luminousness. In like manner terrestrial bodies, such as air, the heavens, the oceans, the whole mass of the earth itself, were imagined as pervious to the penetrating presence of a material God.⁹

During the Manichean and Academic periods of his life Augustine groped in religious darkness. His mind abounded in gross religious misconceptions primarily because of his basic error concerning the nature of God. Referring to this stage in his *Confessions*, he says mournfully: "Thou wert not Thyself, but a mere phantom, and my error was my God."¹⁰ Other gross errors followed in the wake of his fundamental misconception of the divine nature. Christ was not born in the flesh, but drawn out of the "most lucid mass" of the divine substance.¹¹ Evil, too, was believed to be some such kind of substance and to have its own soul and hideous bulk.¹²

These basic errors had their repercussions in Augustine's moral life. They were no help to him in practicing virtue, but rather disposed him to carnal indulgence.¹³ His false notion of God hindered him from seeking aid when he most needed it. Nor did he seek consolation from such a God in trying circumstances.¹⁴ Augustine's quest of God teaches those in error with what earnestness and indefatigability they must strive to attain a true conception of God. Augustine's case also shows palpably how unutterably important it is to conceive of God rightly if the whole religious life is to be built on a solid foundation.¹⁵

⁸ *Confes.*, VII, 5, 7 (*PL*, XXXII, 736; ed. Skutella, 130).

⁹ *Confes.*, VII, 1, 2 (*PL*, XXXII, 734; ed. Skutella, 125).

¹⁰ *Confes.*, IV, 7, 12 (*PL*, XXXII, 698; ed. Skutella, 63).

¹¹ *Confes.*, V, 10, 20 (*PL*, XXXII, 716; ed. Skutella, 93).

¹² *Ibid.* (*PL*, XXXII, 715; ed. Skutella, 92).

¹³ Cf. C. Boyer, *Christianisme et Néo-Platonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1920), p. 49; J. Capello, *Confessionum libri tredecim* (Rome, 1948), p. xix.

¹⁴ *Confes.*, IV, 7, 12 (*PL*, XXXII, 698; ed. Skutella, 63); cf. Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65.

¹⁵ Cf. S. J. Grabowski, "For a Vital Concept of a Living God," *Catholic University Bulletin*, XIII (1946), 9 f.

The time had now arrived when Augustine would no longer conceive of God as "any solid or substantial thing."¹⁶ His acquaintance with the Neoplatonic school of thought had thrown open a new vista of religious ideas. The notion of God as a purely spiritual being,¹⁷ taught by the Neoplatonic philosophers,¹⁸ was as revealing to his mind as it was fundamental to his religion. This new concept removed "the greatest and almost only cause" of his inevitable error.¹⁹ He who till this time professed he "knew not God to be a spirit"²⁰ refashioned his concept of God, and in due time his theology and religion. To Augustine's delight he also discovered that "the one only Church, the Body of Jesus Christ," did not maintain any tenet which should confine God, the Creator of all, in space however great and large.²¹

Later, as bishop, Augustine made use of the experiences of his own soul in his pastoral instructions to the people. For example, in a sermon on Jacob and Esau, he assures his listeners that God is none of the vagaries he once entertained of Him. He is neither earth nor heaven. He cannot be any of the immense bodies above us, viz., the sun, the moon, or any planet. Even if the sun is conceived as extending beyond all confines, it will not and cannot be God. He cannot be envisaged as man, no matter how perfect the latter be, nor as matter, however precious it be: God cannot be anything that is finite, be it corporeal or spiritual.²²

His doctrinal works, too, bear evidence of his relentless efforts and pastoral solicitude in correcting the misconceptions of men and in inculcating the true concept of God. In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, intended "to help to an understanding of the Scriptures"²³ and "to

¹⁶ *Confes.*, IV, 7, 12 (*PL*, XXXII, 698; ed. Skutella, 63).

¹⁷ *De beata vita*, I, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 961).

¹⁸ The God of Plotinus, the "One," is sheer spirituality and should therefore in no way be conceived as corporeal (*Enneads*, VI, 9, 3 [ed. R. Volkman, Leipzig, 1883-84, II, 511]). For this reason God is simple: He is devoid of any composition (*Enneads*, V, 5, 4 [Volkman, II, 210]; II, 9, 1 [Volkman, I, 184]).

¹⁹ *Confes.*, V, 10, 19 (*PL*, XXXII, 715; ed. Skutella, 92).

²⁰ *Confes.*, III, 7, 12 (*PL*, XXXII, 688; ed. Skutella, 45).

²¹ *Confes.*, VI, 4, 5 (*PL*, XXXII, 722; ed. Skutella, 103-4).

²² *Serm.*, IV, 4, 5 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 35).

²³ *Retract.*, II, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 631; *CSEL*, XXXVI, 135).

present the facts which we have comprehended,"²⁴ Augustine portrays the various ways in which different categories of men visualize God as the most excellent and sublime being. Because the passage is a synthesis of some deeper thoughts on the approach of men to God, Augustine's own striking words are transcribed here:

When the one God of gods is thought of, even by those who believe in, invoke, and worship other gods "whether in heaven or on earth" (1 Cor. 8, 5), He is considered in such a way that the very thought tries to conceive a nature which is more excellent and more sublime than all others. Men are indeed influenced by diverse goods, some by those which are concerned with the sense of body, others by those which affect the intellectual quality of the mind. Consequently those who have surrendered to the bodily senses think that the sky, or what they see so radiant in the sky, or the world itself is the God of gods. Or, if they attempt to go beyond the world, they visualize something luminous and conceive it as infinite or of that shape which seems most pleasing in their vague imagining. Or they think of it in the form of the human body, if they prefer that to other things. However, if they do not think there is one God of gods, but rather many and innumerable gods of equal rank, they still attribute to each one the form of body that seems most excellent in their own minds. Those who by means of their intellect strive to visualize what God is, place Him above not only all visible and corporeal natures, but even all intellectual and spiritual natures, above all changeable things. All men engage in contest over the excellence of God, and no one can be found to believe a being is God if there is any being more excellent. Hence all men agree that He is God whom they esteem above all other things.²⁵

CONCEPT OF PRESENCE

Augustine considers the notion of presence to be one of the primary attributes which enter into the concept of God. The Bishop says that when you think "of a certain substance—living, perpetual, omnipotent, infinite, everywhere present, everywhere whole, nowhere included"—you are thinking of God.²⁶ Again in his profound work *On the Trinity* he presents us with a brief but comprehensive and keen analysis of the concept of God by removing from Him the "accidents"

²⁴ These words refer to Book IV of *De doctrina christiana*, a book added much later when about A.D. 427 he interrupted his *Retractationes* in order to finish it. For Book IV cf. Sr. M. Therese Sullivan, *De doctrina christiana liber quartus* (Washington, D. C., 1930).

²⁵ *De doct. christ.*, I, 7, 7 (PL, XXXIV, 220); tr. by J. J. Gavigan, in *The Fathers of the Church* (New York, 1947), p. 32.

²⁶ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, I, 8 (PL, XXXV, 1383).

of the Aristotelian categories of logic.²⁷ In this rather difficult passage, which is not easily rendered into English, Augustine encourages us "to understand God, if we are able, and as far as we are able, as good without quality, great without quantity, a creator without indigence, ruling but from no position, containing all things without 'having' them, totally everywhere without place, eternal without time, making things that are changeable without change of Himself, and not being subject to the influence of anything."²⁸

Predicated of creatures, material or spiritual, presence is a quality, a positive attribute, a certain perfection. When it is asserted of the Supreme Being, the limitations and imperfections proper to presence in created beings must be removed from it. This theological principle is true of all attributes drawn from the universe and predicated of God. It is a teaching common to the Fathers.²⁹ The efforts of Augustine to purify and sublimate the concept of the divine presence are unrelenting, notwithstanding the difficulties that he experiences expressing it in human words.³⁰ This is evidenced by the many and various words and expressions he uses to clarify and exalt God's omnipresence.

Let us notice the expressions that Augustine uses to describe the divine presence in the universe. "God," he says, "is everywhere,"³¹ is

²⁷ Cf. *Topics* (ed. R. McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* [New York, 1941], p. 195).

²⁸ *De trinit.*, V, 1, 2 (*PL*, XLII, 912): "ut sic intelligamus Deum, si possumus, quantum possumus, sine qualitate bonum, sine quantitate magnum, sine indigentia creatorem, sine situ praesidentem, sine habitu omnia continentem, sine loco ubique totum, sine tempore sempiternum, sine ulla sui mutatione mutabilia facientem, nihilque patientem."

²⁹ E.g., Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19, 22 (*PG*, XXXII, 107); Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, IV, 11, 2 (*PG*, VII, 1002; ed. W. W. Harvey [Cambridge, 1857], II, 175); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, IV, 5 (*PG*, XXXIII, 460; ed. G. C. Reischl and J. Rupp [Munich, 1848-60], I, 94); Cyril of Alexandria, *De sancta et consubstantiali trinitate*, Dial. I (*PG*, LXXV, 673); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adv. Eunom.*, I, 3 (*PG*, XLV, 601; ed. F. Oehler, [Halle, 1865], I, 320); Ps.-Dionysius, *De div. nom.*, VII, 3 (*PG*, III, 872); John Dam., *De fid. orth.*, I, 5 (*PG*, XCIV, 801); Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, III, 2, 1 (*PL*, XVI, 148; ed. Ballerini [Milan, 1875], IV, 148); *id.*, *De fide*, I, 16, 106 (*PL*, XVI, 576; ed. Ballerini, IV, 597): "Quidquid religiosius sentiri potest, quidquid praestantius ad decorem, quidquid sublimius ad potestatem, hoc Deo intelligas convenire."

³⁰ *De natura boni*, 22 (*PL*, XLII, 558; *CSEL*, XXV/2, 864); *Confes.*, VII, 5, 7 (*PL*, XXXII, 736; ed. Skutella, 130); VII, 4, 6 (*PL*, XXXII, 735; ed. Skutella, 129); VII, 1, 1 (*PL*, XXXII, 733; ed. Skutella, 124); *De quant. anim.*, I, 34, 77 (*PL*, XXXII, 1077); *In Io. Ev. tr.*, I, 8 (*PL*, XXXV, 1383).

³¹ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 5, 17 (*PL*, XXXIII, 838; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 95).

present everywhere,³² is diffused everywhere,³³ is diffused through all things,³⁴ fills all things.”³⁵ He states this same truth in a negative form when he says that God is everywhere because He is absent nowhere³⁶ and is wanting in no part of any being.³⁷ God is in the universe, in all places, and in every thing. When compared with the presence proper to created beings He is most present.³⁸

The divine presence is thus most perfect in extension and in intensity. Extensively, God encompasses the whole universe and pervades its substance; He permeates every minutest particle of it. In fact, it is characteristic of the divine essence to be present immediately to any other being or world that He may choose to call into existence. Intensively, God is present to all creation in the manner that a self-subsisting Creator and necessary Being alone is able to be present to them, i.e., by sustaining in existence what He has created, since otherwise a contingent being could not subsist. In this manner God is said to be most present to them.

When the Bishop speaks of a ubiquitous diffusion of God in the universe, he warns men again and again against conceiving this in a material way, i.e., as quantity distended by its bulk through distant spaces.³⁹ God is not spread out as liquid, nor does He pervade beings as air and light do. All such substances, whether gross or fine, are material, and as such are subject to the laws of quantity. They are divisible, so that their magnitude is lesser in a part than it is in the whole.⁴⁰

³² *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 13, 41 (*PL*, XXXIII, 848; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 118); *Enar. II in Ps. XXX*, 1, 7 (*PL*, XXXVI, 234).

³³ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 11 (*PL*, XXXIII, 836; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 90).

³⁴ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 92): “Diffusus per cuncta.”

³⁵ *Confes.*, I, 3, 3 (*PL*, XXXII, 662–63; ed. Skutella, 3).

³⁶ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 6, 18 (*PL*, XXXIII, 838; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 96).

³⁷ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 5, 17 (*PL*, XXXIII, 838; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 95): “quia nulli parti rerum absens est.”

³⁸ *Confes.*, VI, 3, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 721; ed. Skutella, 103); *ibid.*, I, 4, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 662–63; ed. Skutella, 3).

³⁹ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 11 (*PL*, XXXIII, 836; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 90); 13, 41 (*PL*, XXXIII, 848; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 118); 4, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 92).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4, 11 (*PL*, XXXIII, 836; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 90): “ne quasi spatiosa magnitudine opinemur Deum per cuncta diffundi, sicut humus aut humor aut aer aut lux ista diffunditur (omnis enim hujuscemodi magnitudo, minor est in sui parte quam in toto).”

This is the reason why we must abstain from carnal conceptions⁴¹ and corporeal imaginations⁴² if we are rightly to conceive of God as being everywhere present.

Augustine is fully aware of the necessity of using human concepts and words, which are immersed in the limitations and imperfections of creatures, to express God's infinite and most perfect being. Attributes drawn from the universe can be predicated of God, since they are in some measure a reflection of God's perfections, but none of them is worthily asserted of God.⁴³ Much more does the divine nature transcend all human words, and yet we must express ourselves in human fashion. God "is conceived more truly than He is expressed (by words), and He *is* more truly than He is conceived."⁴⁴ It is easier to say what God is not than what He is.⁴⁵ In describing the attributes of God Augustine employs in no small measure the philosophical technique of Plotinus,⁴⁶ whose fundamental teaching is that the "One" cannot be defined in positive terms but must be presented in a negative manner.⁴⁷

MODE OF DIVINE PRESENCE

Literally leaning on Augustine's own terminology, let us first see the manner in which God is not present in the universe. God is not enclosed in place;⁴⁸ He is not circumscribed by place.⁴⁹ He is not contained in place, for whatever is contained in place belongs neces-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, "carnali resistendum est cogitationi et mens a corporis sensibus avocanda."

⁴² *Enar. II in Ps. XXX*, 1, 7 (*PL*, XXXVI, 234): "Omnino nihil horum cogitent humana phantasmata."

⁴³ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, XIII, 5 (*PL*, XXXV, 1495): "Omnia possunt dici de Deo, et nihil digne dicitur de Deo."

⁴⁴ *De trinit.*, VII, 4, 7 (*PL*, XLII, 939): "Verius enim cogitatur Deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur."

⁴⁵ *Enar. in Ps. LXXXV*, 12 (*PL*, XXXVII, 1090): "Deus ineffabilis est; facilius dicimus quid non sit quam quid sit." Cf. *De trinit.*, V, 1, 2 (*PL*, XLII, 911-12).

⁴⁶ Cf. C. Boyer, *L'Idée de vérité dans la philosophie de saint Augustin* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1940), p. 126.

⁴⁷ *Enn.*, VI, 3, 11 (ed. Volkman, II, 493).

⁴⁸ *Serm.*, CCLXXVII, 14, 14 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 1265); *De civ. Dei*, VII, 30 (*PL*, XLI, 220; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 313): "nullis inclusus locis."

⁴⁹ *Confes.*, V, 2, 2 (*PL*, XXXII, 707; ed. Skutella, 77): "quem [Deum] nullus circumscribit locus."

sarily to the category of material beings.⁵⁰ Nor is He confined to many places, for He fills all places with His presence.⁵¹ God, therefore, is not to be said to be somewhere, for whatever is somewhere is in place; but God cannot be said to be in place.⁵² Since God is not somewhere but everywhere, it is not correct to ascribe to Him any motion or transition from place to place.⁵³

Augustine warns us earnestly: "Only let us not try to bring God to place, let us not try to contain God in place, let us not try to diffuse God through spaces, as it were, by some mass; let us not dare that, let us not think it."⁵⁴ And again in the same strain: "Do not think of God as being in places; if He were in place, He would not be God."⁵⁵ The limitations and imperfections surrounding the mode of presence proper not only to quantitative beings but also to spiritual created beings are removed from the all-perfect God.

Like the other Fathers Augustine ascends from that which is lower and pervious to the senses to that which is higher and impervious to them, viz., from the presence of the body to the presence of the soul.⁵⁶ Wherever length, width, and depth are wanting in a being, it cannot be material but immaterial.⁵⁷ The soul has no spatial dimensions: it "must not be believed to be long, wide, or heavy."⁵⁸ It has a nature which is superior to all substances possessing tridimensional extension. "The nature of the soul is more excellent than the nature of the body; the former exceeds the latter much."⁵⁹ The soul has no quantitative

⁵⁰ *De div. quaest. LXXXIII*, 1, 20 (*PL*, XL, 15-16); *Serm.*, XII, 3, 3 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 101); *Enar. in Ps. XXXIV*, 6 (*PL*, XXXVI, 337); *De sermone Domini in monte*, II, 5, 17 (*PL*, XXXV, 127): "non enim spatio locorum," etc.

⁵¹ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, XXXI, 9 (*PL*, XXXV, 1640).

⁵² *De div. quaest. LXXXIII*, 1, 20 (*PL*, XL, 15-16).

⁵³ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, XXXI, 9 (*PL*, XXXV, 1640); *De civ. Dei*, XVI, 5 (*PL*, XLI, 483; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 131): "non loco movetur Deus, qui semper ubique est totus."

⁵⁴ *Serm.*, CCLXXVII, 14, 14 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 1265).

⁵⁵ *Enar. in Ps. LXXIV*, 9 (*PL*, XXXVI, 952-53).

⁵⁶ *De Gen. ad lit.*, XII, 11, 22 (*PL*, XXXIV, 462; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 392); "ut ab inferioribus ratio ad superiora conscendat."

⁵⁷ *De anim. et eius orig.*, IV, 21, 35 (*PL*, XLIV, 544): "corpora . . . quae per distantiam longitudinis, latitudinis, altitudinis locorum occupant spatia." Cf. also *De quant. anim.*, 6, 10 (*PL*, XXXII, 1041).

⁵⁸ *De quant. anim.*, 3, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 1038); cf. J. Pastuszka, *Niematerjalność Duszy Ludzkiej u Św. Augustyna* (Lublin, 1930), p. 57 ff.

⁵⁹ *Enar. in Ps. CXLV*, 4 (*PL*, XXXVII, 1886).

mass, no corporeal form, no configuration, no position of parts. In a certain sense it is not a composite, but simple;⁶⁰ in any case, it is more simple than a corporeal being⁶¹ and forms a class of its own.⁶² "The soul is spiritual, incorporeal, and akin to the substance of God."⁶³

The material body's mode of presence is contrasted with that of the soul. Since their natures are different, their modes of presence will be different.⁶⁴ The soul like material bodies is somewhere, it is in some place: it is in a body in such a manner as to be concluded within the delimitations of the body. Yet it is present in the body not by a local and quantitative diffusion akin to the circumscriptive presence of material bodies, but by a certain life-giving activity.⁶⁵ The intensity of its presence, manifested by its various functions and operations, is greater in some parts and members of the body than in others.⁶⁶ Unlike material bodies, which are by parts in the corresponding parts of space which they occupy, the soul is whole in the whole body and whole in each part of the body. "In toto (corpore) tota est, et in qualibet parte tota est."⁶⁷

God has His own mode of presence. It is contrasted with the presence of bodies and of the soul. It is altogether different from the circumscriptive mode of presence of material bodies. They are indeed wholly in the whole place, but in such a manner that they are divisible and their many parts are measured by the corresponding parts of space. As a result larger parts of the material body occupy larger parts of space, and smaller parts smaller parts of space,⁶⁸ and the space occupied by one part cannot at the same time be occupied by another part.⁶⁹ But God's presence also transcends the mode of presence of the soul which is confined (here upon earth) to a particular body as its place. Nothing contains or encompasses the divine substance. God is

⁶⁰ *De quant. anim.*, 1, 2 (*PL*, XXXII, 1036): "simplex quiddam."

⁶¹ *De trinit.*, VI, 6, 8 (*PL*, XLII, 929): "simplicior est corpore."

⁶² *De quant. anim.*, 1, 2 (*PL*, XXXII, 1036): "proprie substantie videtur esse."

⁶³ *Enar. in Ps. CXLV*, 4 (*PL*, XXXVII, 1886).

⁶⁴ *Ep.*, CXXXVII, 2, 4 (*PL*, XXXIII, 517; *CSEL*, XLIV/3, 101).

⁶⁵ *De orig. anim.*, II, 4 (*PL*, XXXIII, 722; *CSEL*, XLIV, 551): "Per totum quippe corpus quod animat, non locali diffusione, sed quadam vitali intentione porrigitur."

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: "alicubi intentius, alicubi remissius."

⁶⁷ *De trinit.*, VI, 6, 8 (*PL*, XLII, 929).

⁶⁸ *De anim. et eius orig.*, IV, 12, 17 (*PL*, XLIV, 534).

⁶⁹ *De orig. anim. hom.* [= *Ep.* CLXVII], 2, 4 (*PL*, XXXIII, 722).

present in and to the whole universe and is wholly in every part of creation. In His entirety God permeates even the minutest and most insignificant being and part of it.⁷⁰ The reason why God is not in place (*in loco*) is that He is everywhere present in His totality.

On this account is He said to be everywhere, because He is absent to no part; on this account is He said to be whole, because He presents not one part of Himself to a part of things, and another part of Himself to another part of things, equal part to equal parts of things, a less to lesser parts, greater to a greater part; but He is equally present as a whole not only to the whole of the universe, but also to each part of it.⁷¹

St. Augustine succinctly expresses this type of presence by the Latin apothegm *ubique totus*; elsewhere he adds a touch of exactness with *ubique simul totus*.⁷² This trenchant dictum contains an epitome of the patristic doctrine on the presence of God. This terminology was in use among the Greek Fathers,⁷³ and still more among the Latin Fathers before St. Augustine.⁷⁴ The Bishop's constant use of it lent it a technical ring.⁷⁵ The same epithet with the same doctrinal content prevailed throughout the remainder of the patristic period.⁷⁶ It was inherited by the Scholastics, who, having systematized the doctrine on the modes of presence and established an accurate terminology, supplanted the expression *ubique totus* by *praesentia repletiva*.

The Fathers admitted that the innermost nature of God's manner

⁷⁰ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 5, 17 (*PL*, XXXIII, 838; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 95): "non solum universitati creaturae verum etiam cuilibet parti ejus totus pariter adest."

⁷¹ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 6, 17 (*PL*, XXXIII, 838; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 96).

⁷² *Serm.*, CCLXXVII, 13, 13 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 1265).

⁷³ John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura*, I, 3 (*PG*, XLVIII, 704); *id.*, *In Ps. CXXXVIII*, 2 (*PG*, LV, 413); Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 19, 22 (*PG*, XXXII, 108).

⁷⁴ Arnobius, *Adv. nationes*, VI, 4 (*PL*, V, 1169-70; *CSEL*, IV, 217); Hilary, *De trinit.*, II, 6 (*PL*, X, 55); *id.*, *Tract. in Ps. CXLIV*, 21 (*PL*, IX, 863; *CSEL*, XXII, 838); Jerome, *Comment. in ep. ad Eph.*, I, 2 (*PL*, XXVI, 472-73).

⁷⁵ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, *passim*; *De civ. Dei*, XVI, 5 (*PL*, XLI, 483; ed. Dombart-Kalb, II, 131); *ibid.*, VII, 30 (*PL*, XLI, 220; ed. Dombart-Kalb, II, 313); *Confes.*, VI, 3, 4 (*PL*, XXXII, 721; ed. Skutella, 103); *ibid.*, I, 3, 3 (*PL*, XXXII, 662; ed. Skutella, 3); *Serm.*, LIII, 8 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 367); *Serm.*, CCLXXVII, 13, 13 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 1264); *Ep.*, CXXXVII, 2, 4 (*PL*, XXXIII, 517; *CSEL*, XLIV/3, 101); *In Io. Ev. tr.*, I, 8 (*PL*, XXXV, 1383).

⁷⁶ Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, II, 12, 20 (*PL*, LXXV, 565); Aurelius Cassiod., *Expositio in Ps. CXXXVIII*, 6 (*PL*, LXX, 986).

of presence in the universe is not easy to explain.⁷⁷ Augustine expresses himself in like manner. Although God is most present (*presentissime*) to every being, He is present nevertheless *secretissime*⁷⁸—a term that denotes in Augustine the inscrutable mysteriousness of an action or a state.⁷⁹ Nothing is more mysterious than God, yet nothing is more present; while it is difficult to say where He is, it is more difficult to say where He is not.⁸⁰ It suffices for the Bishop to state that God is present everywhere in a wonderful way which however is scarcely comprehensible by the minds of men.

The reason of this hidden, obscure presence lies in the very spirituality of His essence, which is impervious to the perceptions of the human senses and remote from the cognitive processes of man.⁸¹ Although the spiritual nature of God is in some respects similar to that of the soul—and in this wise we gain our analogical knowledge of the divine nature—still it is unlike the soul in many other respects. By virtue of this particular spirituality God must be altogether in the whole universe and altogether in every part of the universe at the same time.⁸² The divine presence, like the divine spirituality, involves immutability and indivisibility. Moreover, since the divine essence is ineffable, we cannot express ourselves intelligibly about it unless we employ language indicative of time and place, even though God is not in place and is out of the range of time.⁸³

ANALOGIES

The abstruseness of the subject on the one hand and the ingenuity and practical cast of the Bishop's mind on the other led him to find helpful examples for illustrating the nature of the divine omnipresence.

⁷⁷ E.g., John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura*, I, 3 (PG, XLVIII, 704).

⁷⁸ *Confes.*, VI, 3, 4 (PL, XXXII, 721; ed. Skutella, 103); *De quant. anim.*, I, 34, 77 (PL, XXXII, 1077).

⁷⁹ E.g., *De dono persever.*, 13, 33 (PL, XLV, 1012).

⁸⁰ *De quant. anim.*, I, 34, 77 (PL, XXXII, 1077): "Quo [creatore] nihil sit secretius, nihil praesentius; qui difficile invenitur ubi sit, difficilior ubi non sit."

⁸¹ *De Gen. ad lit.*, V, 16, 34 (PL, XXXIV, 333; CSEL, XXVIII/1, 159).

⁸² *Serm.*, CCLXXVII, 13, 13 (PL, XXXVIII, 1264–65).

⁸³ *De Gen. ad lit.*, V, 16, 34 (PL, XXXIV, 333; CSEL, XXVIII/1, 159): "quamvis, inquam, illa substantia ineffabilis sit, nec dici utcunque homini per hominem possit, nisi usurpatis quibusdam locorum ac temporum verbis, cum sit ante omnia tempora et ante omnes locos."

Augustine likens the ubiquitous and total presence of the divine essence in the universe to the presence of immortality in the human body. Immortality is incorporeal and indivisible. It permeates altogether as one virtue the whole of the human body, which is itself corporeal and divisible. Thus, while some members of the body are larger than others, they are not on that account more immortal than others.⁸⁴

And, again, he parallels it with health, which indivisibly permeates the body and its component parts. Thus, in an all-around healthy body a smaller member, e.g., a finger, has not less health than a bigger member, e.g., the hand.⁸⁵ He also compares the presence of God to wisdom in man, which is so present that it is not measured by the stature of its possessor. Or, if there are two equally wise men of whom one is of larger physical proportions, wisdom will not be greater on that account in the one than it is in the smaller man.⁸⁶

Other abstract substantives—justice, truth, chastity—become for Augustine stock terms to illustrate, and proofs to demonstrate, the possibility of that presence which is proper to God. He makes use of these not only in more recondite and doctrinal treatises but also in instructions and sermons intended for the common people. It is evident, therefore, that these abstract concepts used to elucidate the nature of God's presence are no *obiter dicta*, but are a well-considered part of his theology.⁸⁷

These analogies are intended to render intelligible to the human mind the whole and indivisible presence of God and at the same time the universally diffusive character of that presence. "Far be it," Augustine says, "that whatever the quality of a created being can do in a body, the substance of a creator cannot do in itself."⁸⁸ By the use of such analogies, however, he does not intend to imply that God is such a quality; he expressly denies such an inference. "God is so diffused through creation that He is not a quality of the universe."⁸⁹

Augustine clearly distinguishes between quantity and quality of bodies and the respective modes of presence that they entail. A material substance, such as the body of man, has quantity and quality.

⁸⁴ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 12 (*PL*, XXXIII, 836; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 90-91).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Serm.*, IV, 6, 7 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 36).

⁸⁸ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 13 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 91).

⁸⁹ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 92).

Quantity is its bulk or extension; health and wisdom, which are in that same body, are a quality of it.⁹⁰ There is no quantity in God; hence the mode of presence proper to quantitative bodies is alien to Him. Nor is He a quality of the universe; hence His mode of presence will be even unlike that of non-quantitative finite beings.⁹¹

The Bishop of Hippo thus steers clear of any taint of pantheism. Notwithstanding the divine inbeing and pervasion of the universe, God is not one with it. He does not form a part of the being of creatures. Not even with regard to the spiritual soul of man can God be said to be a *pars*, although the soul is an *imago* of God. And yet the divine presence is so necessary as to be a *condicio sine qua non* of the existence of all creatures. Though He is immanent in all creatures, the simplicity, spirituality, and immutability of His nature require that He be transcendent to them. Speaking of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the chaotic mass described after the first act of creation in the opening lines of Genesis, the Bishop asserts that we must not imagine, as some do, the Holy Ghost therein described as animating by His very person the newly created mass.⁹²

We perceive the stages of Augustine's ascent from the lowest material to the very highest immaterial.⁹³ From the macrocosm of sense and perception he reaches to the inward microcosm of thought and intelligence, and from there to the unchangeable spirit.⁹⁴ It is an ascending movement from the material-and-changing to the spiritual-and-changing, and from the spiritual-and-changing to the immaterial-and-unchanging.⁹⁵ St. Augustine's Platonic mind shows a predilection for reaching God from the existence of abstract and immutable truths, which are divine in their own right and consequently indicative of their divine source.⁹⁶ But he also admits that God is knowable from creation, so that the mind ascends from the perfections of creatures to those of the Creator.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 13 (*PL*, XXXIII, 836; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 91): "corpus aliqua substantia, quantitas ejus est in magnitudine molis ejus, sanitas vero ejus non quantitas sed qualitas ejus est."

⁹¹ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 92): "sic Deus per cuncta diffusus, ut non sit qualitas mundi."

⁹² *De div. quaest. ad Simpl.*, II, 1, 5 (*PL*, XL, 133).

⁹³ *De civ. Dei*, VIII, 6 (*PL*, XLI, 231; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 329-31).

PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY

In opposition to the predicament of quality, God is the personal and creative substance responsible for the existence of all beings. They exist not by necessity or emanation but because they have been called into existence by a free act of the divine will. The creating act alone, however, does not suffice to account for the universe. After it is created, God continues to sustain it in its existence. It is He, too, who causes order and stability; it is He who guides and rules it.⁹⁸

The Doctor correlates, associates, and even identifies the presence of God with the creative and conservative operations of God in the universe. "God fills the earth," Augustine says, "not by the exigency of His nature, but by the presence of His power."⁹⁹ As beings cannot commence to be without God's creative act, so neither can they continue to be without God's power abiding in them and sustaining them. The omnipresent God of Augustine is therefore not only the omnipotent God who creates all things out of nothing but also the all-holding

⁹⁴ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, XX, 11 (*PL*, XXXV, 1562): "Transcende et corpus, et sape animum; transcende et animum, et sape Deum."

⁹⁵ A. C. Pegis, "In Defense of St. Augustine," *New Scholasticism*, XVIII (1944), 99.

⁹⁶ *De trinit.*, IX, 7, 12; XII, 2, 2 (*PL*, XLII, 967, 999); cf. E. Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, 1944), p. 57 ff.

⁹⁷ *Confes.*, X, 6, 8-10; XI, 4, 6 (*PL*, XXXII, 782 f., 811; ed. Skutella, 214-17, 267-69); *Serm.*, CXLI, 2, 2 (*PL*, XXXVIII, 776); *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 32, 49 (*PL*, XXXIV, 316; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 129-30); *Enar. in Ps. XLI*, 6-7 (*PL*, XXXIV, 467-68); *Sermones* (Mai) in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* (ed. G. Morin; Rome, 1930), I, 360: "Fuerunt ergo quidam, non sicut Moyses famulus Dei, non sicut prophetae multi ista intuentes et intelligentes, adjuti Spiritu Dei; quem Spiritum fide hauserunt, faucibus pietatis biberunt, ore interioris hominis ructaverunt. Non ergo tales. Sed fuerunt alii dissimiles, qui per istam creaturam potuerunt pervenire ad intelligendum Creatorem, et dicere de his quae fecit Deus: Ecce quae fecit, gubernat et continet; ille ipse qui fecit, implet sua praesentia ista quae fecit." Cf. M. Pontet, *L'Exégèse de s. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris, 1945), pp. 324-25. It is incorrect, therefore, to state that the unaided reason of man according to St. Augustine cannot ascend from a contemplation of the created universe to the Creator without His illumination. Such, for instance, is the assertion of Herschel Baker, *The Dignity of Man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), ch. XI, "Augustine and the Medieval View of Man," p. 162.

⁹⁸ *Ep.*, CLXXXVII, 4, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 837; *CSEL*, LVII/4, 92): "Sic est Deus . . . substantia creatrix mundi sine labore regens et sine onere continens mundum."

⁹⁹ *De civ. Dei*, VII, 30 (*PL*, XLI, 220; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 313): "implens coelum et terram praesente potentia, non indigente natura."

God who preserves the things He has created.¹⁰⁰ These are fundamental principles underlying the doctrine of the relationship of the universe to God. Both creation and conservation show to what extent creatures are dependent in their being upon the omnipresent God.

Augustine's exegesis of the hexaemeron sheds light on the dynamic presence of God who was then fashioning the universe. Referring to the repose of God on the seventh day, he explains that God rested after the biblical days of creation in so far as He did not create any new genera of beings.¹⁰¹ God does not rest, however, from all activity, for He does not cease to operate in the things He has created.¹⁰² Nor does Augustine see in this ceaseless activity any contradiction to God's immutability. God is always simultaneously at rest and at work.¹⁰³ Although the things He works upon are confined to place and subject to time, He is outside the category of time and place.¹⁰⁴

God cannot recede from the work which He brought into existence. When the human builder constructs his edifice or the artisan finishes his product, they go away; they are no longer needed that their works may continue in existence. But if God were to turn away from the universe, it would turn to nothingness. If He were to abandon any of the numberless created beings constituting the universe, it would cease to be.¹⁰⁵

Nor is God in the world as the craftsman, artisan, or architect, who are external to the work they are producing. They occupy a place different from that occupied by the object on which they are working. It is characteristic of man to be present to the object on which he is working, without being present in it. God, on the contrary, works from

¹⁰⁰ *De Gen. ad lit.*, VIII, 26, 48 (*PL*, XXXIV, 391; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 265); *ibid.*, IV, 12, 22 (*PL*, XXXIV, 304; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 108).

¹⁰¹ *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 12, 22 (*PL*, XXXIV, 304; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 108).

¹⁰² *De Gen. ad lit.*, V, 23, 46 (*PL*, XXXIV, 338; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 169); *ibid.*, V, 4, 10 (*PL*, XXXIV, 325; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 144).

¹⁰³ *De Gen. ad lit.*, V, 23, 46 (*PL*, XXXIV, 338; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 169): "simul requiescens et operans."

¹⁰⁴ *De Gen. ad lit.*, VIII, 23, 44 (*PL*, XXXIV, 389; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 262): "ipsa apud seipsam et in seipsa sine ullo tempore ac loco, movet tamen per tempus et locum sibi subditam creaturam . . ."

¹⁰⁵ *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 12, 22 (*PL*, XXXIV, 304; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 108); *ibid.*, IV, 12, 23 (*PL*, XXXIV, 305; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 109); *ibid.*, V, 20, 40 (*PL*, XXXIV, 335; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 164).

within. In creating, He works intrinsically in the thing created; in conserving, His power is operative on the inside of the universe and is active within each part and parcel of it. His permeating presence is the cause of subsistence of all things, attaining their very nature from within; it also guides and rules all beings by a power internal to them. "By the power of His majesty He creates whatever He creates; by His presence He rules whatever He has created."¹⁰⁶

It must be noted that the creative act and the conservative operations are inseparably bound up, for Augustine, with the divine omnipresence. This is likewise true of all other divine operations which belong to the world's administration. The Bishop does not conceive of God as present and therefore as acting, but as active and therefore present. "These things the one true God works and performs as God, that is, as being everywhere present."¹⁰⁷ And elsewhere: "Behold, what He created He governs and contains; He Himself who created fills by His presence those things that He created."¹⁰⁸

Augustine, therefore, does not conceive the presence of God in the form of an inactive abiding or an inert permeation of all being, but in terms of power and action. "He is everywhere present, not by spaces of places, but by the power of His majesty."¹⁰⁹ Before Augustine, both Greek and Latin Fathers presented God in His dynamic presence. In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find passages in the early Fathers which expressly denote the presence of the divine substance. In virtue of their doctrine that God is simple it follows that nature and action are not separable in God, and hence the divine substance is present where the divine action is exerted. But what was explicitly taught was the presence of the divine action and not of the divine substance. By laying stress on the dynamic presence the danger of identifying God with the universe was made more remote.

In this matter the Bishop of Hippo had not only a guide in tradition but also an incentive from the religious philosophy of Plotinus, who

¹⁰⁶ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, II, 10 (PL, XXXV, 1393).

¹⁰⁷ *De civ. Dei*, VII, 30 (PL, XLI, 220; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 313): "Haec enim fecit et agit unus et verus Deus, id est ubique totus."

¹⁰⁸ *Sermones* (Mai) in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* (ed. G. Morin; Rome, 1930), I, 360.

¹⁰⁹ *De serm. Dom. in monte*, II, 5, 18 (PL, XXXIV, 1277).

considers the presence and immensity of God preeminently in the form of power and action.

The "One," however, is found neither in other things, nor in the divisible, nor is it indivisible in the sense in which the smallest possible remainder is indivisible. It is the greatest of all things, not in extension, but in power, and hence space and extension have nothing to do with its power. The real existence which comes next to it in rank is also indivisible and undivided in a dynamic, not spatial, sense. We are to understand, too, that it is infinite, not by virtue of being immeasurable in extension or number, but because its power cannot be comprehended or circumscribed.¹¹⁰

The doctrine that God is present in the universe is expressed by a twofold series of assertions. First, God is said to be in the universe or to pervade all things. The various ways in which this is expressed may be epitomized by "God in them." Secondly, the entire universe with its individual parts is said to be in God: "they in God." Both classes of expression indicate the relation of the universe to God. The doctrine of omnipresence is commonly expressed nowadays in the first manner, viz., that God is in all things. The second manner, viz., that all things are in God, was transformed during the Scholastic period into a different sense. "All things are in God" means that they have their exemplary ideas in the divine essence.

Scripture countenances the statement that all things are in God.¹¹¹ It occurs in the Latin Fathers: thus Ambrose¹¹² and Jerome use it,¹¹³ although they do not make the effort that Augustine does to explain its usage. Plotinian philosophy supports it¹¹⁴ and Augustine expresses his preference for it.¹¹⁵ It occurs after Augustine's time; thus St. Bernard states trenchantly: "All things are in Him, so is He in all things."¹¹⁶ This mode of expression became common to pantheists.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ *Enneads*, VI, 9 (ed. Volkman, II, 515); tr. by B. A. G. Fuller, in C. M. Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy* (New York, 1907), p. 368.

¹¹¹ Rom. 11:36; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:16.

¹¹² *De fide*, I, 16, 106 (*PL*, XVI, 553; ed. Ballerini, IV, 597).

¹¹³ *In Isaiam*, XVIII (*PL*, XXIV, 653).

¹¹⁴ *Enneads*, IV, 3, 9 (ed. Volkman, II, 21): "It [the world] lies in the soul which sustains it."

¹¹⁵ *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII, 20 (*PL*, XL, 15); *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 18, 32 (*PL*, XXXIV, 308; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 115).

¹¹⁶ *De consid.*, V, 6 (*PL*, CLXXXII, 769).

¹¹⁷ Cf. J. Radford Thompson, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London, 1887), p. 282 f.

Malebranche, in self-defense against pantheistic accusations, maintains that, according to the teaching of Spinoza, God is in the universe (and hence the doctrine is pantheistic), but according to his own teaching the universe is in God (and hence he himself evades pantheism).¹¹⁸

Augustine warns us that man and the universe are not in God as a part of His substance.¹¹⁹ They are in Him because in order to subsist they must be supported by Him, and in order to fulfill the purposes of their existence they must be guided by Him to their respective ends.¹²⁰ He is the sole uncaused reality and every other caused reality must be dependent upon His sustaining power. And yet He is so perfect in His being as to be transcendent to His creature. "He is . . . by His immutable and transcendent power interior to every being, because all things are in Him, and exterior to every being, because He is above all things."¹²¹ This inbeing in God Augustine terms a place (*locus*), thus considering the divine essence as a container in the manner of space. He excuses himself, however, for using such metaphorical language.¹²²

PRESENCE AND DIVINE SUBSTANCE

Although Augustine does not speak explicitly of the presence of the divine substance in the universe, the doctrine is implicitly contained in his theology. What is his teaching on the nature of God? What relation exists between the divine will and its act, between the divine essence and will? His doctrine in these fundamentals relating to the divine nature will necessarily have a bearing on the nature of omnipresence.

The divine power or act is rooted in the divine will. It is the divine will which creates; it is the divine will which preserves created beings in existence. There is, however, an essential difference between God and man in regard to the relationship which exists between the act and the will. In man an act and the will which elicits it are not only distinct but also separate; in God will and power, will and act, are

¹¹⁸ Cf. A. Ferland, *De Deo uno* (Montreal, 1943), p. 194.

¹¹⁹ *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 12, 23 (*PL*, XXXIV, 305; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 109).

¹²⁰ *De Gen. ad lit.*, II, 6, 12 (*PL*, XXXIV, 268; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 41).

¹²¹ *De Gen. ad lit.*, VIII, 26, 48 (*PL*, XXXIV, 391; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 265).

¹²² *De Gen. ad lit.*, IV, 18, 34 (*PL*, XXXIV, 309; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 117).

identically the same. More than that, they are identical with God's very essence: they are God Himself. "The will and power of God is God Himself."¹²³

This identification is true not only of the will and its act but also of all divine attributes. For Him who is Life it is not one thing to be and another to live, but it is one and the same thing to be and to live. Again, for Him who is the subsisting Intellect, to live and to know are not diverse acts, but to know is to live, and to live is to be. Thus, too, God is great, yet not by any participated greatness as man is, but by that greatness which is His own essence. In other words, God is His own greatness, just as He "can be said to be His own divinity."¹²⁴ God does not participate in the perfections ascribed to Him; He simply is that perfection which is predicated of Him.¹²⁵

Underlying these statements is the fundamental doctrine that God is a simple substance or nature, i.e., devoid of any composition. Augustine expresses the concept of non-complexity trenchantly and profoundly when he says that God is simple because being and having are not two different things in God as they are in man, but one and the same thing. God is what He has. "He is said to be multiple, because there are many perfections which He has; He is said to be simple, however, because He is not anything else than what He has."¹²⁶

The ultimate reason for identifying the divine attributes with the divine essence is to be sought in the utmost perfection of the divine being. The cause of the existence of created beings lies outside them, but God's being with all its perfections is absolutely independent of any external cause. God is *in semetipso*: He has the source and cause of His existence in and by Himself.¹²⁷ He alone is an eternal, immutable, self-subsisting, and hence all-present substance.¹²⁸ All other existences are created and draw their being from Him as a source and cause.¹²⁹

¹²³ *Confes.*, VII, 4, 6 (*PL*, XXXII, 735-36; ed. Skutella, 129): "voluntas enim et potentia Dei, Deus ipse est."

¹²⁴ *De trinit.*, V, 10, 11 (*PL*, XLII, 918).

¹²⁵ *De civ. Dei*, XI, 10, 1 (*PL*, XLI, 325; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 475).

¹²⁶ *Ep.*, CLXIX, 2, 7 (*PL*, XXXIII, 745; *CSEL*, XLIV/3, 617); *De civ. Dei*, XI, 10, 1 (*PL*, XLI, 325; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 475): "hoc est quod habet."

¹²⁷ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, XIX, 11-13 (*PL*, XXXV, 1548-50).

¹²⁸ *In Io. Ev. tr.*, I, 8 (*PL*, XXXV, 1383).

¹²⁹ *De civ. Dei*, XI, 15 (*PL*, XLI, 331; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 483); XII, 5 (*PL*, XLI, 353; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 518).

Having being originally (*primitus*) as a source-being, He alone has being in the true and highest sense.¹³⁰ "God," says the Bishop trenchantly, "*summe est.*"¹³¹

Thus, of God it can simply be said that He is: nothing else need be said. In predicating "is" of creatures some attribute must be added: we say that they *are* this or that, such or not such. In fact, we are so accustomed to adding an attribute after the verb "is" because it is predicated so frequently of created beings that when we use it of God there is a tendency to say not only that "He is" but "what He is."¹³² Augustine, with his deep insight into divine things, makes the unaccustomed statement that God is "is." Thus he remarks that God is "the is," as "the good is the good of all goodness."¹³³ Elsewhere, when speaking of the manner in which we know the good, Augustine states that whatsoever in any degree *is*, is good. The reason which he gives is that it comes from Him who not merely is in some degree, but is "the is."¹³⁴

¹³⁰ *De Gen. ad lit.*, V, 16, 34 (*PL*, XXXIV, 333; *CSEL*, XXVIII/1, 159).

¹³¹ *De civ. Dei*, XII, 5 (*PL*, XLI, 353; ed. Dombart-Kalb, I, 518); *Contra Secund. Manich.*, 10 (*PL*, XLII, 586; *CSEL*, XXV/2, 919).

¹³² Cf. E. Gilson, *Philosophie et Incarnation selon saint Augustin* (Montreal, 1947), pp. 26-27.

¹³³ *Enar. in Ps. CXXXIV*, 4 (*PL*, XXXVII, 1741): "Est enim est, sicut bonorum bonum est." Cf. F. J. von Rinklen, "Deus bonum omnis boni: Augustinus und modernes Wertdenken," in *Aurelius Augustinus* (Cologne, 1930), p. 216 ff.

¹³⁴ *Confes.*, XIII, 31, 46 (ed. Skutella, 367): "ab illo enim est, qui non alio modo est, sed est est." The text in this passage is the one adopted by Skutella. It is also accepted by E. Gilson in his *Philosophie et Incarnation selon saint Augustin*, p. 27. Gilson thus abandons, as less accurate, the text which he accepted in his previous work, *L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1944) where we read on p. 53: "ab illo enim est, qui non aliquo modo est, sed est, est." The text accepted by de Labriolle varies somewhat from the one already quoted when it states that same reason in these terms: because it is from Him, who is not merely in some degree, but what He is, is: "Ab illo enim est, qui non aliquo modo est, sed quod est, est" (ed. de Labriolle [Paris, 1926], II, 404). However, de Labriolle deviates from this text in the text of his own translation of the *Confessions*: "puisque il procède de Celui qui n'existe pas d'une façon quelconque, mais qui *est* absolument." Many of our English translations of the *Confessions* adopt the same text as de Labriolle; cf., e.g., *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, ed. by W. J. Oates (New York, 1948), I, 243: "Because it is from Him who is not in any degree, but He Is that He Is." Cf. also *Confessions*, tr. by E. B. Pusey (London, 1945), p. 344: "For from Him it is, who Himself is not in degree, but what He Is, Is."

DIVINE PRESENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

The writings of Augustine purpose not only to enlighten the intellect but also to move the will. The aim of his philosophy, wisdom, and theology is the attainment of the highest Good, to which man must conform and assimilate himself already in this life in order to contemplate it in eternity. When he stimulates the will and appeals to the emotions, the Bishop does not neglect to expound and define the doctrine in which ethics and morality, religion and charity, are rooted. There is a blend of dogma and morality: his works afford much light for the understanding and much warmth for the heart. Augustine evidences, more perhaps than any other Father, the inseparability of theology and morality, of belief and practice, of dogma and living, in Christian religion.

This is true likewise of the doctrine under consideration. While he studies and expounds the doctrine of the all-present God, the practical application of it to the life of man is ever obvious. Moreover, his teaching on the presence of God is but a particular phase of his entire doctrine on God. The impressive portrayal of an all-present God is a sequel to his vivid concept of an all-perfect God. God is in heaven and in hell, in the sea, in the skies, in the sun, the moon, and the stars. He is in every place in His entirety—*totus ubique*.

God is near, ever-present, within us and around us. We cannot move ourselves out of the sphere of His presence. We cannot flee from Him who is within our very selves. He pervades every being as light shines through a translucent object. In fact, He is more present to us than we are to ourselves. We cannot rid ourselves of His power and influence. His presence is not otiose but operative. Through it He sustains our being and every being; without it nothing would be able to subsist: *sine quo nemo potest esse*.¹³⁵

These are some of the thoughts that recur in the voluminous writings of the Bishop of Hippo in connection with his doctrine on the presence of God. In it he found a formidable weapon against the sinner. Sinners forsake their Creator but He does not forsake them. They are ignorant that God is everywhere, whom no place encompasses. He alone is near even to those who try to remove themselves from Him.¹³⁶ But it is

¹³⁵ *De quant. anim.*, I, 34, 77 (PL, XXXII, 1077).

¹³⁶ *Confes.*, V, 2, 2 (PL, XXXII, 707; ed. Skutella, 77).

impossible for the enemies of God to abscond from the terrible Judge. In this the all-present Judge differs from human judges, because they preside in a particular place and pass their sentence upon a transgressor who is himself usually before them.

God is the judge of your iniquities. If He is God, He is everywhere present. Whither will thou betake thyself from the eyes of God, that thou mayest speak in some part where He does not hear? If God judges from the east, go to the west, and say whatever you wish against God; if He judges from the west, go to the east, and speak there; if from the wilderness or mountains, go into the midst of people, where thou wilt murmur to thyself. He judges from no place who is everywhere hidden, everywhere public; whom no one can know as He is, and whom no one is permitted to ignore.¹³⁷

A keen feeling and a deep consciousness of the ever-present God is part and parcel of his own personal religion. Anyone who reads his *Confessions* must become aware of Augustine's sensitiveness to the divine presence working in his own soul.¹³⁸ These are not exclusively allusions to that presence which he terms the presence of inhabitation, and which he usually associates with the person of the Holy Ghost. Nor is it only that presence and activity which is bound up with the inspiration and workings of divine grace. Augustine refers frequently to that divine presence which is common to all beings, animate and inanimate, to all men, sinners and the just. When, forgetting himself as it were, he seeks and calls upon God to come to him, then upon second thought he rebukes himself and apologizes for trying to draw God to himself from elsewhere as if He were not already there.¹³⁹ "Thou wert more inward to me than my most inward part, and higher than my highest."¹⁴⁰

One also feels Augustine's overpowering conviction of the physical need of God and of His pervasive presence and action. "If I shall not remain in Him, nor will I be able to remain in myself."¹⁴¹ In corroboration of this assertion Augustine adduces a passage referring to wisdom and found in the Book of Wisdom, but applies it directly to God:

¹³⁷ *Enar. in Ps. LXXIV*, 9 (*PL*, XXXVI, 952).

¹³⁸ Cf. F. Cayré, *Dieu présent dans la vie de l'esprit* (Bruges, 1951), p. 195 f.

¹³⁹ *Confes.*, I, ch. 2 and 3 (*PL*, XXXII, 661-63; ed. Skutella, 2-3).

¹⁴⁰ *Confes.*, III, 6, 11 (*PL*, XXXII, 688; ed. Skutella, 45).

¹⁴¹ *Confes.*, VII, 11, 17 (*PL*, XXXII, 742; ed. Skutella, 141-42).

“illa autem in se manens innovat omnia.” No finite and contingent being can exist unless God, the absolute and necessary Being, is the cause of its origin and the preserver of its existence. This He does by his active and pervasive presence. “He made these (souls), nor is He far off. For He did not make them, and so depart, but they are of Him and in Him.”¹⁴²

Too late loved I Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late I loved Thee! And behold, Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee; deformed I, plunging amid those fair forms, which Thou hast made. Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee, which unless they were in Thee were not at all.¹⁴³

An all-present, living, and active God is a tremendous reality permeating the depths of Augustine’s soul. Indeed, God is so real to him that at times he seems to pierce the veil which separates the finite from the infinite and almost to grasp the God whose throne is inaccessible to the mind of mortal man.¹⁴⁴ It is in this sense that Paulinus writes in a letter to Augustine: “I have asked you who sees as it were through God.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *Confes.*, IV, 12, 18 (*PL*, XXXII, 701; ed. Skutella, 67); tr. by E. B. Pusey (London, 1945), p. 62.

¹⁴³ *Confes.*, X, 27, 38 (*PL*, XXXII, 795; ed. Skutella, 237); tr. *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁴⁴ H. Pope, *St. Augustine of Hippo* (Westminster, Md., 1949), pp. 251–52: “We can see how he [Augustine] had penetrated into the mysteries of the Godhead, has become almost ‘comprehensor,’ and not simply ‘viator.’” Also E. Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (New York, 1924), p. 24: “Augustine is for me the Prince of Mystics, uniting in himself, in a manner I do not find in any other, the two elements of mystical experience, viz., the most penetrating intellectual vision into things divine, and a love of God that was a consuming passion. He shines as a sun in the firmament, shedding forth at once light and heat in the lustre of his intellect and the warmth of his religious emotion.”

¹⁴⁵ *Ep.*, CXXI, 111, 14 (*PL*, XXXIII, 468; *CSEL*, XXXIV/2, 736): “Te, qui vides quasi per Deum, interrogavi.” Some mss. have “qui vides quasi Deum.”