AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, SERVUS SERVORUM CHRISTI

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The age of Saint Augustine was for the episcopate of the West a period of training for future duties. Before the end of the fifth century, in almost every community the real leader, both in temporal and spiritual matters, was the bishop. During the next two centuries there came into being the medieval prelate, a prince in the church and in the state; but the foundations of his ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction had already been laid by the early part of the fifth century. The African bishops shared with their colleagues of the other western provinces the same line of evolution, until it was interrupted, first by the Vandal invasion, and then by the Islamic conquest. However, by that time Augustine of Hippo, Alypius of Thagaste, the primate Aurelius of Carthage, and their fellow-bishops had made contributions of permanent value to the whole church, and they had created a noble standard of duty and conduct to be emulated by prelates of a later day.

The life of an African bishop of the early fifth century is fully illustrated in the career of Saint Augustine. One must remember, however, that Hippo was a comparatively important seaport, that the extent of the diocese was large in comparison with many others, and, above all, that its spiritual ruler was no ordinary bishop, but a teacher revered by the whole of Africa and "the Church beyond the sea." Although Saint Augustine's life is in many respects typical of that of the North African bishops, it is therefore more complex than that of the average and on a greater scale than that of the majority of his colleagues. Many of his occupations and problems would be scarcely known to the bishop of a small, poor, remote, inland diocese.

When Saint Augustine became sole bishop of Hippo Regius
in 396,\(^1\) he became head of a diocese apparently large for North Africa,\(^2\) where a see was usually a village or fundus.\(^3\) Seven hundred bishoprics are known to have existed there during the fourth century; and, even if there was a Donatist for every Catholic, this is an astounding figure for a province the size of Africa. The longest extent of Augustine’s domain from the city was towards the south-east, a distance of about forty miles; in other directions the distance was generally about twenty-five miles, although in certain places considerably less.\(^4\) It had a numerous population, of which the rural inhabitants were more Punic than Roman,\(^5\) and the townsmen more Latin than Punic-speaking.\(^6\) The majority of the Christians were then Donatists.\(^7\) The Catholics were given to pagan observances, sometimes under Christian forms,\(^8\) and to the grievous sins of “riotting and drunkenness,” “strife and envying,” and deception.\(^9\) The new bishop attacked these evils, endeavored to elevate the plane of religious and moral life, combated heresy and schism, and for thirty-four years lived a life without leisure, a “servus servorum Christi,” as he proudly calls himself.\(^10\) Early in his presbyterate he wrote to a correspondent: “For I do not propose to spend my time in the empty enjoyment of ecclesiastical dignity; but I propose to act as mindful of this, that to the one chief Shepherd I must give account of the sheep committed to me.” This continued to be his attitude during the years of his long episcopate. Again and again he refers to the increasing

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1 Presbyter, 391; bishop-coadjutor, 394.
2 In Ep. 34:5, (CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 26; Saint Augustine indicates the usual sire of a diocese by using town—civitas—as synonymous with diocese.
5 Ep. 66:2; 84:2; 209:3, (CSEL., v. 34 (2), pp. 236, 393; v. 57, p. 348).
6 Serm. 167:4, (PL., v. 38, p. 910); Augustine relates a Punic proverb in Latin because “you all do not understand Punic.”
burden\textsuperscript{12} of the bishop's office, the multifarious cares and tasks\textsuperscript{13} which occupied his day and those "hours which bishops devote to study while other men sleep."\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, throughout this entire period he suffered from illness.\textsuperscript{15}

The bishop of Hippo was the superior of a considerable body of clergy, but it is impossible to determine their number. In the city of Hippo there were, besides the Donatist cathedral,\textsuperscript{16} five churches:\textsuperscript{17} three basilicae, the cathedral or basilica pacis,\textsuperscript{18} the basilica Leontiana,\textsuperscript{19} the basilica ad octo martyres,\textsuperscript{20} and two chapels, one dedicated ad viginti martyres\textsuperscript{21} and the other to Saint Theogenes.\textsuperscript{22} The cathedral also had a chapel in honor of Saint Stephen, especially built by Augustine for the reception of relics of the Protomartyr.\textsuperscript{23} All the clergy who ministered in these churches must have been present in the cathedral on September 26, 426, when Saint Augustine designated his successor; and it is recorded that there were then present the presbyters Saturnius, Leporius, Barnabas, Fortunatianus, Rusticus, Lazarus, and Eraclius.\textsuperscript{24} Rusticus was the chaplain of the nunnery of Hippo.\textsuperscript{25} This is too large a number of priests for the town, since the bishop performed most of the priestly duties, but it seems too small to include all the priests of the diocese. The lesser clerics present were grouped together as "clergy," and

\textsuperscript{13} Ep. 31:4; 98:8; 102:1; 119:3; 151:13; 169:1, 13; 213:5; (CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 4; pp. 530; 545; v. 44, pp. 153; 392; 611; v. 57, pp. 366-7).
\textsuperscript{14} Ep. 118:3, (CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 668; "O rem dignam vigiliis et lucubrationibus episcoporum").
\textsuperscript{15} Ep. 10:1; 38:1; 118:43; 122:1; 229:1; (CSEL., v. 34 (1), p. 23; v. 34 (2), pp. 64; 698; 742; v. 57, p. 497).
\textsuperscript{18} Ep. 213, (CSEL., v. 57, p. 373); De Civ. Dei, xxii, 8.
\textsuperscript{21} Serm. 148; 325, (PL., v. 38, pp. 799; 1447); De Civ. Dei, xxii, 8.
\textsuperscript{22} Serm. 273:7, (PL., v. 38, p. 1251).
\textsuperscript{23} Ep. 212, (CSEL., v. 57, p. 372); De Civ. Dei, xxii, 8. Saint Augustine built only when he believed it necessary. Possidius relates: "For new buildings he never had any desire, avoiding the entanglements of his soul in these things, since he wished always to have it free from all temporal annoyance." (Vita Aug., 24).
\textsuperscript{24} Ep. 213:1, (CSEL., v. 57, p. 373).
their number is not given. They probably were many times the number of priests. There was no parochial system in the town, since only the great capital of Carthage with its twenty-two churches had developed to this point, and was divided into seven parishes, each with a distinct body of clergy.26 In the Letters and other writings of Saint Augustine there are occasionally mentioned priests, deacons, subdeacons, readers, and acolytes belonging to various parishes or stations in the diocese.27 The institution and growth of monasticism in North Africa were fostered by the bishop Hippo, and, indeed, he is to be considered the founder of African communal life.28 In the diocese of Hippo there were four monasteries of men, and perhaps two, certainly one, houses of women.29 When he succeeded Bishop Valerius, Augustine established a community in the episcopal house, and there he lived frugally with his clergy.30 Over the government of these communities the bishop kept the strictest supervision, although he never visited the nunneries unless it was unavoidable.31

28 Augustine established the first monastery in North Africa on his own lands at Thagaste and endowed it with a portion of his patrimony. Confessions, IX, 8:17; Possidius, Vita S. Augustini, 3, Ep. 126:7 (CSEL., v. 44, p. 12-13).
29 The four houses for men were the monastery which he established in 391, the episcopal house, and two outside the city. (See Serm. 355, 1, 2; Possidius, Vita, 5; Serm., 355, 2; Serm., 356, 10, 15. For women there was a nunnery within the city (Ep. 210, 211;) and perhaps one nunnery outside (Ep. 35:2).
30 Possidius, Vita Aug., 22.
31 Ibid., 26.
Soon after his ordination as presbyter, Saint Augustine described the priest as one *qui populo ministrat sacramentum et verbum dei*,32 and when he became bishop one of his chief duties remained the ministry of the sacraments and the word. The episcopate, increasingly burdened with administrative and supervisory obligations during three centuries, had not yet been able to relieve itself to any great extent in Africa of the parochial duties of the first monarchical bishops. Services in the church were frequent. Daily communion was the practice in Africa, and Saint Augustine conformed to it.33 In addition to this and to other services on Sunday and saints’ days, there were evening services daily in the church of Hippo.34 Moreover, the hearing of confession, the granting of absolution, the imposition of penance—or at least the responsibility for it—devolved upon the bishop; for the Council of Hippo (393) had decreed that priests might not absolve without the consent of the bishop, unless he was absent and it was a case of necessity.35 If the offense was a matter of common knowledge, the absolution was to be public, the penitent receiving the imposition of hands before the “apsis.” In many small African dioceses this may have been accomplished without unduly oppressing the bishop, but in a diocese such as Augustine’s it must have been necessary to consider all cases in the parish churches “cases of necessity,” and to have granted this power to the priests. The bishop was not even free from ordinary pastoral visitation, but in this Augustine “adhered to the rule set forth by the Apostle, and visited only the widows and orphans in their afflictions.” Yet whenever it happened that he was requested by the sick “to come in person and pray to the Lord for them and lay his hand upon them, he went without delay.”36 The vincula of marriage were likewise fastened by the bishop.37

However, more exacting even than the ministry of the sacraments was that of the word, especially preaching. Fortunately, this was an occupation dear to Saint Augustine, and

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35 Council of Hippo, 393, Serm., II, can. 30, (Mansi v. III, pp. 849, 924).
37 Epist. in Ps., 149:15, (PL., v. 37, p. 1958).
one in which he was unsurpassed by contemporaries. Up to the time when he was ordained priest at Hippo, it had been the rule that no presbyter might preach in the presence of the bishop; but the Greek Bishop Valerius, who preached in Latin with difficulty, and who was acquainted with the eastern tradition, appointed him cathedral preacher. This was a precedent soon followed by others, first Alypius of Thagaste, then Aurelius of Carthage, the primate of Africa. As pleasing and natural as preaching was to the former teacher of rhetoric, the bishop did not take his task lightly. The care he devoted to it is revealed in his De Doctrina Christiana, and the large number of sermons which have come down to us indicate the important place of this occupation in his program.

In addition to preaching there was teaching as another form of the ministry of the word. "Forenoon and afternoon alike" people sought the bishop, asking all manner of things including instruction; and inquiries came by letter from outlying portions of the diocese and from far distant places. The pressure of episcopal affairs notwithstanding, Saint Augustine freely gave attention to their enlightenment. He was responsible also for the instruction of the catechumens, although much of the actual teaching was the task of priests and deacons. At Carthage, circa 400, the deacon Deogratias was in charge of the catechumens, and for his benefit Saint Augustine systematized his principles and views in the teacher's manual De catechisandis rudibus. Occasionally also one who had been judged erroneous or heretical came to Hippo for correction. For example Leporius, a monk who had been con-

40 Migne, Patrologia Latina, v. 34.
41 Three hundred sixty-three authentic Sermones ad populum, PL., vols. 38, 39;
43 Augustine even offered unsolicited to assist a young girl in her studies, and encouraged her to apply herself to the Scriptures (Ep. 226). For typical requests and replies, see Ep. 37, 92, 121, 140, 147-9, 158-9, 161-4, 169, 198-9, 213, 264-5.
44 Serm. 212; 213; 214; 215. (PL., v. 38).
45 PL., v. 40, pp. 309 ff.
denied by some bishops of Gaul for his views on the incarnation, came to Augustine for instruction, recanted, and atoned for his error. When his instructor believed that he was firmly grounded in the Catholic faith, he wrote to the Bishops Procopius and Cylinnius, and asked them to receive Leporius again.46

Moreover, Saint Augustine's flock often sought spiritual and practical advice from their bishop rather than from the priests. Sometimes the problems resulted from the daily social contact with pagans and paganism, as in the case of Publicola.47 The consecrated virgin Felicia was gently exhorted to persevere in the good life, and consoled for the existence of bad shepherds and sheep along with the good.48 Ecdicia, an over-zealous ascetic, who had at length driven her husband into adultery, wrote to her bishop for consolation, and must have been surprised at the homily on wifely conduct which she received in reply.49 But it is very rarely that the people of the diocese wrote to their bishop; they came in person. However in addition to being pastor of the church of Hippo, Saint Augustine stood as spiritual advisor to the bishops of Africa and other sections of the church and to many of the nobility and high officials. This required a voluminous correspondence.50

The magnitude of these parochial duties would appear to furnish occupation enough for one man, but in addition Saint Augustine had the still greater responsibility of purely episcopal functions. The recruiting, training, maintenance, supervision, and discipline of the clergy called for a prodigious amount of work on the part of the bishop. Recruits were from the Roman rather than the indigenous stock, for the clerics in the regions outside of the town were handicapped in their ministrations by a lack of knowledge of Punic, and Augustine had to refuse the request of Bishop Novatus of Sitifis for his own brother, Lucil-

46 Ep. 219, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 428 ff.).
47 Ep. 46, 47, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), pp. 123 ff.; 129 ff.).
48, Ep. 208, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 342 ff.).
49 Ep. 262, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 621 ff.).
50 Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia (Ep. 25, 27, 30, 31, 42, 45, 80, 84, 95, 188); Saint Jerome's friends, Proba, Juliana, and Demetrias (Ep. 128, 129, 133, 188); the imperial ambassador Darius (Ep. 231); the proconsul Largus (Ep. 203); the tribune and commissioner Marcellinus (Ep. 128, 129, 133, 136, 138); and Count Boniface (Ep. 189, 220).
lus, a deacon, because of his proficiency in that language. The bishop of Hippo was insistent upon a trained clergy, and it is apparent that the episcopal monastery, where the clergy of the city lived in community, was also a seminary. Unfortunately for the diocese of Hippo, however, the men trained there were in demand throughout Africa, and were called away to important positions. It is believed that at least twelve bishops had been trained there. The library of this school must have been one of the things which gave the bishop joy, and which received his constant oversight. Ordination was, of course, reserved to the bishop alone, and candidates were ordained only after sufficient testimony concerning character and ability was brought forth by the people. However, the congregation sometimes imposed upon the bishop’s rights in this, as will be discussed later. To clergies or laymen going to settle in another place, or travelling abroad, the bishop issued letters of commendation.

The administration of ecclesiastical justice had resulted in the establishment of bishop’s courts. The ceremony and procedure of Bishop Augustine’s court are not revealed in the letters and other writings, although he mentions it as an accepted institution, but a number of cases upon which he passed judgment are recorded. The bishop’s conduct towards ecclesiastical

51 Ep. 84, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), pp. 392-393). The reading in section 2 (p. 393) is cum Latina lingua, but from the context it is evident that this is the error of a copyist who substituted Latina for Punic, or that the word is a gloss which has become incorporated in the text. Augustine occasionally refers to the Punic language. See Ep. 17:2 (CSEL., v. 34, (1), pp. 41-42), which refers to Numidia, or at least to the region about Madaura, as “a district in which the cradle of that language is still warm.” The serfs of Mappalia in the diocese of Hippo understood only Punic. Ep. 66:2, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), p. 236). The inhabitants of the city itself were more Latin than the rural residents; and in Serm. 167:4. (PL., v. 38, p. 910) he states that not all of his hearers understands the Punic language.

52 A seminary was at once necessary to overcome the dearth of clergy, which was hindering the Church at the time of Augustine’s consecration. Vita, 7, 11. To be of the greatest value to the church a clergyman had to have, besides spiritual and moral qualities, a certain education and be marked by “that finish of a man who has gone through the normal training.” Ep. 60:1, (CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 221).


54 Ep. 231:7, (CSEL., v. 57, p. 510); de Haeresibus, 80.


56 Note the case of Pinianus, related below.

57 Ep. 78:4; 27:4-6; 31:7; 41:2; 159:1; 206; 212, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), p. 337; v. 34 (1), pp. 99-102; v. 34, (2) pp. 6-7; 83-4; v. 44, pp. 497-8; v. 57, pp. 349; 371-2.

58 Ep. 133:2. (CSEL., v. 44, p. 82).
offenders was canonically regulated. No cleric could be suspended from communion until he had actually been proven guilty, unless he failed to present himself for trial.\textsuperscript{59} Priests, deacons, and lesser clerics were first judged by their bishop\textsuperscript{60} who reported his decision to the provincial Primate.\textsuperscript{61} If he desired, the condemned cleric might within a year\textsuperscript{62} appeal to six neighboring bishops to hear his case;\textsuperscript{63} and from them he could appeal either to the provincial Primate and following that to the Council of all Africa, or directly to that body.\textsuperscript{64} Cases concerning laity who were guilty of offenses against the church were disposed of by the bishop without the necessity of reporting, and there was apparently no such detailed provision for appeals as in the case of the clergy. Saint Augustine states that flogging was frequently used in episcopal courts to exact a confession, but does not state whether it was employed in the case of clerics as well as laymen.\textsuperscript{65} Of all the sentences which the bishop might pronounce, that of excommunication was considered most severe. Saint Augustine regarded its imposition as a most serious responsibility, and therefore rarely employed it.\textsuperscript{66} He wrote to Classicanus: "One thing I say deliberately as an unquestionable truth, that if any believer has been wrongfully excommunicated, the sentence will do harm rather to him who pronounces it than to him who suffers this wrong."\textsuperscript{67}

It is sufficient to mention one case which came before Augustine.\textsuperscript{68} A priest accused a deacon of attempting to incite


\textsuperscript{60} Ep. 65, \textit{(CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 232); Ferrère, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29. At first it was necessary that the bishop call in five neighboring bishops to assist him in the trial of a priest, and two for the trial of a deacon, \textit{(Council of Hippo, 393, \textit{Ser.}, II, \textit{can.} 8; Mansi, III, p. 920), but by 402 the bishop alone tried the accused, and the first appeal was to neighboring bishops. Ep. 65; Sixteenth Council of Carthage, \textit{Can.} 17; \textit{Cod. Can. Ecc. Afr.}, 125; (Mansi, III, p. 822).}

\textsuperscript{61} Ep. 65:2, \textit{(CSEL., v. 34 (2), pp. 233-4).}

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{65} Ep. 133:2, \textit{(CSEL., v. 44, p. 82). Priests were not liable to torture in secular courts. \textit{Cod. Theod.}, XI, 39, 10.}

\textsuperscript{66} Ep. 250; \textit{(CSEL., v. 57, pp. 593 ff); a sentence of excommunication of this period is preserved in a letter (58) of Synesius of Ptolemais. Kidd, \textit{Documents Illustrative of Early Church History}, v. II, p. 156.}

\textsuperscript{67} Ep. 250A, \textit{(CSEL., v. 57, pp. 598-599).}

\textsuperscript{68} For another example see Ep. 165.
him to immorality, and the deacon replied with a counter charge.⁶⁹ There was no evidence, but Saint Augustine knew the two men well, and suspected that the deacon had made a false charge.⁷⁰ Upon his refusal to raise the deacon to the priesthood, this man wrathfully declared that the priest Boniface should not be allowed to retain his office, at least as long as he was under suspicion. Thereupon he stirred up the laity, who demanded the dismissal of the priest.⁷¹ Boniface humbly agreed to refrain from the execution of his duties until he was cleared. Some of the Catholics of Hippo had been pointing with disdain at a few instances of scandal within the Donatist ranks, and had boasted that such things never occurred under Augustine's discipline. They were now quite perturbed.⁷² The bishop wrote a letter to the people of Hippo to be read in the church,⁷³ in which he refused to erase the name of Boniface from the roll of presbyters, because that was unjust and because it was contrary to the decree prohibiting suspension before conviction.⁷⁴ Moreover, he could not now give judgment since he had passed the case on to a higher judge, in fact to the Supreme Judge; he had left the matter to God to decide by direct intervention. The priest and deacon had been sent together to the tomb of Saint Felix of Nola, where Augustine expected the guilt of one and the innocence of the other to be made manifest in some miraculous way.⁷⁵ The shrine of Saint Felix had some reputation for such miracles, and an authentic account of whatever occurred could not be obtained from Paulinus. Unfortunately there is no report of the outcome.

The majority of cases, however, which came to the bishop's court were not strictly ecclesiastical, but civil; the audientia episcopalis, arbitration was the most frequent judicial occupation of the diocesan ruler. Roman law had early allowed two litigants to settle their dispute by appeal to an arbitrator upon whom both agreed; and when this practice was employed by Christians, they had naturally turned to the bishops. It was

⁶⁹ *Ep*. 77; 78. (*CSEL.*, v. 34 (2), pp. 329 ff.; 331 ff.).
⁷⁰ *Ep*. 78:2, (p. 333).
⁷¹ *Ep*. 77:2; 78:2, (pp. 330; 333).
⁷⁴ Ibid., 4, (pp. 336-7).
⁷⁶ Ibid., 3, (pp. 335-6).
thought to have been recommended to Christians by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:1. According to Sozomen, the Emperor Constantine made this appeal to the bishop legal. 77 It is said that an edict of 333 made the bishop’s judgment binding if only one of the parties involved appealed 78 to him, but that this was later reduced to cases in which both parties appealed. Stilicho reduced this power of the prelates, 79 but on his death a new law was enacted 80 rendering an episcopal judgment not subject to appeal. 81 As is at once apparent, this carried episcopal arbitration to the highest degree of authority. 82 At the same time that this honored the bishops it placed a heavy burden upon them. Augustine was “daily saluted with lowly respect” by men “who are desirous of terminating through his help disputes concerning secular affairs”—“gold or silver or land or cattle.” 83 Moreover, this service was asked even by heretics 84 and pagans. 85 Sometimes he had to devote the greater part of the day, especially following Easter, 86 to listening to the often selfish and greedy claims of his people. 87 His biographer states: “Though they sometimes kept him even until mealtime and sometimes he had even to fast all day, yet he always examined these cases and passed judgment upon them, considering in them the value of human souls,—in how far each had increased or decreased in faith and good works.” 88 Often correspondence, with its consequent difficulty of finding means of communication, was neces-

78 Ayer, Source Book of Early Church History, p. 382; Cod. Just., I, 4:7 and 8; Boyd, Ecc. Edicts of the Theod. Code, p. 92. Gratian recognized the rights of the church courts, (Cod. Theod., XVI, 2:23) to hear ecclesiastical cases but required that criminal cases be judged by the secular courts. Honorius confirmed the jurisdiction of bishops over religious cases, ordered their deposition of priests to be enforced by police authority if necessary, and required all other cases to be heard according to law. (Cod. Theod., XVI, 11:1; II, 35:41; Const. Sirm., 7).
81 Ibid., I, 27:2; Cod. Just., I, 4:8.
82 On a level with a judgment of the Praetorian Prefect.
83 Ibid., v. 34, (2), p. 22).
84 Ibid., v. 34 (2), p. 86; Possidius, Vita Aug., 19.
85 Possidius, Vita Aug., 19: “Christians or by men of any sect.”
88 Possidius, Vita Aug., 19.
sary. Although he faithfully discharged this duty, Saint Augustine appears to have disliked this occupation, for the person against whom a bishop decided was likely to show ill feeling and make unpleasant charges concerning the prelate’s integrity; and this work which took him away from the better things he regarded as a kind of conscription, for his pleasure was always in the things of God or in the exhortation or conversation of intimate brotherly friendship."

A bishop was supposed to confine his authority and activities to his own diocese, and there he was to rule without interference. However, the bishop was sometimes coerced by his laity, or at least he often had to humor their fancies. Saint Augustine rarely journeyed outside of his diocese, and did not undertake distant missions for the African church, both because of his health and because his people would not permit him. However, the irresponsibility shown by the clergy and people during times of his absence, was the strongest bond which tied him to the city. The greatest interference with episcopal sovereignty was the violent thrusting of ordination upon an unwilling man at the hands of an unwilling bishop. It was thus that Saint Augustine had been made priest in Hippo, and the people of the city tried to do this once again in the case of Pinianus.

89 Ibid.
90 Enar. in Ps., 25:13, (PL., v. 36, p. 196); Possidius, Vita Aug., 19. The later states that Augustine kept in mind "the remark of a certain one who said that he preferred to hear cases between strangers rather than friends; for of strangers he could gain the one over as a friend in whose favor the case was justly decided, whereas he would lose one of his friends against whom judgment was passed."
91 Possidius, Vita Aug. 19.
92 "In other towns we deal with matters concerning the Church only so far as the bishops of those towns, our brethren and fellow-priests, allow us or enjoin upon us." Ep. 34:5, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), p. 26).
93 As in the famous incident at Oea, which Augustine reports to Jerome, when the people refused to allow the bishop to introduce Jerome’s new Latin version of the Bible. Ep. 71:5, (CSEL., v. 34 (2), p. 253).
94 On one occasion he acted as legate or commissary for Bishop Zosimus of Rome and journeyed to Caesarea in Mauretania. Ep. 190:1, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 137-8).
97 Ep. 21, (CSEL., v. 34 (1), pp. 49-54; Possidius, Vita Aug., 8. In this case the bishop was not unwilling.
98 Ep. 123; 126, (CSEL., v. 44, pp. 3 ff.; pp. 7 ff).
Upon the capture of Rome by Alaric, many wealthy nobles fled to their estates in Africa, and among the richest were Albina, her daughter Melania, and son-in-law Pinianus, who settled at Thagaste. There they presented to the church an estate of greater extent than the town. Saint Augustine bade them welcome to Africa, excused himself from visiting them on account of age, health, and the requirements of his parishioners, and invited them to visit Hippo. Pinianus and Melania accepted the invitation, and came to Hippo accompanied by Bishop Alypius. Meanwhile their reputation for lavish giving became known in Hippo, for Melania had sold her estates in Gaul and Spain and distributed the money, and was now supporting many churches and monastic houses with the revenues of her Italian, Sicilian, and African properties.

Therefore a large congregation, determined to capture a rich prize, was present in the cathedral when Augustine received his guests. All the people shouted for Augustine to ordain Pinianus their priest at once. The bishop had had some intimation of what might occur, and had promised his guest that he would not be ordained against his will. He told the assembly that if they took Pinianus as their priest they would be without a bishop. This only temporarily quieted them, and then the rioting became so turbulent that Augustine feared that homicide might result. The mob then turned against Alypius and hurled insults at him, accusing him of preventing Pinianus from gratifying their wishes, in order that he might keep a rich man in his church. Rather than become a priest, Pinianus declared that he would leave Africa; but he finally agreed to take an oath that he would reside in Hippo, and that if he ever should

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102 Ep. 125; 126, (CSEL., v. 44, pp. 3 ff.; pp. 7 ff.).
104 Ep. 125:2; 126:1, (CSEL., v. 44, pp. 4, 8).
105 Ep. 126:1, (p. 8).
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 1, 2, (pp. 8-9).
receive ordination it would only be in Hippo. The certain of success, the mob disbanded. However, when morning came, Pinianus and Melania departed to Thagaste. Albina and her family and the people of Thagaste were soon making accusations concerning the sordid motives of the congregation and perhaps even the bishop of Hippo. Saint Augustine loyally defended his people against these charges, and, most surprising, he insisted that Pinianus keep his promise. The oath was exacted through fear and terrorization, but Augustine would not allow this. He regarded it as a valid oath, and the breaking of it would involve the sin of perjury. Moreover, unless the fulfillment of the oath was required by the two bishops involved, their own promises would no longer be credited. Pinianus did not return, and when he lost his fortune the people of Hippo dropped the matter. Melania and her husband became again on good terms with Saint Augustine, and after they went to Palestine referred theological problems to him.

Temporal duties formed a third and exacting division of the bishop’s occupations. The estates of the church of Hippo were extensive, more than twenty times the size of Saint Augustine’s own patrimony, and consisted of both town houses and rural farmlands as well as funds in the church treasury. Even a ship has been offered, but was refused. The administration of these possessions and revenues was a task unpleasant to Bishop Augustine, who said that “he preferred to

108 Ibid., 3-5, (pp. 9-11).
109 Ibid., 7-9; 125:2, (pp. 12-15; p. 3).
110 Ep. 125:3-4; 126:11-14, (CSEL., v. 44, pp. 5-7; 16-18).
111 Ep. 126:1, (p. 8).
112 Ep. 125:3-4; 126:12, (pp. 5-7; 17).
113 Ibid., 4, (pp. 6-7).
114 Baxter, Sel. Let. of St. Aug., p. 223, n.
115 Ep. 202:2, (CSEL., v. 57, p. 301); De Gratia Christi and De Peccato Originali answer their questions concerning certain statements of Pelagius.
118 Ep. 35:4, (CSEL., v. 34, (5), p. 30); Enar. in Ps., 103:3; 16, (PL. v. 37, p. 1371); Getty, The Life of the N. Africans as Revealed in the Sermons of Saint Augustine, p. 115.
120 Serm., 355:5, (PL., v. 39, p. 1572); Getty, Life of the N. Afr. as Rev. in the Serm. of St. Aug., pp. 130-1. Augustine did not desire to become involved in the obligations fastened upon the collegium of the Navicularii by the imperial government.
live by the contributions of God’s people rather than be burdened with the care and direction of these possessions, and that he was ready to give them back to them so that all the servants and ministers of God might live after the manner of which we read in the Old Testament, that they were partakers of that altar which they served. But this the laity were never willing to undertake."121 The Bishop had an assistant, chosen from among “the more capable clergy,” who supervised this property and directed its exploitation.122 Clerical work was necessary for this as well as for many of the prelate’s other occupations, and a corps of notaries and secretaries was maintained at Hippo.123 A yearly audit of diocesan accounts was made.124 The sources of this accumulating property were gifts,125 legacies,126 and probably a portion of the property relinquished by monks when they entered the monasteries of Hippo.127 Saint Augustine had each bequest investigated to see that it would work no hardship on the family of the testator128 and he sometimes refused to accept legacies129. Personal gifts were sent to the bishop, often in the form of costly robes,130 but with few exceptions he refused to use them,131 had them sold, and placed the money in the charitable funds of the diocese.132

121 Possidius, Vita Aug., 23.
122 Ibid., 24.
125 Ep. 83:6, (CSEL., v. 54, (2), pp. 391-2). Possidius (24) relates that one of the chief men of Hippo announced his intention to give his entire property to the church, retaining the interest until his death. The deed was presented to Augustine, who gladly accepted it. However, some years later the man sent his son with a letter asking the bishop to return the deed. One hundred gold pieces might be retained for the poor. Saint Augustine promptly returned the deed, spurned the gold, and wrote the man a letter of censure and reproof, warning him to make his peace with God in humble repentance for his false pretenses and wickedness, that he might not depart from this life under the burden of so great a sin.
126 The bishop urged men to remember Christ as well as their sons in their wills. Serm. 355:4, (PL. v. 39, p. 1571); Getty, Life of the N. Africans as Rev. in the Serm. of St. Aug., pp. 127 ff.
127 The monks of Hippo had to assume poverty. If a priest possessed any property it was to pass to his church after his death. Ep. 83:4, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), p. 390). Paragraph 6 of the same letter indicates that the diocesan and monastic treasuries were one and the same.
The care of the poor ever required Augustine's attention, and he complained that when he was away from Hippo the church neglected its duty. For this purpose he even drew from the funds intended for the maintenance of the clergy and bishop, occasionally to the dislike of those who were dependent on the funds. Once when money was lacking and, besides the poor, there were many captives to be ransomed, he even went to the extreme of melting down the holy vessels. The bishop, the father of the church, was designated by parents and magistrates as the guardian of the orphans. Thus a dying father left his small daughter to Augustine's care. A pagan, Rusticus, asked that the girl be given in marriage to his son, and made his request through the Catholic Bishop Benenatus, who apparently approved of the man and his wish. Augustine, however, was indignant. The girl was a Catholic, and must be kept where she will be a supporter of the true church. At present she was too young for marriage, as she was also too young to carry out her desire to take religious vows, a desire with which the bishop of Hippo naturally sympathized. At any rate the matter could not at all be considered until the young man became a Christian. In this respect Possidius relates that Augustine always followed a rule which he had learned from the practice of Ambrose: "namely, never to seek a wife for another man, nor to urge anyone who desired to go to war to do so, nor to accept an invitation to a feast in his own community."

Moreover, the intercession with government officials and secular courts on behalf of criminals was often a heavy and difficult burden. Abuses of this episcopal interference led the Emperors Theodosius and Arcadius to forbid an appeal through the clergy after condemnation, excepting in those cases where the appeal was prompted by a sense of humanity or a failure of justice. The bishops no doubt did accomplish much good,

134 Possidius, Vita Aug., 23.
135 Ibid., 24.
136 Ep. 252 to 255, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 600-603).
137 Ibid.
138 Possidius, Vita Aug., 27.
but so many of them granted the desire of every worthless fellow who requested their assistance, that they frequently obstructed justice and sadly embarrassed the civil authorities. Augustine seldom made use of this right, although he does refer to it as "a favor which we are accustomed to grant to all" and therefore the instances when he did intercede were all the more effective. The bishop and Macedonius, vicar of Africa, engaged in an interesting exchange of correspondence on this subject, debating the topic from the episcopal and magisterial viewpoint. The vicar's objections impress one as just. It is a testimonial to the nobility of the bishop's character that he interceded for enemies of the Catholics, groups of pagans and Donatists who had been convicted of murder and other crimes against the people of the church. His intercession unfortunately failed in the judicial murder of his friends Aprigius and Marcellinus.

Similar to this duty of intercession and often involving it was the bishop's obligation to those who claimed the church's right of sanctuary. It may have arisen out of the practice of persons fleeing to the bishop to ask his intercession with the civil authorities. An edict of Theodosius I made it legal, but also limited it in the case of debtors, in which instance the bishop had to discharge the financial responsibility of the fugitive or turn him over to the officers or creditors seeking him. Thus a certain Fascius, who owed seventeen solidi to the tax-collectors fled to Augustine's cathedral for sanctuary, and the bishop paid his creditors that amount. Since he did not have that amount at hand, he borrowed the sum, and Fascius agreed to repay the man who lent it. However, he failed to do so by the prescribed time, and the bishop instructed the priests to read a letter to

144 Ep. 151 to 155, (CSEL., v. 44, pp. 382 ff.).
145 Ep. 90; 91; 103; 104:1, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), pp. 426; 427 ff.; 578 ff.; 582).
146 Ep. 100; 133; 134; 139:2, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), pp. 535 ff.; v. 44, pp. 80 ff.; 84 ff.; 144 ff.).
148 Canon 7 of the Council of Sardica states that aid shall not be denied those who flee to the church. Hefele, Conciliengeschichte, I, pp. 561-3; Hist. of Councils, II, pp. 137.
149 Cod. Theod., IX, 45:1.
the congregation asking a special offering for this purpose. If a sufficient sum was not raised, the remainder of the amount was to be drawn from the church treasury. It usually happened that after a few days the fugitive would become careless and leave the church for lengthy periods, until he was suddenly way-laid and carried away to trial. Faventius, a tenant of one of the great estates of the region, had some reason to fear the proprietor, and fled to the church at Hippo, but after some days was captured through lack of vigilance and carried away to Cirta, the capital of Numidia. The priest whom Augustine sent to intercept the party failed to secure his release, and the captive was imprisoned as soon as he arrived in the city. Saint Augustine employed his rights of intercession, wrote to the magistrate, and also requested the bishop of Cirta to visit him personally. The magistrate was a Christian with a good reputation, but, nevertheless, Augustine was apprehensive concerning the outcome of the trial since the proprietor was a very wealthy man. Classicanus, mentioned above, was excommunicated by his bishop, Auxilius, because he objected to the grant of sanctuary to men who had broken an oath taken on the Gospels.

In the midst of all these obligations and occupations Saint Augustine in some remarkable manner found time to compose an entire library of writings. Each bishop was responsible for the suppression of heresy and schism in his diocese, but Augustine's field was the whole church. His colleagues recognized his preeminence, which was to make him the greatest doctor of the church, and officially commissioned him to pursue his studies in Biblical exposition and theology. To facilitate this by decreasing the pressure of administrative duties, Saint Au-

153 *Ep.* 113; 114; 115, (CSEL., v. 34, (2), pp. 695 f.; 660 f.; 661 f.).
157 Apparently regarded as the most sacred and binding of oaths.
160 In 414 or 415 Saint Augustine wrote to a correspondent: "... in so far as leisure is granted me from the work imperatively demanded by the church, which my office especially binds me to serve, I have resolved to devote the time entirely, if the Lord is willing, to the labor of studies pertaining to esslesiastical learning; in doing which, I think I may, if it please the mercy of God, be of some service even to future generations." *Ep.* 151:13 (CSEL., v. 44, p. 392).
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gustine tried three expedients. The first was the division of the diocese of Hippo, and apparently he could do this without referring the matter to a council or to his neighboring colleagues. He separated Fussala, a town forty miles away, to which he could no longer give adequate personal attention.161 However, Bishop Anthony, who was ordained to rule over this place failed in his duty, and was removed.162 Fussala reverted to Hippo.163

Another scheme was an arrangement on the part of the people of Hippo that they allow their bishop five days a week free from their interference, in order that he might spend that time in study. This was soon disregarded.164 A few years later, September 26, 426,165 Saint Augustine tried a third plan, the appointment of an assistant. Valerius had made Augustine his coadjutor, and this expedient might have been available to the latter also, if he had not come to believe that this had been forbidden by the eighth canon of Nicaea, which forbade two bishops, meaning rivals, in one see.166 In addition to the actual need for an assistant, he wished also to provide against any confusion and disturbance following his death. Severus of Milevis had lately appointed his successor,167 but without consulting the laity, and for a time opposition had threatened his appointed successor. Augustine, therefore, desired that his choice should be ratified both by the clergy and congregation of the town. He called the people together in the Cathedral of Peace,168 and a careful record of the proceedings was taken by the notaries of the church.169 Augustine explained his act, and then presented the priest Eraclius as his successor.170 The congregation shouted approval.171 In order not to expose Eraclius to the censure

165 Ibid., 1, (p. 373).
167 Ibid., 1, (p. 374).
168 The cathedral was known as the basilica pacis or basilica maior.
169 Ep. 213:2, (p. 375).
170 Ibid., 1, end; 2, (pp. 374, 375). Perhaps the same Eraclius who, as a deacon, built a chapel in honor of a martyr. Serm., 356'7, 10, (PL., v. 39, p. 1577).
171 Ibid., 1-3, reported at the end of each section.
which he had incurred by being made bishop-coadjutor, his consecration would not take place until after Augustine's death. Again the people shouted approval. The bishop referred to his need of leisure for study, to the former agreement which had been violated, and announced that he would place the burden of the diocesan administration on Eraclius, who knew the bishop's usual practice in most cases, and who might refer to him when in doubt. Eraclius was thus in the terminology of a later time arch-deacon with the right of succession to the episcopate. All present who were able were asked to subscribe their signatures to the record, and to again show their assent by acclamation. When silence was again obtained, the bishop closed the assembly, and asked the prayers of the people for the church, for himself, and for Eraclius.

Saint Augustine survived this agreement only four years; and these were unhappy years in which he saw the Catholic church of Africa fall to ruin under the invading Vandals. The bishops appealed to Augustine for instructions concerning their behavior in the face of the foe, and finally crowded into Hippo to enjoy his hospitality during the siege. In the third month of the siege Aurelius Augustine, servus servorum Christi, passed away, his last months spent not in the leisure he had craved, but still in the service of others.

172 Ibid., 4, 5, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 276-7).
173 Ibid., 6, (pp. 377-8).
174 Ibid., 7, (p. 379).
175 Possidius, Vita Aug., 28.
176 Ep., 228, (CSEL., v. 57, pp. 484-496).