St Augustine can rightly claim a place in a journal concerned with the neglected centuries in which occurred the transition from the pagan civilisation of Greece and Rome to mediaeval Christianity. He is in fact a central figure in this development, having experienced both as student and teacher the best of the old classical training, and having in no small measure laid the foundations for the edification of the future.

Yet the sheer bulk of his surviving work might well daunt classical scholars who have been trained within the comparatively modest limits set by Cicero: nor is the bulk alone disconcerting, the language is far from Ciceronian and likely to deter the classical scholar.

Any reader of St Augustine, especially of the Sermones ad Populum, will quickly become familiar with the following more striking peculiarities of his language: quia with the Indicative to express reported speech, et + non (and other negatives) in defiance of Ciceronian usage, the comparative rarity of nec, analogical forms of compounds of eo such as exiet, et + non in Indirect Commands and Final Clauses; uncertainty about the moods with the Indicative in Indirect Questions and Generic Relative Clauses; changes in usage, such as nec = ‘not even’, iste for classical hic, ille with a dependent Genitive, et with the last two items of an enumeration; and changes of form, such as osum and dominus.

All this is bound to be disturbing to anyone familiar with the standards of classical Latin and does much to account for the neglect of the Latin of the last centuries of the Roman Empire in undergraduate literary courses, which are properly directed to the outstanding masterpieces of the Golden and Silver Ages of Latin Literature.

But Literature is not the only Liberal Art to claim the attention of those attempting to understand man, least of all at a
time when traditional values are challenged. For it is at just such a
time that study of the Hellenistic period, when the ideals of the
Greek city-state could no longer hold their own, and of the last
centuries of Rome, when Roman citizens no longer valued the
imperium Romanum sufficiently to give personal service in the field
in its defence, that we find conditions like our own, in an affluent
and materialist society that has gained the whole world and the
Moon as well, but lacks any coherent system of moral and
aesthetic values to give meaning and purpose to life.

It was in such circumstances that Augustine grew up, largely
indifferent to the piety of his mother and leaning to the Manichaean
heresy that provided a facile solution for the problem of evil in the
world. But he soon became dissatisfied intellectually with this and
disgusted by the notorious failure of leading adherents of the heresy
to live moral lives. When he left Africa for Rome, chiefly to avoid
riotous behaviour by students¹⁷, (which was as wide-spread in the
Ancient World at this period as it is to-day — at any rate Libanius
was being distressed by the same sort of irresponsibility and bad
manners at this time in Antioch¹⁸), he could no longer believe in
Manichaeanism but had not yet anything to take its place. He
gives a moving account of his waiting for the revelation of the
truth, rather in the manner of an Oriental sage awaiting enlighten­
ment, and of his resolute behaviour once his conversion did come,
largely through the influence of St Ambrose at Milan¹⁹.

One of his difficulties, as of all members of the educated
class at this period, in embracing the new religion lay in the
repellent nature of the Greek and Latin versions of the Scriptures
then current, which shocked classical scholars then as much as
Augustine’s Latin may shock a classical scholar today²⁰. The
same reaction to the Scriptures is clear in the correspondence of
St Basil with Libanius²¹, and at least in part the Emperor Julian’s
reaction against Christianity was determined by the uncouth
behaviour of some converts²² and the poor style of their Scrip­
tures²³.

Basil and Augustine, making an Aristotelian choice²⁴, preferr­
ed the truth of Scripture to the friends of their youth. At least
those brought up on the Authorised Version are not confronted with
this choice, since it happily combines the truth of Scripture with the
highest literary merit; but the early versions of the Bible are
characterized by a slavishly literal rendering of the original, even to
the point of reproducing the word-order with the resulting unintend­
ed changes in emphasis.

Indeed, Augustine deliberately chooses a Vulgar Latin form
if this will make his meaning clear to his people, so he will use
ossum rather than os, for the need to communicate outweighs his
scruples as a classical scholar\textsuperscript{15}.

But one might expect these scruples to lead him to seek out
the sources of his religion rather than depend on the Greek of the
LXX and the Latin of pre-Vulgate versions. Yet, although he knew
some Punic (perhaps only a word or two, there is nothing to suggest
that he spoke Punic), he made no attempt to learn Hebrew, and
even attempted to dissuade St Jerome from his plan to produce an
improved Latin version from the Hebrew\textsuperscript{25}. It is not that he is
unaware of the need to consult all the evidence, since he is quite
definite in his assertion that all the Gospels must be studied\textsuperscript{26};
although he is just as certain that they necessarily supplement each
other\textsuperscript{27} and cannot possibly contradict each other since all are
inspired by the one spirit\textsuperscript{28}. This question of inspiration accounts
for Augustine's cavalier attitude to the Hebrew text, since it was
believed that the LXX\textsuperscript{29} was produced by each of the seventy
(or seventy-two) working independently without reference to his
colleagues and all then produced identical translations — clearly
the result of inspiration, although a different view would be taken
of this sort of thing in a modern examination room. There was
therefore no point in consulting the out-of-date Hebrew sources,
when the work of more recent inspiration was at hand in a language
that ranked first\textsuperscript{30}. In the same way old and illegible MSS were
discarded as new copies took their place: how much we might
gain from the discovery of such discarded rubbish is well illustrated
in the case of the hebrew text of the OT by the chance survival of
fragments of Babylonian Biblical MSS in the Old Cairo Geniza\textsuperscript{31}.
However, Augustine's attitude to the Hebrew text inevitably means
that his voluminous commentaries on the books of the Bible are
worthless for the modern Biblical student who wants to learn
what the texts actually say. Indeed, Augustine wastes much
ingenuity in explaining the \textit{locutiones} of the Scriptures, which are
for him necessarily true, even if odd, but for us simply mistransla­
tions or inadequate renderings of Hebrew ideas or Semitic ideas
concealed under the strange Greek of the NT. So, Augustine is
concerned to find *mulier* used of Eve at her creation, but it is
difficult to see how else a Latin translator could render *isshah*,
which has no reference to age or virginity; and it is even more
disturbing for Augustine to find *mulier* used of the Virgin Mary.

This deliberate ignoring of the Hebrew evidence is the stranger
in the case of one living in an area in which Punic was still spoken,
and who had earlier been attracted by Manichaeanism with its basis
in Persian ideas. But this concern with the truth as found in the
Greek and Latin Scriptures, especially the latter, and the disruption
of the Empire into East and West, led Western Europe to shun the
East with an indifference that had already proved so frustrating to
St Basil in his attempts to win the support of the Western bishops
in his courageous stand against Arianism32. So while Islamic
civilisation took its place as the most brilliant in the world for a
thousand years, and while Byzantium gained from Islam and itself
affected Islam, so that the latest scientific discoveries from Balkh
could appear in Greek translation within a century33, Western
Europe slipped back into barbarism as Germanic invaders destroyed
what Rome had built and the conservative traditions of the Church
discouraged independent thinking and any sympathetic contact with
the non-Christian world, which then in Islam and Hindu India far
surpassed in standards Western European civilisation.

Augustine could not foresee this, and the decline of Rome
left him undismayed. The sack of Rome did not trouble him. It
had all happened before, so that the pagans could not fairly claim
it to be the result of abandoning the old gods, as Augustine
explained to his congregation34. The era of Rome as a political
power was over, and in the short time left to man on earth, it
hardly mattered35.

The failure to maintain close contacts between the Eastern
and Western Empires and with the great civilisation so soon to
emerge East of the frontiers of the Roman Empire, is unfortunate
in that the religious experience of all the great religions have
striking resemblances to each other and in spite of political and
other obstacles clearly influenced each other, notably in the case
of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, and the degree to which
there is common ground between East and West in religious
experience and belief has been obscured by the development of
superficial differences in externals and institutions. Indeed, the
extent to which Oriental thought has influenced Western thought from its earliest origins needs investigation: even the darker sayings of Heraclitus would become somewhat more intelligible if they could be shown to be attempts to convey in Greek well established Hindu doctrines of that time.

Augustine is of course aware of India\textsuperscript{36}, but is not conscious of any direct debt to the Indians as far as ideas are concerned, although there was a growing belief at least among the Greeks of the early centuries of our era in Oriental influences, attributed partly to ‘Aethiopians’, who however behave and think like Brahmins\textsuperscript{37}.

There are however points of resemblance between Augustine’s thought and characteristic Hindu beliefs, for instance, in the need to free oneself from desires\textsuperscript{38}, and in the believer’s being \textit{unus spiritus} with God\textsuperscript{39}; but this kind of coincidence is perhaps no more than the necessary result of any genuine religious and mystical experience.

But it was not Augustine’s purpose to synthesize the various currents of thought in the Ancient World: for him the Scriptures took the place of all that had been. Perhaps Quintus of Smyrna may be taken to be a typical representative of ordinary pagan thought in the 4th century: he has no real belief in the Olympian deities but only a fatalistic resignation to the omnipotence of \textit{Aīsia}, superior even to the gods\textsuperscript{40}. While Julian attempted to establish a reformed paganism incorporating all that was best in the ancient world transmuted by neo-Platonic thought\textsuperscript{41}, and as an outward and visible sign he affected the ancient symbols of conservative reaction, unkempt hair and the philosopher’s beard\textsuperscript{42}; Augustine does not attempt to maintain continuity between the world of Virgil and that of Christ, although his own sensitivity to Virgil is well known\textsuperscript{43}, and he himself testifies to the continuing popularity of Virgil in Africa in his own day, even if only in the form provided by the ancient equivalent of television\textsuperscript{44}.

He does of course draw on his classical past when this knowledge is useful to illustrate the point he has to make. So in considering what constitutes a happy life he can discuss the pagan philosophers’ views, but it is interesting to note that the characteristic schools of philosophy are those of the Stoics and Epicureans\textsuperscript{45}, while Plato and Cicero represent the best in the Classics\textsuperscript{46}.  

23
As a defender of the faith against heresies, Augustine is well known, whether he attacks the Manichaeanism which attracted him in his youth, or the Donatists who were the main rivals in Africa, or later in his life Pelagianism, a British heresy showing the sturdy independence of the Celt: for Pelagius is merely a Latinised form of the name of a Morgan who dared to assert that men could be sinless through their own efforts: for Augustine only divine grace can effect this.

However, some of his classical training is to be seen in his constant attempt to see allegories in OT stories that 'prefigure' those of the NT and developments in the Church of his own day. The fascination of number in a kind of mysticism that no mathematician could tolerate, represents another strand in ancient thought stretching at least as far back as Pythagoras.

Certain themes recur in his sermons. It is not only that inevitably what he considers the message appropriate to Christmas or Easter will recur in the sermons preached on these occasions year after year, but certain texts seem to have made an especially deep impression on him and occur many times. Such are:

Knock, and it shall be opened... (Mat.vii, 7);
The Pharisee and the publican (Lu.xviii, 10);
Neither is he that planteth... (I Cor.iii, 7);
The head stone of the comer (Ps.cxviii, 22);
They would not have crucified... (I Cor.ii, 8).

Again, two images stand out in his preaching: the pressura needed to produce good wine (how many suffering from modern pressures realise that the faded metaphor goes back to the ancient wine-press?); and the medicus, who must cut and burn and disregard his patient's feelings and wishes to ensure his ultimate advantage (since Augustine mentions in passing some of the grim facts of ancient medical practice, the image is more telling than it can be in these days of painless surgery).

The severe standards of Augustine in private morals are well known and nowadays tend to be condemned: but Basil advocated the same standards, and both draw their inspiration from St Paul, whose authority is unquestioned by Augustine. Similar standards have always been accepted in Hinduism and
Islam. For the Christian Fathers the insistence on chastity and mutual faithfulness in marriage was a natural reaction against the licence and degradation of the permissive society in which they lived, and essential to establish higher Christian ethics that would respect the personality of others and give meaning and dignity to their relationships. It was not only free citizens who needed a higher ideal: the Christian Fathers had also, in a state that admitted slavery, to do what they could to protect slaves of both sexes from their masters' lusts.

Both Basil and Augustine hold very severe views on those who seek to break their vows after committing themselves to the religious life. They are convinced that while there was no obligation to take the vows, once they had been taken, it was unthinkable to break faith with God.

The relationship with God and especially with Christ is fundamental, and Augustine returns again and again to the idea of Christ as the head and the Church as the body, frequently with a reference to the text, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' (Acts ix, 4), as clear evidence of Christ's identification of himself as caput with his corpus, the Church, in spite of his remoteness from the possibility of being personally injured by any human action. His most concise statement of this has a rhetorical form, Unum caput, unum corpus, unus Christus, which has had a sinister echo in our days: Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer.

The aim of this paper has been to attempt to show Augustine against his background formed by the traditional classical education of the seven or eight centuries before his time, to show how for one with such a training the adoption of Christianity was neither simple nor easy, and to show how he reacted after his conversion both to his past and to his new beliefs for the future. It is beyond my competence to attempt a final judgment on his work as a whole, or his importance in Church History and the development of Western civilisation.

NOTES

1. Serm.CLXXX, 7. The references in nn.1–16 are exempli gratia only, to linguistic phenomena that are in most cases very frequent.
2. Serm.CXXXIII, 3. *Et non* after all is a natural enough mode of thought and synonymous with *ne-que*, so the refinement of Ciceronian usage was vulnerable as the feeling for Ciceronian standards declined. For the Christians, literal Latin and Greek translations of the Hebrew *weld*, as at Gen. ii, 25, in the pre-Vulgate version used by St Augustine, probably helped to spread the expression *et non*.

3. Serm.CLIII, 10
5. Serm.CXXXV, 6.
7. Serm.CXXVI, 1.
10. Serm.CCXXV, 2.
11. Serm.CXXXVII, 1.

15. *De doctr.Christi, iii, 7.* The problem was to distinguish *ös* and *ös*, when the feeling for quantity was fading. Augustine frankly prefers what he admits to be a barbarism in the interests of clarity. So at *Enarr.in psalm!* *CXXXVII (CXXXIX) v, 15, in using the same form, he states that he would rather have the grammarians censure him than the people not understand.

16. Serm.CLXXIX, 2.
18. Lib. ort.xxxiv, xxxvi, xliii.
19. Conf.V, vii, xiv; VI-VIII.
20. Conf.VI, v, 8.


Even if the authenticity of this correspondence is doubtful, it at least reveals the critical attitude of Antiquity to the style of the versions of the Bible then available.

22. Jul. Ep.89b (Budé) 288A.
23. Jul. Ep.61 (Budé) 423C-D.
27. Serm.CCCXXIV, 1.
29. Ep.XXVIII, 2 Septuaginta quorum est gravissima auctoritas.

30. In accounting for the three languages of the inscription on the Cross, Augustine dismisses Hebrew as merely the local language, but of the others he says: *Non quia graeca et latina solae sunt gentium linguæ: sed quia ipsæ maxime excellunt, graeca, propter studium litterarum;*
I. Serm. CCXVIII, 6.
34. Serm. CV, 13, preached after the sack of Rome in 410.
35. Augustine believed that the Second Coming was not far off, cf. Non enim tantum remanet de saeculo, quantum iam exemptum est (Serm. CLI, 2).
36. Serm. CLXIV, 5 Merces in Indiam deportandae sunt: non nosti linguam Indorum, sed intelligibilis videtur sermo avaritiae.
37. So Philostratus tells us of Apollonius’ visit to India and later to the Aethiopians, Apoll. vit. iii, 10 ss., 20.
38. Serm. CLVI, 10.
39. Serm. CLXII, 1, based on I Cor. vii, 17.
40. III, 649-51 ἢ οὖκ ἂνες ὦ τί πάντας, ὦσοι χορον ναιετάουνων, ἰνθρώπους ὦλη περισσάται ἀνθρωπός ἰετα ὦδέ θεῶν ἀλέγουσα; τόδων θεόν έξίλαχε μούνη.
VII, 9-10 οὐ γὰρ ἀμ ἰνθρώπου οἱ ἰετα τελέων ἀπόντα ἀλλ' ἐκθελέ άγχι παρίσταται ἐκ των άιος.
42. As this dress is now fashionable, St Augustine’s opinion may be quoted: Barbae quis usus, nisi sola est pulchritudo? Quare Deus barbam creavit in homine? Speciem video, usum non quero (Serm. CCXLIII, 6).
43. Conf. I, xiii, 21, sed fletam Didonem extinctam, ferroque extrema secutam.
44. Serm. CCXLI, 5, Nostis enim hoc prope omnes: atque utinam pauci nossetis. Sed pauci nostis in libris, multi in theatris, quia Aeneas descendit ad inferos...
45. Serm. CL; CLVI, 6-8.
46. Serm. CCXLVIII, 7; CCXLII, 6; CCXLII, 7.
47. Serm. CCXLVII, 4, Si computes ab uno usque ad decem et septem, siunt centum quinquaginta et tres. Non opus est omnía nunc numerare, apud vos numerate: sic computate, unum et duo et tria et quatuor sunt decem. Quaodo decem sunt unum et duo et tria et quatuor, sic adde caeteros numeros usque ad decem et septem: et invenis numerum sacram fidelium atque sanctorum in coelestibus cum Domino futurorum.
48. See the references in nn.26-8, for a recurring theme in Easter sermons.
49. E.g. Serm. CXXXIII, 1.
50. E.g. Serm. CXXXVII, 4.
51. E.g. Serm. CXLV, 6.
52. E.g. Serm. CLVI, 15.
53. E.g. Serm. CLX, 3.
54. E.g. *Serm.* CXXXVI, 5.
55. E.g. *Serm.* CXXXII, 2.
57. *Serm.* CLIV, 2.
59. Basil *Ep.* cxcix, 18; Aug., *Serm.* CCLX.
60. E.g. *Serm.* CXXXVII, 1.