

problems caused by Manichaeism that Neoplatonists help Augustine solve:

- ① Nature of God - material vs. spiritual substance
- ② Origin of Evil - where does it come from if all that God creates is good?

## BOOK 7 PROBLEMS OF THOUGHT AND BELIEF

### CHAPTER 1

#### New Knowledge of God's True Nature

31 years

(1) My evil and abominable youth was now dead, and I was passing into early manhood. But the more advanced I was in age, so much the more was I defiled by vain things. I could conceive of no substantial being except such as those that I was wont to see with my own eyes. Yet from the time that I first began to learn anything of wisdom I did not think of you, O God, as being in the shape of the human body. Such a conception I always shunned, and I rejoiced to find that the faith of our spiritual mother, your Catholic Church, likewise shunned it. But what more I should think you to be, I did not know. I, a man—and such a man!—tried to think upon you, the supreme, the sole, and the true God, and I believed with all my soul that you are incorruptible, and inviolable, and immutable. Not knowing whence or how, I clearly saw and was certain that what can be corrupted is inferior to what cannot be corrupted, and what cannot be violated I unhesitatingly placed above what is violable, and what suffers no change I saw to be better than what can be changed.

My heart cried out violently against all my phantasms,\* and with one blow I tried to beat off the throng of unclean images fluttering\* before my mind's eye. Yet they had scarcely been driven off, when, lo, in the twinkling of an eye, they came thronging back again, rushed before my sight, and clouded it over. Hence, although I did not think of you as being in the shape of a human body, I was forced to think of you as some corporeal thing corporeal, existent in space and place, either infused into the world or even diffused outside the world throughout infinite space. Even thus did I think of that very incorruptible and

inviolable and immutable being which I set above the corruptible, the violable, and the mutable. For whatever I conceived as devoid of such spatial character seemed to me to be nothing, absolutely nothing, not even so much as an empty space. For if a body is removed from a place, and the place remains empty of any body whatsoever, whether earthly, watery, airy, or celestial,<sup>6</sup> yet there remains that empty space, as it were a spacious nothing.

alienated from self of my own self (2) So gross of heart was I,<sup>7</sup> and I had no clear idea even that whatever was not extended over, or diffused throughout, or compacted into, or projected up to definite measures of space, or did not or could not receive something of this kind, I thought to be completely non-existent. Just as my eyes were wont to move about among such forms, so also my heart moved about among similar images. I did not perceive that the mental power by which I formed these images was no such corporeal substance. Yet it could not form them unless it were itself some great thing. So also, I thought that you, the life of my life, were a great corporeal substance, existent everywhere throughout infinite space, which penetrates the whole world-mass, and spreads beyond it on every side throughout immense, limitless space. Thus the earth would have you, the heavens would have you, all things would have you: they would all be limited by you, but you would be limited nowhere. The body of the air—of that air which is above the earth—does not hinder the light of the sun from passing through it. The sun penetrates the air, not by breaking it up or cutting it apart, but by completely filling it. Just so, I thought that the bodies, not only of the heavens, and the air, and the sea, but even of the earth, are all subject to your passage and penetrable in all their parts, the greatest as well as the least, so that they may receive your presence, while all things, which you have created, are governed both inwardly and outwardly by your secret inspiration. Thus did I conjecture, because I could think of nothing different, but it was all false. In that theory, a larger part of the earth would hold a larger part of you, a lesser part, a smaller portion. Thus all things would be filled with you, in such wise that an elephant's body would receive more of you than would a sparrow's, in

as far as it was bigger and occupied a bigger place. Thus you would cause your parts to be present as fragments, large parts in the large parts of the world and small parts in the small parts of the world. It is not so with you, but as yet you had not enlightened my darkness.<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

## A Refutation of the Manichees

(3) For me, O Lord, that was a sufficient answer to those men, themselves deceived and deceiving others, dumb yet talking much (for from them your Word did not sound forth)—that was indeed a sufficient answer which long ago, while we were still at Carthage, Nebrius used to propose, and which impressed all of us who heard it. He asked: "What would that unknown nation of darkness, which the Manichees are wont to postulate as a hostile mass, have done to you if you had refused to contend with it?" If it was answered that it would do you some injury, then you would be violable and corruptible. If it were said that it could not injure you, no reason would be offered for your fighting with it, fighting, too, in such wise that some portion and member of your being, or some offspring of your very substance, would be mingled with those opposing powers and natures which were not created by you. Thus it would be so far corrupted and changed for the worse, as to be turned from happiness to misery, and as to need some assistance by which it could be rescued and cleansed. They would hold that this offspring is the soul, to whose aid your Word would come: your utterance,<sup>1</sup> which is free, pure, and without defect, would bring aid to the enslaved, the defiled, and the corrupt. Yet your utterance would itself be corruptible because it came from the same substance. Therefore, if they should affirm that whatever you are, that is, your substance, by which you are, is incorruptible, this whole tale is false and execrable. But if they should say that you are corruptible, that too is known to be false and abominable as soon as it is uttered. Sufficient, therefore, was his argument against those who on every count deserved to be spewed forth by a sickened stomach. For the men who thought and spoke of such things of



you had no way of escape except by horrible blasphemies of both heart and tongue.

## CHAPTER 3

*Free Will and the Problem of Evil*

(4) Up to this time, although I affirmed and firmly believed that you, our Lord, the true God, who made not only our souls but also our bodies, and not only our souls and bodies, but all men and all things, are inviolable and inalterable and in no way mutable, I still had no explicit and orderly knowledge of the cause of evil. Yet whatever it was, I saw that it must be sought out in such wise that I would not be constrained to believe that the immutable God is mutable, lest I myself become the very thing I was seeking to explain.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I felt safe in my search and certain that what those men,<sup>2</sup> whom I fled from with all my soul said was not the truth. I saw that in their search for the cause of evil they had become full of malice,<sup>3</sup> and because of this they deemed that your substance is subject to evil, rather than that their own substance committed evil.

(5) I strove to understand what I often heard that the will's free decision is the cause of our doing evil, and that your just judgment is the cause of our suffering evil, but this I could not discern clearly. When I attempted to withdraw my mind's eye out of those depths, I was plunged down into it again, and as often as I attempted it, I was plunged down again and again. But this raised me up towards your light; I knew just as surely that I had a will as that I was alive. I was absolutely certain when I willed a thing or refused to will it that it was I alone who willed or refused to will. Already I was beginning to see that therein lay the cause of my sin. I saw that what I did against my will was something done to me, rather than something I actually did. I concluded that it was not my fault, but my punishment, but I quickly confessed that I was not punished unjustly, for I thought of you as being just.

But then again I said: "Who made me? Was it not you, my God, who are not merely good, but goodness itself? Whence then comes it, then, that I will evil, and do not will the good?"

That there may be a reason why I should justly be punished? Who has placed this in me and ingrafted in me this seedbed of bitterness,<sup>4</sup> since I have been fashioned whole and entire by my most sweet God? If the devil is its author, whence comes the devil himself? If he by his own perverse will was changed from a good angel into a devil, whence came that evil will in him by which he became a devil, when the whole angel was made by a supremely good creator?"

By such thoughts I was again crushed and stifled, but I was not brought down even into that hell of error, where no one makes confession<sup>5</sup> to you, while they think that you suffer evil rather than that man commits it.

## CHAPTER 4

*God the Absolute Good*

(6) In this manner I strove to establish further facts, just as I had already discovered that the incorruptible is better than the corruptible, and as a result confessed that you, what-  
ever you are, are incorruptible. There never has been, nor will there be, a soul able to conceive anything better than you, who are the supreme and best good. But since it is of the utmost truth and certainty that the incorruptible is preferable to the corruptible, even as I already preferred it to be, I could now attain in thought to a being better than yourself, my God, if you were not incorruptible.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, where I perceived that the incorruptible must be preferred to the corruptible, there ought I to seek you. There, too, ought I to observe where evil itself is, that is, whence comes that corruption, by which your substance can in no way be violated. For absolutely no corruption defiles our God: none from the will, none from necessity, none from any unforeseen change. He is God, and what he wills for himself is good, and he himself is that same good, whereas to be corrupted is not good. Nor are you forced to do anything against your will, because your will is not greater than your power. But it would be greater if you were greater than yourself. God's will and power are God himself. What is unforeseen by you who know all things? No nature exists, unless because you know it. But why should we ask many

where does evil come from

God is incorruptible & best God

ontological argument

God's will & power

cause of evil

can't allow mutability of God

safe in search

free will judgment

descent/ascent

will/sin

God as creator of sinners



times, "Why may not that substance which is God be corruptible?" If it were, it would not be God.

## CHAPTER 5

*God's Omnipotence and the Fact of Evil*

evil way of searching  
\* (7) I sought an answer to the question, "Whence is evil?" but I sought it in an evil way, and I did not see the evil in my very search. I placed before my spirit's gaze the whole creation, whatever we can see in it, such as earth, and sea, and air, and stars, and trees, and mortal animals, and likewise whatever we do not see therein, such as the firmament of heaven above, and all the angels, and all its spiritual beings, but I set out even such things as if they were bodies arranged in such and such places, as my imagination dictated. I made your creation into a single great mass, arrayed with a variety of bodies, whether they were true bodies or bodies that I had feigned for the spiritual beings. I formed this huge mass, not as great as it actually was, which I could not know, but as great as I thought proper, yet finite in its every aspect. I imagined, Lord, that you encircled it on every side and penetrated it, but you remained everywhere infinite. It was as if there were a sea, one single sea, that was everywhere and on all sides infinite over boundless reaches. It held within itself a sort of sponge, huge indeed, but yet finite; and this sponge was filled in every part by that boundless sea.<sup>1</sup> Thus did I conjecture that your finite creation was filled by you, the infinite, and I said:

"Behold God, and behold what God has created! God is good. Most mightily and most immeasurably does he surpass these things. But being good, he has created good things. Behold how he encircles and fills all things! Where then is evil, and whence and by what means has it crept in here? What is its root, and what is its seed? Or has it no being whatsoever? Why then do we fear and shun what does not exist? If we fear it without cause, that very fear is evil. By it our stricken hearts are goaded and tortured, and that evil is all the more serious in so far as what we fear does not exist, and still we are fearful of it. Therefore, either there is an evil that we fear,

the fact that we fear is itself an evil. Whence, therefore, is evil, since God the good has made all these things good? He, the greater, the supreme good, has made these lesser goods, yet both creator and all created things are good. Whence comes evil? Was there a certain evil matter out of which he made these things? Did he form and fashion it, but yet leave within it something that he would not convert into good? Why would he do this? Was he powerless to turn and change all this matter, so that no evil would remain in it, even though he is all-powerful? Lastly, why should he will to make anything at all out of it, and not rather by that same omnipotence cause that it should not exist at all? Or forsooth, did it have the power to exist against his will? If it were eternal, why did he permit it to exist so far back throughout infinite ages of time? Why was he pleased so long after to fashion something out of it? Or if he now suddenly willed to take some action, would not the omnipotent cause rather it not to exist, and for himself alone to exist, the whole true and supreme and infinite good? Or if it were not good for him who is good to refrain from fashioning and creating something good, then, after that evil matter had been removed and reduced to nothing, would he not establish good matter, out of which he would create all things? He would not be omnipotent, if he were unable to create anything good, unless he were assisted by that matter which he had not created."

Such things I turned over within my unhappy breast overladen with gnawing cares that came from the fear of death, and from not finding the truth. Yet the faith of your Christ, our Lord and Savior,<sup>2</sup> the faith that is in the Catholic Church, was firmly fixed within my heart. In many ways I was as yet unformed and I wavered from the rule of doctrine. But my mind did not depart from it, nay, rather, from day to day it drank in more and more of it.

## CHAPTER 6

*Astrologists and Horoscopes*

(8) By this time also I had rejected the deceitful divinations and impious ravings of the astrologists. For this too, O



my God, let your own mercies confess to you from the deepest depths of my soul. For you, you alone—for who else calls us back from the death of every error except that life which cannot die, that wisdom which needs no light itself but enlightens every mind that needs it, by which the whole world is ruled, down even to the quivering leaves on the trees?—you alone had concern for my obstinacy, by which I struggled against Vindicianus,<sup>1</sup> that keen old man, and Nebridius, a young man admirable in mind. The first affirmed vehemently and the second said frequently, although with some hesitation, that there is no art of foreseeing the future, and that men's conjectures are often assisted by chance: for since they say many things, some of them actually come to pass, and apart from any knowledge in the speakers, they hit upon these things by the mere fact that they do not remain silent.

friend

You provided me with a friend who was neither a foolish client of the astrologists nor one well versed in their studies, but, still, as I said, a curious consultant of them. Furthermore, he had some knowledge, which he said he had heard from his father, but he did not know how it would serve to topple over his belief in that art. This man, Firminus by name, who was possessed of a liberal education and well trained in rhetoric, consulted me, as one of his dearest friends, as to what I might think, in the light of his so-called constellations, about certain of his affairs, upon which his worldly ambitions were taking rise. I had already begun to incline towards Nebridius's opinion in this matter, but I did not refuse to interpret them and to tell him what came into my mind, still undecided as it was. However, I submitted that I was now almost persuaded that these are empty and ridiculous fables. He then told me that his father was very much addicted to such books, and had a friend who studied them at the same time and with equal passion. By joint study and discussion they so fanned in their hearts the desire for such trifles that they even made observations on the moments when their dumb animals were born, if they were brought forth at home, and noted the position of the heavens at those times. From these things they would gather proofs for their so-called art.

He told me that he had heard from his father that, when

his mother was carrying himself, Firminus, a servant of one of his father's friends was likewise pregnant. This fact did not escape her master, who even took pains to know by very careful examination the time when his dogs littered. Thus, while the two men, one for his own wife, the other for his servant, by most painstaking observations, figured out the day, the hour, and the most minute particles of the hour, both women were delivered at the same time. As a result, they were compelled to draw up identical horoscopes, right down to the same minute, for each of the newborn infants, one man for his son, the other for his tiny slave. For when the women began to be in labor, each man indicated to the other what was happening in his home. They arranged to send messengers to each other, as soon as the expected birth was announced to them. Each man in his own estate easily provided for word to be sent immediately. The messengers sent by the two men met, he said, exactly at the midpoint between their houses, so that neither of them could determine a different position for the stars or different moments of time. However, Firminus, who was born to an ample estate within his own family, ran his course on life's brighter paths, increased in wealth, and rose to places of honor, whereas that slave served his masters with never a lightening of the yoke of his condition, as I was told by Firminus, who knew him.

(9) After I had listened to and believed this story, for such a man had related it, all that reluctance of mine was dissolved and gave way. First, I attempted to recall Firminus from that fond study. I said to him that, after I had inspected his horoscope, if I were to make true predictions, I would surely have to see therein his parents, eminent among their fellow citizens, a family nobly placed in its city, gentle birth, good education, and liberal learning. But if that slave had consulted me about the same horoscope, for the two were identical, I ought again, so as to speak truly to him also, see therein a family most abjectly poor, a servile condition of life, and other things far different and far removed from the first. Hence it would be that from an inspection of the same horoscope I would state different things, if I were to speak the truth, but if I made identical statements, I would speak falsely. From this I gath-



ered with absolute certainty that any true statements made after an inspection of such horoscopes would be uttered not by art but by luck, while false statements would be made not out of ignorance of the art but by the trickery of chance.

(10) Having taken this approach to the problem, I ruminated within myself upon related things. So that none of the dotards following such a trade, whom I longed to attack right off and to refute with ridicule, might object to me that either Firminus had given me a false account or his father had given him one, I turned my attention to those who are born twins. For the most part, one issues from the womb so close upon the other that that brief difference in time, however great the power they may claim it to have in the nature of things, cannot be determined by human observation, nor can it be written down at all in those tables which the astrologer must inspect in order to make true predictions. Yet they will never be true, for after inspecting the same tables, he must say the same things of both Esau and Jacob, although the same things did not befall both men. Therefore, he would make false statements; or if he made true ones, he would not be saying the same things. Yet he inspected the same tables. Not by art, therefore, but by chance would he make true statements.

For you, O Lord, most just ruler of the universe, while both those who consult and those who are consulted in this way know nothing of it, by a hidden inspiration bring it about that, according to the secret merits of men's souls, the consultor may hear what he ought to hear out of the depths of your just judgment.<sup>2</sup> Let no man say to you, "What is this?"<sup>3</sup> or "Why is that?" Let him not say it, let him not say it, for he is man.

## CHAPTER 7

## A Soul Still Tormented

(11) But now, O my helper,<sup>1</sup> you had freed me from my chains, and still I asked, "Whence is evil?" but there was no way out. Yet in none of those wavering thoughts did you let me be carried away from that faith in which I believed both that you exist, and that your substance is unchangeable, and that you have care over men and pass judgment on them, and

that is Christ, your Son, our Lord, and in the Holy Scriptures, which the authority of your Catholic Church approves, you have placed the way of man's salvation unto that life which is to be after this death. These truths being made safe and fixed immovably in my mind, I asked uncertainly "Whence is evil?" What torments there were in my heart in its time of labor, O my God, what groans! Still were your ears turned to me, although I knew it not! When I sought an answer, bravely but in silence, the unspoken sufferings of my soul were mighty cries for your mercy. You knew what I suffered, but no man knew of it. How much of that torment did my tongue direct from there into the ears of my closest friends! Did my soul's tumult, for which neither time nor my tongue sufficed, ever resound in their ears? But all that "I roared with the groaning of my heart"<sup>2</sup> went into your ears, and "my desire was before you, but the light of my eyes was not with me."<sup>3</sup> It was within; I was outside, but it was not in any place. I was intent on the things that are contained in places, but among them I found no place of rest, nor did they receive me, so that I might say, "It is enough, and it is well." Nor did they permit me to return to where it would indeed be well with me. I was superior to those things, but inferior to you, for you are the true joy for me who am subject to you, and all those things which you have created inferior to me you have made subject to me.

This was the right mean, and the middle region of my salvation, to remain in your image, and by serving you to subdue my body. But when I would rise up in pride against you, and run against the Lord with the thick boss of my shield,<sup>4</sup> even those lowest things were set against me and pressed down upon me, and there was never relief or breathing spell. From all sides they rushed upon me in hordes and heaps as I gazed at them, and as I took thought and turned back from them, the images of bodily things set upon me, as if to say, "Where are you going, O foul and unworthy man?" Such things grew out of my wound, for you humble the proud man, like one who has been wounded.<sup>5</sup> By my swelling wound I was separated from you, and my badly bloated face closed up my eyes.)



## CHAPTER 8

## God's Healing Hand

(12) But you, O Lord, abide forever,<sup>1</sup> and you will not be angry with us forever,<sup>2</sup> for you have mercy on earth and ashes,<sup>3</sup> and it has been pleasing in your sight to reform my deformities. By inner goads you aroused me,<sup>4</sup> so that I did not rest until you stood plain before my inner sight. By the secret hand of your Physician<sup>5</sup> my swelling wound subsided, and day by day my mind's afflicted and darkened eyes grew sounder under the healing salve<sup>6</sup> of sorrow.

## CHAPTER 9

## Sacred Scripture and Pagan Philosophy

*illumination* (13) It was first your will to show me how you resist the proud and give grace to the humble,<sup>2</sup> and how great is your mercy in showing men the way of humility, for the reason that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among" men.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, by means of a certain man<sup>4</sup> puffed up with most unnatural pride you procured for me certain books of the Platonists<sup>5</sup> that had been translated out of Greek into Latin.<sup>6</sup> In them I read, not indeed in these words but much the same thought, enforced by many varied arguments, that

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made. What was made, in him is life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."<sup>7</sup>

I read that the soul of man, although it gives testimony of the light, is not itself the light, but the Word, God himself, is "the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world," and that "he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

But that "he came unto his own, and his own did not receive him, but as many as received him, to them he gave power

*what was not in Platonists - Christ*

to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name,"<sup>8</sup> this I did not read in those books.

(14) Again, I read there that the Word, God, was born, not of the flesh, nor of blood, "nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." But I did not read there that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."<sup>9</sup>

I found out in those books, though it was said differently and in many ways, that the Son, "being in the form of the Father, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," for by nature he is the same with him. But those books do not have it that he "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man," and that "he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also has exalted him" from the dead, "and has given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bend down of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father."<sup>10</sup>

That before all times and above all times your Only-begotten Son remains unchangeably coeternal with you; and that souls receive "of his fulness,"<sup>11</sup> so that they may be blessed; and that they are renewed by participation in the wisdom "remaining in herself,"<sup>12</sup> so as to be wise: these truths are found in those books.

But that "according to the time, he died for the ungodly," and that "you spared not your only Son, but delivered him up for us all"<sup>13</sup> is not there. For "you have hidden these things from the wise, and have revealed them to little ones," so that they who labor and are burdened might come to him and he would refresh them. For he is meek and humble of heart,<sup>14</sup> and he guides the meek in judgment, and he teaches the mild his ways, seeing our abjection and our labor, and forgiving all our sins.<sup>15</sup> But those men who are raised up on the heights of some toplofty teaching do not hear him as he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls."<sup>16</sup> Although they know God, they do not glorify him, or give thanks, but become vain in their thoughts,



\* (and their foolish heart is darkened; for professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.)<sup>17</sup>

(15) Therefore I also read there that "they changed the glory of your incorruption" into idols and various images, "the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of fourfooted beasts, and of creeping things," namely, into the Egyptian food by which Esau lost his birthright. For the first-born people worshiped the head of a fourfold beast instead of you, "and in their hearts turned back into Egypt,"<sup>18</sup> and bent your image, their own souls, before "the likeness of a calf that eats hay."<sup>19</sup> These things I found there, but I did not feed upon them.

It pleased you, Lord, to remove the reproach of a lesser status from Jacob, so that "the elder should serve the younger," and you called the Gentiles into your inheritance.<sup>20</sup> I had come to you from among the Gentiles, and I set my mind on that gold which you willed your people to take out of Egypt, for it was yours wherever it was. To the Athenians you said through your Apostle that in you "we live, and move, and have our being," as indeed some of them have said.<sup>21</sup> In truth these books were from the Gentiles. But I did not set my mind upon the idols of the Egyptians, which they served with your gold, they "who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator."<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER 10

## The Infinite Light - [like cave analogy]

(16) Being thus admonished to return to myself under your leadership I entered into my inmost being. This I could do, for you became my helper. I entered there, and by my soul's eye, such as it was, I saw above that same eye of my soul, above my mind, an unchangeable light. It was not this common light, plain to all flesh, nor a greater light, as it were, of the same kind, as though that light would shine many, many times more bright, and by its great power fill the whole universe. Not such was that light, but different, far different from all other lights. Nor was it above my mind, as oil is above water, or sky above earth. It was above my mind, because

1st stage of NeoPlatonic vision

creation  
ex nihilo

light different  
in kind, not degree  
— Creator-creature

I made me, and I was beneath it, because I was made by it. He who knows the truth, knows that light, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it, O eternal truth, and true love, and beloved eternity. You are my God, and I sigh for you day and night!

When first I knew you, you took me up,<sup>2</sup> so that I might see that there was something to see, but that I was not yet able to see it. You beat back my feeble sight, sending down your beams most powerfully upon me, and I trembled with love and awe. I found myself to be far from you in a region of unlikeness, as though I heard your voice from on high: "I am the food of grown men. Grow, and you shall feed upon me. You will not change me into yourself, as you change food into your flesh, but you will be changed into me." I knew that "you have corrected man for iniquity, and you have made my soul to waste away like a spider,"<sup>3</sup> and I said, "Is truth nothing, because it is diffused neither through finite nor through infinite space?" From afar you cried to me, "I am who am." I heard, as one hears in his heart; there was no further place for doubt, for it would be easier for me to doubt that I live than that there is no truth, which is "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."<sup>4</sup>

## CHAPTER 11

## Finite and Infinite

(17) I beheld other things below you, and I saw that they are not altogether existent nor altogether non-existent: they are, because they are from you; they are not, since they are not what you are. For that truly exists which endures unchangeably. "But it is good for me to adhere to my God,"<sup>1</sup> for if I do not abide in him, neither will I be able to abide in myself. But he abides in himself, and he renews all things.<sup>2</sup> "You are my Lord, for you have no need of my goods."<sup>3</sup>

Creator-creature

Winded by light seeing

intellectual vision hearing

being/becoming



④ nonbeing - not good at all

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The Confessions of St. Augustine

finite

4 Levels of Existence - participate in relative nonbeing

① All w/ existence is good - even if subject to corruption

② finite beings have become corrupt by turning away from God

③ God - only being incorruptible is supremely good

falleness, corrupted, things are still good (18) It was made manifest to me that beings that suffer corruption are nevertheless good. If they were supremely good, they could not be corrupted, but unless they were good, they could not be corrupted. If they were supremely good, they would be incorruptible, and if they were not good at all, there would be nothing in them to be corrupted. Corruption damages a thing, and it would not suffer damage unless its good were diminished. Therefore, either corruption damages nothing, and this cannot be, or whatever suffers corruption is deprived of some good, and this fact is most certain. If things are deprived of all good whatsoever, they will not exist at all. If they continue to be, and still continue incapable of suffering corruption, they will be better than before, because they will remain forever incorruptible.

privation of good existence is good, evil is not a substance What is more monstrous than to claim that things become better by losing all their good? Therefore, if they are deprived of all good, they will be absolutely nothing. Hence, as long as they exist, they are good. Therefore, whatsoever things exist are good. But (evil) of which I asked "Whence is it?" is not a substance, for if it were a substance, it would be good. Either it would be an incorruptible substance, a great good indeed, or it would be a corruptible substance, and it would not be corruptible unless it were good. Hence I saw and it was made manifest to me that you have made all things good, and that there are no substances whatsoever that you have not made. Since you have not made all things equal, it follows that all things, taken one by one, are good, and all things, taken together, are very good. For our God has made all things very good.<sup>1</sup>

### CHAPTER 13

#### Universal Good

To God (19) To you, nothing whatsoever is evil, and not only to you but also to your whole creation, for outside of it there is no evil

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nothing that can break in and disrupt the order that you have imposed upon it. Among its parts, certain things are thought to be evil because they do not agree with certain others. Yet these same beings agree with others still, and thus they are good, and they are also good in themselves. All these beings, which do not harmonize with one another, nevertheless are in keeping with that lower part of things, which we call the earth, which has a cloudy and windy sky of its own that is congruous to itself.

Let me never say, "These things should not be!" If I considered them alone, I might desire better things; but still for them alone I ought to praise you. That you must be praised all these show forth: from the earth, dragons, and all the deeps, fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfill your word, mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, serpents and feathered fowls; kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens, the old with the younger; let them praise your name.<sup>1</sup> And from the heavens also let these praise you, let these praise you, our God, in the high places, all your angels, all your hosts, the sun and the moon, all stars and light, the heavens of heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens, let them praise your name.<sup>2</sup>

No more did I long for better things, because I thought of all things, and with a sounder judgment I held that the higher things are indeed better than the lower, but that all things together are better than the higher things alone.

### CHAPTER 14

#### A Return to Idolatry

(20) There is no health<sup>1</sup> in them to whom any part of your creation is displeasing, nor was there health in me, when many of the things that you had made displeased me. Since my soul did not dare to be displeased at my God, it would not admit that anything displeasing to it was your work. From there it turned to the theory of two substances, but it found no rest in it, and uttered the errors of other men. Turning away from that belief, my soul fashioned for itself a god that filled all the

idol

lower beings

order of goods

theory of 2 substances



places in infinite space. It thought that this god was you, and set it up in its heart. Thus it again became the temple of its own idol, a thing abominable before you. But afterwards you soothed my head, unknown to me, and closed my eyes, lest they see vanity.<sup>2</sup> I turned<sup>3</sup> a little from myself, and my madness was lulled to sleep. I awoke in you, and I saw that you are infinite, although in a different way, and this vision was not derived from the flesh.

## CHAPTER 15

*The Temporal and the Eternal*

(21) I looked back over other things, and I saw that they owe their being to you, and that all finite things are in you. They are there, not as though in a place, but in a different fashion, because you contain all things in your hand by your truth. All things are true, in so far as they have being, nor is there any falsity, except when that is thought to be which is not. I saw that all things are in harmony not only with their proper places, but also with their seasons. I saw that you, who alone are eternal, did not make a beginning to your works after innumerable ages had passed, because all ages, both those which have passed, and those which will come to pass, neither depart nor come to be except by your activity and your abiding presence.

## CHAPTER 16

*The Relative and the Absolute*

(22) From experience, I knew it is no strange thing that the bread that pleases a healthy appetite is offensive to one that is not healthy, and that light is hateful to sick eyes, but welcome to the well. Your justice offends the wicked, much more do the viper and the worm, which you have created good and in keeping with those lower parts of your creation, to which the wicked themselves are adapted. For they are in harmony with those lower things in so far as they are unlike you, but they are in harmony with higher things, in so far as they become liker to you.

I asked, "What is iniquity?" and I found that it is not a substance. It is perversity of will, twisted away from the substance, yourself, O God, and towards lower things, and casting away its own bowels,<sup>1</sup> and swelling beyond itself.

## Divided Line &amp; Cave Analogy CHAPTER 17

*A Momentary Vision* new love true concept of God

(23) I marveled that now I loved you, and not a phantom in your stead. Yet I was not steadfast in enjoyment of my God: I was borne up to you by your beauty, but soon I was borne down from you by my own weight, and with groaning, I plunged into the midst of those lower things. This weight was carnal custom. Still there remained within me remembrance of you: I did not doubt in any way that there was one to cleave to, nor did I doubt that I was not yet one who would cleave to him. "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down upon the mind that muses upon many things."<sup>1</sup> Yet I was most certain that your "invisible things, from the foundation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," your "eternal power also, and divinity."<sup>2</sup>

Searching into why it was that I gave approval to the beauty of bodies, whether in the heavens or on earth, and what helped me to make sound judgments, and to say, "This should be thus and so, and that not," searching, then, into why I passed such judgments, for I did pass them, I had found that immutable, true, and eternal truth which exists above my changeable mind. Thus I gradually passed from bodies to the soul, which perceives by means of the body, and thence to its interior power, to which the bodily senses present exterior things—beasts too are capable of doing this much—and thence again to the reasoning power, to which what is apprehended by the bodily senses is referred for judgment. When this power found itself to be in me a variable thing, it raised itself up to its own understanding. It removed its thought from the tyranny of habit, and withdrew itself from the throngs of contradictory phantasms. In this way it might find that light by which it was sprinkled, when it cried out, that beyond all doubt the immu-

turning inward



see the immutable  
 Forms | table must be preferred to the mutable. Hence it might come to know this immutable being, for unless it could know it in some way, it could in no wise have set it with certainty above the mutable. Thus in a flash of its trembling sight it came to that which is. Then indeed I clearly saw your "invisible things, understood by the things which are made." But I was unable to fix my gaze on them. In my frailty I was struck back, and I returned to my former ways. I took with me only a memory, loving and longing for what I had, as it were, caught the odor of, but was not yet able to feed upon.<sup>3</sup>

## CHAPTER 18

## The Way of Humility

needs mediator  
 & descent/ ascent  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*  
 (24) I sought for a way of gaining strength sufficient for me to have joy in you, but I did not find it until I embraced "the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is over all things, God blessed forever."<sup>1</sup> He called to me, and said, "I am the way of truth, and the life."<sup>2</sup> He mingled that food,<sup>3</sup> which I was unable to receive, with our flesh, for "the Word was made flesh,"<sup>4</sup> so that your Wisdom, by which you created all things, might provide milk for our infant condition. I did not hold fast to Jesus my God, a humble man clinging to him who was humble, nor did I know in what thing his lowliness would be my teacher. Your Word, eternal truth, surpassingly above the highest parts of your universe, raised up there to himself those who had been brought low. Amid the lower parts he has built for himself out of our clay a lowly dwelling, in which he would protect from themselves those ready to become submissive to him, and bring them to himself. He heals their swellings, and nourishes their love, so that they may not go on further in self-confidence, but rather become weak. For at their feet they see the Godhead, weak<sup>5</sup> because of its participation in our "coats of skin,"<sup>6</sup> and in their weariness they may cast themselves upon it, while it arises and lifts them up.

## CHAPTER 19

## The Divinity of Jesus Christ

(25) But I had other thoughts:<sup>1</sup> I conceived my Lord Christ only as a man of surpassing wisdom, whom no other wise man could equal. Above all, because he was born in a woman's manner of the Virgin, to give us an example of despising temporal things in order to win immortality, he seemed by the godlike care that he had for us, to have merited such great authority as a teacher. But what mystery was contained within those words, "The Word was made flesh,"<sup>2</sup> I could not conceive. But of what has been handed down in writing concerning him, namely, that he ate and drank, slept, walked about, was joyful, grew sad, and preached, I had learned only that that flesh did not cleave to your Word except together with a human soul and mind. Any man who has knowledge of the immutability of your Word knows this: I knew it at that time, as far as I could know it, and had no doubt whatsoever concerning it. Now to move one's bodily members at the command of the will, and now not to move them; now to be affected by some emotion, and now not to be affected; now to utter wise judgments by means of signs, and now to remain silent—such things belong to a soul and a mind that are subject to change. If these things were written falsely of him, then all else would be in danger of being false, and no saving faith for mankind would remain in those Scriptures. But since the things written are true, I acknowledged that in Christ there was a complete man: not merely a man's body, nor an animating principle in the body but without a mind, but a true man.<sup>3</sup> I accounted him a person to be preferred above all other men, not as the person of Truth, but because of some great excellence of his human nature and a more perfect participation in wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

Alypius, on the other hand, thought that Catholics believed that God was clothed in flesh in such wise that in Christ there was no soul, in addition to his divinity and his body. Nor did he think that a human mind was attributed to him. Because he was firmly convinced that the deeds recorded of him could

Christ as complete man

perfect

Alypius' false Christ



only be done by a creature possessed of life and reason, he moved more slowly towards the Christian faith. However, he learned later that this was the error of the Apollinarian heresies,<sup>5</sup> and he was pleased with the Catholic faith and better disposed towards it. It was somewhat after this, I admit, that I learned how, with regard to those words, "The Word was made flesh," Catholic truth is distinguished from the false teaching of Photinus.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the refutation of heresies causes what your Church thinks, and what sound doctrine holds, to stand out.<sup>7</sup> For there must be heresies, so that those who are approved may become manifest among the weak.<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER 20

## The Soul's True Country

(26) At that time, after reading those books of the Platonists and being instructed by them to search for incorporeal truth, I clearly saw your invisible things which "are understood by the things that are made."<sup>1</sup> Although pushed backwards in my search, I perceived what that was which, because of my mind's darkness, I was not permitted to contemplate. I was made certain that you exist, that you are infinite, although not diffused throughout spaces, either finite or infinite, that you are truly he who is always the same, with no varied parts and changing movements, and that all other things are from you, as is known by one single most solid proof, the fact that they exist. Of these truths I was most certain, but I was too weak to find my joy in you. I prated as if I were well instructed, but I did not know enough to seek your way in Christ our Savior. I had not perished, but I was on the road to perdition.

Now I began to desire to appear wise. Filled up with punishment for my sins,<sup>2</sup> I did not weep over them, but rather was I puffed up with knowledge. Where was that charity which builds upon the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus? When would those books teach it to me? It is for this reason, I believe, that you wished me to come upon those books before I read your Scriptures, so that the way I was affected by them might be stamped upon my memory. Hence,

later on, when I was made gentle by your books, and my wounds had been treated by your soothing fingers, I would be able to detect and distinguish how great a difference lies between presumption and contrition, and between those who see where they must travel, but do not see the way, and those who see the way that leads not only to beholding our blessed Fatherland but also to dwelling therein. If I had first been formed by your Sacred Scriptures and if you had grown sweet to me by my familiar use of them, and I had afterwards happened on those other volumes, they might have drawn me away from the solid foundation of religion. Or else, even if I had persisted in those salutary dispositions which I had drunk in, I might have thought that if a man studied those books alone, he could conceive the same thoughts from them.<sup>3</sup>

## CHAPTER 21

## The Pilgrim Way

(27) So it was with the most intense desire that I seized upon the sacred writings of your Spirit, and especially the Apostle Paul. Those difficult passages,<sup>1</sup> where at one time he seemed to me to contradict himself, and where the text of his discourse appeared to be at variance with the testimonies of the law and the prophets, melted away. I saw those pure writings as having one single aspect, and I learned to exult with joy.<sup>2</sup> I made a beginning, and whatever truths I had read in those other works I here found to be uttered along with the praise of your grace, so that whosoever sees may not glory, as if he had not received<sup>3</sup> not merely what he sees but also his very ability to see. For what does he possess which he has not received?<sup>4</sup> Also, it is that he may be admonished not only to see you who are always the same,<sup>5</sup> but also that he may be made strong to hold fast to you. Again, it is that he who cannot see from afar off may yet walk upon that way whereby he may come to you, and see you, and hold fast to you. For although a man may be delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man, what shall he do with that other law in his members, fighting against the law of his mind, and making him captive in the law of sin, which is in his members?<sup>6</sup>



prisoners in sin For you are just, O Lord, but we have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have acted wickedly,<sup>7</sup> and your hand is heavy upon us,<sup>8</sup> and we have been justly delivered over to that ancient sinner, the lord of death,<sup>9</sup> because he persuaded our will to be like his will, whereby he stood not in the truth.<sup>10</sup>

need Christ What shall an unhappy man do? "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death," unless it is by your grace, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord,"<sup>11</sup> whom you have begotten coeternal with yourself, and created in the beginning of your ways,<sup>12</sup> in whom the prince of this world found nothing worthy of death,<sup>13</sup> and yet killed him? And the handwriting of the decree that was against us was blotted out.<sup>14</sup>

what Platonists lack All this those writings of the Platonists do not have. Their pages do not have this face of piety, the tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and a humbled heart,<sup>15</sup> the salvation of your people, the city that is like a bride,<sup>16</sup> the pledge of the spirit,<sup>17</sup> the cup of our redemption. In those books no one sings: "Shall not my soul be subject to God? For he is my God and my savior, my protector. I shall be moved no more."<sup>18</sup> In them no man hears him calling to us: "Come unto me, all you that labor."<sup>19</sup> They scorn to learn of him because he is meek and humble of heart. "For you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to little ones."<sup>20</sup>

what philosophers should be It is one thing to behold from a wooded mountain peak the land of peace,<sup>21</sup> but to find no way to it, and to strive in vain towards it by unpassable ways, ambushed and beset by fugitives and deserters, under their leader, the lion and the dragon.<sup>22</sup> It is a different thing to keep to the way that leads to that land, guarded by the protection of the heavenly commander, where no deserters from the heavenly army lie in wait like bandits. They shun that way, like a torture. In a wondrous way all these things penetrated my very vitals, when I read the words of that least of your apostles,<sup>23</sup> and meditated upon your works, and trembled at them.<sup>24</sup>

truth vs. habit

## BOOK 8 THE GRACE OF FAITH

### CHAPTER 1

#### Truth Seen but not Followed

(1) With thanksgiving let me remember, O my God, all your mercies to me and let me confess them to you. Let my bones be filled with your love, and let them say to you: "Lord, who is like unto you?"<sup>1</sup> You have broken my bonds. I will sacrifice to you the sacrifice of praise.<sup>2</sup> I will narrate how you broke them asunder. And when they hear these things, let all who adore you say: "Blessed be the Lord, in heaven and on earth. Great and wonderful is his name."<sup>3</sup>

Your words had stuck fast in the depths of my heart, and on every side I was encompassed by you. I was now certain that you are eternal life, although I saw it only "in a glass, in a dark manner."<sup>4</sup> Yet all my doubts concerning incorruptible substance, and that every other substance comes from it, had been removed from me. It was not to be more certain concerning you, but to be more steadfast in you that I desired. But in my temporal life all things were uncertain, and my heart had to be cleansed of the old leaven.<sup>5</sup> The way, the Savior himself, had become pleasing, but as yet I was loath to tread its narrow passes. You put it into my mind, and it seemed good to my sight, to turn to Simplicianus,<sup>6</sup> who appeared to me to be a good servant of yours, for in him your grace shone bright. I had also heard that from his youth he had lived most devoutly in your service. At that time he had grown old, and because of long years spent in following your way with such good zeal, I thought that he was one who had experienced many things and learned many things. In truth, he was such a one. Hence I wished that after I had discussed my problems with him, he would show me the proper manner for one affected like me to walk in your way.

need  
conv.  
of  
will



(2) I saw that the Church was full of men, of whom one went this way, another that. I was displeased with the course I followed in the world, and with my desires no longer aflame with hope of honor and wealth, as they had been, to bear so grievous a bondage was a very great burden to me. In comparison with your sweetness and the beauty of your house, which I loved,<sup>7</sup> those things no longer gave me delight, but I was still tightly bound by love of women. However, your apostle did not forbid me to marry, although he exhorted me to something better, especially wishing that all men would be like himself.<sup>8</sup> But I was weaker and chose the softer place. For this one thing I was tossed all about in other ways: I was faint and I wasted away with withering cares. For in other matters, which I had no wish to endure, I was forced to adapt myself to that conjugal life, which I had given myself to and by which I was therefore restricted.

From the mouth of your truth I had learned that there are eunuchs who make themselves such for the kingdom of heaven, but he also says, "He that can take it, let him take it."<sup>9</sup> Surely "all men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God; and who by these good things that are seen could not understand, could not find, him who is."<sup>10</sup> I was no longer in that vanity! I had passed beyond it, and by the testimony of the whole creation I had found you our creator, and your Word, who is God with you, and who is one God with you, through whom you created all things.

There is another class of impious men, who "knowing God, have not glorified him as God, or given thanks."<sup>11</sup> Into this group also I had fallen, but your right hand<sup>12</sup> raised me up, and took me out of it, and you placed me where I might grow strong again. For you have said to man: "Behold, piety is wisdom,"<sup>13</sup> and "Do not desire to appear wise,"<sup>14</sup> "for professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."<sup>15</sup> But I had now found the good pearl, and this I must buy, after selling all that I had.<sup>16</sup> Yet still I hesitated.

knowing but not doing

## CHAPTER 2

## The Conversion of Victorinus

(3) I went, then, to Simplicianus, the father, as to his reception of grace,<sup>1</sup> of Ambrose, the then bishop, and by him loved as a father. To him I recounted the winding ways of my errors. When I recorded how I had read certain books of the Platonists, translated into the Latin language by Victorinus,<sup>2</sup> sometime professor of rhetoric at Rome, who, I had heard, had died a Christian, he congratulated me because I had not fallen in with the writings of other philosophers, full of fallacies and deceits according to the elements of this world,<sup>3</sup> whereas in the works of the Platonists God and his Word are introduced in all manners. Thereupon, in order to exhort me to accept Christ's humility, "hidden from the wise and revealed to little ones,"<sup>4</sup> he spoke of Victorinus himself, whom he had known intimately when he was in Rome. He told me certain things about him that I will not pass over in silence, as they involve an instance of that great praise of your grace<sup>5</sup> which must be confessed to you. For that aged man, most learned and most highly skilled in all liberal studies, had read through and passed judgment on many philosophical works and had been the teacher of many noble senators. He had even merited and obtained a statue in the Roman forum as a memorial of his outstanding teaching, which citizens of this world deem a great honor. Right up to his old age, he had been a worshiper of idols and a communicant in sacrilegious rites, with which almost the entire Roman nobility was then inflated. By such rites they inspired the people with the cult of Osiris,<sup>6</sup> and every kind of god, monsters, and barking Anubis, which at one time had borne arms against Neptune and Venus, and against Minerva.<sup>7</sup> These gods, whom Rome had once conquered, she now adored. Over the course of many years, the aged Victorinus himself had defended them with thunderous and terrifying eloquence. But now he did not blush to become the child of your Christ and a newborn infant at your font,<sup>8</sup> to bend his neck under the yoke of humility, and to lower his brow before the reproach of the cross.<sup>9</sup>

Simplicianus

Platonist

Victorinus

humility

descent



(4) Lord, Lord, you who have bowed down the heavens and have descended you who have touched the mountains and they have smoked,<sup>10</sup> by what means did you wend your way into his breast? He used to read Holy Writ as Simplicianus has said, and he studiously searched into and examined all Christian writings. He said to Simplicianus, not openly, but privately and as a friend, "You should know that I am already a Christian." But he answered, "I will not believe it, nor will I reckon you among Christians, unless I see you in the Church of Christ." The other laughed and said, "Is it walls, then, that make men Christians?" He often said that he was already a Christian; Simplicianus just as often made his reply; and just as often he made his joke about the walls. He was afraid of offending his friends, the proud worshippers of demons. He thought that from their lofty seat of honor in Babylon,<sup>11</sup> as from cedars of Lebanon, which the Lord had not yet broken down,<sup>12</sup> the heavy weight of their enmity would rush down upon him.

Afterwards, through reading and longing, he drank in strength. He feared that he would be denied by Christ before the angels if he now feared to confess him before men.<sup>13</sup> He saw himself as guilty of a great crime by being ashamed of the mysteries of the humility of your Word, while not being ashamed of the sacrilegious rites of proud demons, which he had proudly imitated and accepted. He put aside shame from vanity and became meekest before the truth. Suddenly and unexpectedly, he said to Simplicianus, who has himself described it, "Let us go to the church. I wish to become a Christian." Unable to contain himself for joy, Simplicianus went with him. There he was granted the initial sacraments of instruction,<sup>14</sup> and not long after he gave in his name, so that he might be reborn in baptism. Rome stood in wonder, and the Church rejoiced. The proud saw, and were angry; they gnashed their teeth, and pined away.<sup>15</sup> But the Lord God was the hope of his servant, and he had no regard for vanities and lying follies.<sup>16</sup>

(5) At length the hour came for him to make his profession of faith.<sup>17</sup> At Rome, those who are about to approach your grace usually deliver this profession from an elevated place,

in the sight of your faithful people, in set words which they have learned and committed to memory. To Victorinus, he said, the priests gave permission to make the profession in private, as it was the custom to allow this to those who looked as if they would be self-conscious and upset. However, he preferred to make profession of his salvation in the sight of that holy throng. What he taught in his school of rhetoric was not salvation, and yet he taught it publicly. How much less, then, should he dread your meek flock when he affirmed your Word, since he had never dreaded to pronounce his own words before throngs of madmen! Hence, when he arose to make his profession, all who knew him uttered his name to one another with a murmur of congratulation. And who among them did not know him? A suppressed sound issued from the mouths of all those who rejoiced together, "Victorinus! Victorinus!" Suddenly, as they saw him, they gave voice to their joy, and just as suddenly they became silent in order to hear him. He pronounced the true faith with splendid confidence, and they all desired to clasp him to their hearts. By their love and joy they clasped him to themselves. Those were the hands by which they clasped him.

## CHAPTER 3

## The Law of Contrasts

(6) O God the good, what goes on within a man that he should rejoice more over the salvation of a soul that had been despaired of, and was then set free of a greater peril, than if there had always been hope for him, or if his danger had been less? Merciful Father, you too rejoice more over one man who does penance than over ninety-nine just men who do not need penance. We listen with great gladness as we hear how the sheep that had strayed away is brought back on the joyful shepherd's shoulders, and how the drachma is restored to your treasure house, while the neighbors rejoice with the woman who has found it. The joyous festivities within your home wring tears from our eyes when the story is read in your house of how your younger son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found.<sup>1</sup> In truth, you rejoice in us and in your

more  
joy when  
lost soul  
is saved

public  
profes-  
sion

Christ's  
descent

Christ  
w/o  
Church

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fear of  
shame

men →  
God

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angels, who are holy in holy charity. For you are always the same, but things that do not exist forever or in the same way, all these you know forever and in the same way.

Contrasts - (7) What is it, therefore, that goes on within the soul, since it takes greater delight if things that it loves are found or restored to it than if it had always possessed them? Other things bear witness to this, and all are filled with proofs that cry aloud, "Thus it is!" The victorious general holds his triumph yet unless he had fought, he would never have won the victory, and the greater was the danger in battle, the greater is the joy in the triumph. The storm tosses seafarers about, and threatens them with shipwreck: they all grow pale at their coming death. Then the sky and the sea become calm, and they exult exceedingly, just as they had feared exceedingly. A dear friend is ill, and his pulse tells us of his bad case. All those who long to see him in good health are in mind sick along with him. He gets well again, and although he does not yet walk with his former vigor, there is joy such as did not obtain before when he walked well and strong.

Men gain these very pleasures of human life, not merely from any unexpected and unwanted troubles that happen to them, but from those that are planned and voluntary. There is no pleasure in eating and drinking unless the discomfort of hunger and thirst comes first. Men addicted to liquor eat certain salty foods so as to produce an annoying dryness, and when a drink allays this, pleasure results. It is the custom for affianced brides not to be given immediately in marriage, lest as husband a man hold in low esteem the woman given to him, whom as her betrothed he did not long for because she was kept from him.

opposite - (8) This same rule holds for foul and accursed joys; it holds for those that are permitted and lawful; it holds for the most sincere and virtuous friendship; it holds for him who was dead but now lives again, and for him who was lost and is now found. Everywhere a greater joy is preceded by a greater suffering. Why is this, O Lord my God, since you are eternal unto yourself, since you yourself are joy, and since there are beings that forever rejoice in you and about you?<sup>22</sup> Why is it that this particular rank of beings alternates between decline

and advance and between strife and harmony? Is this their proper measure? Is it so much only that you have given to them, when from the heights of heaven<sup>8</sup> down to the depths of the earth, from the beginning to the end of time, from the angel even to the worm, from the first movement up to the last, you seated, each in its proper place, all varieties of good things and all your just works, and caused them to be each in its proper season?

Woe is me! How high are you in the highest, and how deep are you in the depths? Nowhere do you depart from us, and we scarcely return to you. God is highest & deepest

## CHAPTER 4

## Mutual Joy

(9) Lead us, O Lord, and work within us: arouse us, and call us back; enkindle us, and draw us to you; grow fragrant and sweet to us. Let us love you, and let us run to you.<sup>1</sup> Are there not many men who, out of a deeper hell of blindness than Victorinus, have turned back to you and drawn near to you? Are they not enlightened, as they receive your light? For if they receive it, they also receive from you power to become your sons.<sup>2</sup> Yet if they are known to fewer people, so also those who know them rejoice less over them. For when many men rejoice together, there is a richer joy in each individual, since they enkindle themselves and they inflame one another.<sup>3</sup> Again, if they are well known to many men, they exercise authority towards salvation for many others, and they lead the way on which many others follow. Therefore, those also who have preceded them rejoice because of them, for the reason that they do not rejoice over them alone.<sup>4</sup>

Far be it from me to think that in your tabernacles there should be acceptance of persons,<sup>5</sup> of the rich before the poor, or of the noble before the baseborn. Rather, you have chosen the weak things of the world, that you may confound the strong, and the contemptible things, and those that are not, as if they are, that you might bring to naught things that are.<sup>6</sup> Yet even that same man, the least of your apostles,<sup>7</sup> by whose tongue you have uttered these words of yours, when Paulus



the proconsul, whose pride had been conquered through that other's warfare, was sent to pass under the easy yoke of your Christ, and was made a private citizen of the great King, then, instead of his former name of Saul, was pleased to be called Paul as a token of so great a victory.<sup>8</sup>

*ex. st. Paul*  
*great victory in conversion of a pagan hero*  
A greater victory is won over the enemy in the case of a man upon whom he has a firmer hold and by means of whom he has hold on many others. He has more hold on the proud because of their lofty titles, and because of their name and authority, he has hold on many others. Hence the more grateful were their thoughts with regard to Victorinus's heart, which the devil had held as an impregnable fortress, and with regard to Victorinus's tongue, with which as a keen and powerful weapon he had slain so many, so much the more abundantly did it behoove your sons to rejoice because our King bound up the strong man,<sup>9</sup> and because they saw his vessels taken from him, and cleansed, and rendered fit for your honor, and made profitable to the Lord for every good work.<sup>10</sup>

## CHAPTER 5

## The Inner Conflict

*gives up career*  
*bound by will*  
(10) When Simplicianus, your servant, related to me all this concerning Victorinus, I was on fire to imitate him, and it was for this reason that he had told it to me. Afterwards he added to it how in Emperor Julian's time a law was passed by which Christians were forbidden to teach literature and oratory, and how he obeyed the law, and chose rather to give up his school for words than your Word, by which you make eloquent the tongues of infants.<sup>1</sup> Then he appeared to me to have been no more courageous than fortunate, since he found opportunity to devote himself to you alone. (For this very thing did I sigh, bound as I was, not by another's irons but by my own iron will. The enemy<sup>2</sup> had control of my will, and out of it he fashioned a chain and fettered me with it. For in truth lust is made out of a perverse will, and when lust is served, it becomes habit, and when habit is not resisted, it becomes necessity. By such links, joined one to another, as it were—for this reason I have called it a chain—a harsh bondage held me

*lust → habit → necessity*

But a new will which had begun within me, to wish freely to worship you and find joy in you, O God, the sole sure delight, was not yet able to overcome that prior will, grown strong with age. Thus did my two wills, the one old, the other new, the first carnal, and the second spiritual, contend with one another, and by their conflict they laid waste my soul.

(11) Thus I understood from my own experience what I had read, how "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."<sup>3</sup> I was in both camps, but I was more in that which I approved within myself than in that other which I disapproved within me. For now, in the latter, it was not so much myself, since in large part I suffered it against my will rather than did it voluntarily. Yet it was by me that this habit had been made so warlike against me, since I had come willingly to this point where I now willed not. Who can rightly argue against it, when just punishment comes upon the sinner? Nor did I any longer have that former excuse, in which I used to look upon myself as unable to despise the world and to serve you, because knowledge of the truth was still uncertain to me. Now indeed it was certain to me. Yet I was still bound to the earth, and I refused to become your soldier.<sup>4</sup> I was afraid to be lightened of all my heavy burden, even as I should have feared to be encumbered by it.)

(12) Thus by the burdens of this world I was sweetly weighed down, just as a man often is in sleep. Thoughts wherein I meditated upon you were like the efforts of those who want to arouse themselves but, still overcome by deep drowsiness, sink back again. Just as no man would want to sleep forever, and it is the sane judgment of all men that it is better to be awake, yet a man often defers to shake off sleep when a heavy languor pervades all his members, and although the time to get up has come, he yields to it with pleasure even although it now irks him. In like manner, I was sure that it was better for me to give myself up to your love than to give in to my own desires. However, although the one way appealed to me and was gaining mastery, the other still afforded me pleasure and kept me victim. I had no answer to give to you when you said to me, "Rise, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you."<sup>5</sup> When on

*new will*

*\* 2 wills*

*\* Paul*

*\* spirit*

*\* flesh*

*\* intellect vs will*

*\* metaphor of sleep*

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all sides you showed me that your words were true, and I was overcome by your truth, I had no answer whatsoever to make, but only those slow and drowsy words, "Right away. Yes, right away." "Let me be for a little while." But "Right away—right away" was never right now, and "Let me be for a little while" stretched out for a long time.

In vain was I delighted with your law according to the outward man, when another law in my members fought against the law of my mind, and led me captive in the law of sin which was in my members.<sup>1</sup> For the law of (sin) is force of habit whereby the mind is dragged along and held fast, even against its will, but still deservedly so, since it was by its will that it had slipped into the habit. Unhappy man that I was! Who would deliver me from the body of this death, unless your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord?

## CHAPTER 6

## The Story of Ponticianus

(13) I will now recount and confess to your name,<sup>1</sup> "O Lord, my helper and my redeemer,"<sup>2</sup> how you delivered me from the fetters of desire for concubinage, by which I was held most tightly, and from the slavery of worldly concerns. I went about my accustomed tasks with ever increasing anxiety, and each day I sighed for you. I frequented your church whenever I was free from the burden of the tasks under which I groaned. Alypius was with me, since now, after his third term as assessor, he was relieved of his legal duties and was looking for clients to whom he might again sell his counsel, just as I sold skill at speech, if such skill can be imparted by teaching. By reason of our friendship, Nebridius had consented to teach under Verecundus, a citizen and grammarian of Milan and a very close friend to all of us, who urgently desired, and by right of friendship demanded from our group, the reliable assistance he needed so much. Nebridius was not attracted to this by desire for profit; if he wished for that, he could have gained greater rewards from his learning. But he was a very kind and agreeable friend, and out of duty to friendship he would not reject our request. He acted in a very prudent manner, as he

was on guard against becoming known to men who were great according to this world,<sup>3</sup> and he avoided among them all mental disturbance. He wished to keep his mind free and to have as much time as possible open to engage in study, to read, or to hear things concerning wisdom.

(14) One day when Nebridius was absent, for what reason I do not recall, there came to our home to visit me and Alypius a certain Ponticianus,<sup>4</sup> a countryman of ours, in so far as being from Africa, who held a high office at court. I do not know what he wanted from us, but we sat down to talk together. He chanced to notice a book lying upon a game table that stood before us. He took it up, opened it, and much to his surprise found that it was by the apostle Paul. He had thought that it was one or another of the books that I was wearing myself out in teaching. Whereupon he smiled and looked at me as if to congratulate me, and expressed surprise that he had suddenly found these writings and these alone before my eyes. For he was a faithful Christian, and often he prostrated himself before you, our God, in many long prayers within the church. When I told him how I expended very great pains upon those Scriptures, a discussion arose in which he narrated the story of Anthony<sup>5</sup> an Egyptian monk.<sup>6</sup> His name was famous among your servants, but up to that very hour it had been unknown to us. When he discovered this, he dwelt all the more on the subject, introducing this great man to us who were ignorant of him, and wondering at this same ignorance. We in turn stood in amazement on hearing such wonderful works<sup>7</sup> of yours, deeds of such recent memory, done so close to our own times, and most fully testified to, in the true faith and in the Catholic Church. All of us marveled at it, we because there had been such great wonders, and he because they had not been heard of by us.

(15) From this subject his discourse turned to the flocks within the monasteries and to their way of life, which is like a sweet-smelling odor to you, and to the fruitful deserts in the wilderness, of all of which we knew nothing. There was a monastery at Milan, filled with good brothers, situated outside the walls, under the fostering care of Ambrose, but we had not known about it. He proceeded with his account, and



we kept silent and attentive. Then it came about that he told us how he and three of his associates—just when I do not know, but it was at Trier!—one afternoon, when the emperor was attending the games at the circus, went out for a walk in the gardens along the walls. As they chanced to walk in pairs, one went apart with him and the other two wandered off by themselves. While wandering about, these two others came upon a certain house, where dwelled some of your servants, "poor in spirit, of whom is the kingdom of heaven,"\* and there they found a little book in which was written the life of Anthony.

One of them began to read this book, to marvel at it, and to be aroused by it. As he read it, he began to meditate on taking up such a life, and to give up his worldly career and serve you. These two men were numbered among those whom they style special agents.<sup>8</sup> Then the reader, suddenly filled with holy love and by sober shame made angry with himself, turned his eyes upon his friend and said, "Tell me, I ask you, where will we get by all these labors of ours? What are we seeking for? To what purpose do we serve in office? What higher ambition can we have at court than to become friends of the emperor?<sup>10</sup> In such a position what is there that is not fragile and full of peril? By how many perils do we arrive at a greater peril? When will we get there? But to become God's friend, if I wish it, see, I become one here and now."

He spoke these words, and in anguish during this birth of a new life, he turned his eyes again upon those pages. He read on and was changed within himself, where your eye could see. His mind was stripped of this world, as soon became apparent. For as he read, and turned about on the waves of his heart, he raged at himself for a while, but then discerned better things and determined upon them. Already belonging to you, he said to his friend, "I have now broken away from our former hopes, and I have determined to serve God, and from this very hour and in this very place I make my start. If it is too much for you to imitate me, do not oppose me." The other answered that he would join him as a comrade for so great a reward and in so great a service. Both of them, being now yours, began to build a tower at that due cost<sup>11</sup> of leaving all that they had and following you.

By then Ponticianus and the man with him, who had walked in other parts of the garden, came in search of them in the same place, and on finding them, warned them that they must return, as the day was already late. The men told them of their resolution and purpose and how such a determination had sprung up and become established within them, and begged the others not to trouble them, even if they would refuse to join them. Ponticianus and his companion, although so wise changed from their former state, nevertheless wept over it, as he affirmed, congratulated them devoutly, and recommended themselves to their prayers. Then, with hearts dragging along upon the earth, they returned to the palace, while the other two fixed their hearts on heaven and remained in the house. Both men had affianced brides, and when these women heard the story, they also dedicated their virginity to you.

## CHAPTER 7

## The Naked Self

(16) Ponticianus told us this story, and as he spoke, you, O Lord, turned me back upon myself. You took me from behind my own back, where I had placed myself because I did not wish to look upon myself. You stood me face to face with myself, so that I might see how foul I was, how deformed and defiled, how covered with stains and sores. I looked, and I was filled with horror, but there was no place for me to flee to away from myself. If I tried to turn my gaze from myself, he still went on with the story that he was telling, and once again you placed me in front of myself, and thrust me before my own eyes, so that I might find out my iniquity and hate it.<sup>1</sup> I knew what it was, but I pretended not to; I refused to look at it, and put it out of my memory.

(17) At that time, in truth, the more ardently I loved those men whose healthful affections I was hearing about, because they had given themselves wholly to you for healing, the more detestably did I hate myself as compared to them. Many, perhaps twelve, of my years had flown by since that nineteenth year when by reading Cicero's Hortensius I was aroused to a

sees he  
sin

can

Cicero



delayed  
search  
for wisdom

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CHAPTER 8

In the Garden

(19) Then, during that great struggle in my inner house, which I had violently raised up against my own soul in our chamber,<sup>1</sup> in my heart, troubled both in mind and in countenance, I turn upon Alypius and cry out to him: "What is the trouble with us? What is this? What did you hear? The unlearned rise up and take heaven by storm,<sup>2</sup> and we, with all our erudition but empty of heart, see how we wallow in flesh and blood! Are we ashamed to follow, because they have gone on ahead of us? Is it no shame to us not even to follow them?" I said some such words, and my anguish of mind tore me from him, while astounded he looked at me and kept silent. I did not speak in my usual way. My brow, cheeks, eyes, color, and tone of voice spoke of my state of mind more than the words that I uttered.

Attached to our lodging there was a little garden; we had the use of it, as of the whole house, for our host, the owner of the house, did not live in it. The tumult within my breast hurried me out into it, where no one would stop the raging combat that I had entered into against myself, until it would come to such an end as you knew of, but as I knew not. I suffered from a madness that was to bring health and I was in a death agony that was to bring life; for I knew what a thing of evil I was, but I did not know the good that I would be after but a little while. I rushed, then, into the garden, and Alypius followed in my steps. Even when he was present, I was not less alone—and how could he desert me when I was reduced to such a state? We sat down as far as we could from the house. Suffering from a most fearful wound, I quaked in spirit, angered by a most turbulent anger, because I did not enter into your will and into a covenant with you,<sup>3</sup> my God. For all my bones cried out<sup>4</sup> to me to enter into that covenant, and by their praises they lifted me up to the skies. Not by ships, or in chariots, or on foot do we enter therein; we need not go even so far as I had gone from the house to the place where we were sitting. For not only to go, but even to go in

\*  
not yet  
fear of  
healing

\*  
certainly  
w/o faith

zeal for wisdom. Yet still I delayed to despise earthly happiness, and thus devote myself to that search. For the bare search for wisdom, even when it is not actually found,<sup>2</sup> was preferable to finding treasures and earthly kingdoms and to bodily pleasures swirling about me at my beck. But I, a most wretched youth, most wretched from the very start of my youth, had even sought chastity from you, and had said, "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet!" For I feared that you would hear me quickly, and that quickly you would heal me of that disease of lust, which I wished to have satisfied rather than extinguished. I had wandered along crooked ways<sup>3</sup> in a sacrilegious superstition, not indeed because I was certain of it, but as though I preferred it to other teachings which I did not seek with piety but opposed with hatred.

(18) I thought that the reason I deferred from day to day to reject worldly hopes and to follow you alone was because there seemed nothing certain by which I could direct my course. But the day had come when I stood stripped naked before myself, and my conscience upbraided me. "Where is my tongue? You said, forsooth, that you would not cast off your burden of vanity for the sake of an uncertain truth. See, now it is certain, and yet that burden still weighs you down, while men who neither wore themselves out in search of truth, nor meditated for ten years and more on such things, win wings for their readier shoulders." p. 396

Thus was I gnawed within myself, and I was overwhelmed with shame and horror, while Ponticianus spoke of such things. When he had brought an end to his story, and to the business for which he had come, he departed and I went into myself. What was there that I did not say against myself? With what scourges of self-condemnation did I not lash my soul, so that it would follow me as I strove to follow after you? Yet it drew back; it refused to go on, and it offered no excuses for itself. All arguments were used up, and all had been refuted. There remained only speechless dread and my soul was fearful, as if of death itself, of being kept back from that flow of habit by which it was wasting away unto death.

Platonic, but not so

KIERKEGAARD -  
"Sickness Unto Death"

garden

desert  
ascend

alone  
together



\* thither was naught else but the will to go, to will firmly and finally, and not to turn and toss, now here, now there, a struggling, half-maimed will, with one part rising upwards and another falling down.

(20) Finally, in the shifting tides of my indecision, I made many bodily movements, such as men sometimes will to make but cannot, whether because they lack certain members or because those members are bound with chains, weakened by illness, or hindered in one way or another. If I tore my hair, and beat my forehead, if I locked my fingers together and clasped my knees, I did so because I willed it. But I could have willed this and yet not done it, if the motive power of my limbs had not made its response. Therefore I did many things in which to will was not the same as the ability to act. Yet I did not do that which I wanted to do with an incomparably greater desire, and could have done as soon as I willed to act, for immediately, when I made that act of will, I would have willed with efficacy. In such an act the power to act and the will itself are the same, and the very act of willing is actually to do the deed. Yet it was not done: it was easier for the body to obey the soul's most feeble command, so that its members were moved at pleasure, than for the soul to obey itself and to accomplish its own high will wholly within the will.

## CHAPTER 9

## The Two Wills

(21) Whence comes this monstrous state? Why should it be? Let your mercy shine forth, and let me inquire, if perchance man's hidden penalties and the darkest sufferings of the sons of Adam may be able to give me an answer. Whence comes this monstrous state? Why should it be? Mind commands body, and it obeys forthwith. Mind gives orders to itself, and it is resisted. Mind gives orders for the hand to move, and so easy is it that command can scarce be distinguished from execution. Yet mind is mind, while hand is body. Mind commands mind to will: there is no difference here, but it does not do so. Whence comes this monstrous state? Why should

be? I say that it commands itself to will a thing: it would not give this command unless it willed it, and yet it does not do what it wills.

It does not will it in its entirety: for this reason it does not give this command in its entirety. For it commands a thing only in so far as it wills it, and in so far as what it commands is not done, to that extent it does not will it. For the will commands that there be a will, and that this be itself, and not something else. But the complete will does not give the command, and therefore what it commands is not in being. For if it were a complete will, it would not command it to be, since the thing would already be in being. Therefore, it is no monstrous thing partly to will a thing and partly not to will it, but it is a sickness in the mind. Although it is supported by truth, it does not wholly rise up, since it is heavily encumbered by habit. Therefore there are two wills, since one of them is not complete, and what is lacking in one of them is present in the other.

## CHAPTER 10

## Man's Single Nature

(22) Let them perish from before your face,<sup>1</sup> O God, even as vain talkers and seducers<sup>2</sup> of men's minds perish who detect in the act of deliberation two wills at work, and then assert that in us there are two natures of two minds, one good, the other evil.<sup>3</sup> They themselves are truly evil, when they think such evil things. They will become good, if they come to know true doctrines and assent to the truth, so that your apostle may say to them, "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord."<sup>4</sup> But they wish to be light, not in the Lord, but in themselves, and they think the soul's nature to be that which God is. Thus they are made into a deeper darkness, for in horrid pride they have turned back farther from you, from you who are "the true light which enlightens every man that comes into this world."<sup>5</sup> Take heed of what you say, and blush for shame, but "come to him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded."<sup>6</sup>

As for me, when I deliberated upon serving the Lord my



at war w/self  
 God, as I had long planned to do, it was I myself who willed it and I myself who did not will it. It was I myself. I neither willed it completely, nor did I refrain completely from willing it. Therefore, I was at war within myself, and I was laid waste by myself. This devastation was made against my will indeed, and yet it revealed not the nature of a different mind within me, but rather the punishment of my own nature. Therefore, it is no more I that did it, but sin that dwells in me, sin that issues from punishment of a more voluntary sin, for I was Adam's son.<sup>2</sup>

many conflicting wills w/in men  
 (23) If there are as many contrary natures as there are conflicting wills, there will now be not only two natures but many of them. If a man deliberates whether he should go to the Manicheans' meeting place or to the theater, they cry out: "See, there are two natures: the good one draws him this way, while the evil one leads him back there! For whence else is this hesitation between the opposing wills?" I answer that both of them are evil, both that which draws him to them and that which draws him back to the theater. But they do not believe a will that leads to them to be anything but good. What results? If one of us debates with himself and wavers between two contending wills—whether he should go to the theater or to our church—must not those men likewise waver as to their answer? Either they will admit what they do not want to, viz., that he goes to our church out of a good will, as those who receive its sacraments and are obligated by them enter into it, or else they will suppose that two evil natures and two evil minds conflict within one man. But then what they are accustomed to say, that one nature is good and the other evil, will not be true. Or else they will be converted to the truth, and they will not deny that when a man deliberates, a single soul wavers between different wills.

(24) Therefore, when they perceive two conflicting wills within one man, let them no longer say that two contrary minds, deriving from two contrary substances and from two contrary principles, contend together, one good, the other evil. For you, the God of truth, condemn them, and contradict and refute them, as in cases where both wills are bad. For instance, a man deliberates whether he should murder another by poi-

son or with a sword; whether he should seize this or that part of another man's land, when he cannot take both; whether he should purchase pleasure out of lust or save his money out of avarice; whether he should go to the circus or to the theater, if both are showing on the same day. To this last I add a third choice, whether he should rob another man's house, if diverse he has the chance. And I add a fourth, whether he should bad commit adultery, if an opportunity opens up at the same time. wills Let us suppose that all these occur together at exactly the same time, and that all are equally desired but cannot be carried out simultaneously. They rend asunder the mind, with these four wills opposing one another, or even with many more, in accordance with the great range of things that are desired. Yet the Manicheans are not accustomed to assert that there is such a great multitude of diverse substances.

So also with regard to wills that are good. I ask of them diverse whether it is good to find delight in reading the apostle, good whether it is good to take delight out of a sober psalm, wills whether it is good to discourse on the Gospel? To each of these questions they will answer, "It is good." What now? If, therefore, all these offer delight at one and the same time, do not diverse wills perplex a man's heart while it deliberates which thing we would seize upon before all others? All of them are good, but all strive with one another, until one is chosen, and there is fixed upon it a single complete will, whereas it had been divided into many wills. So also, when eternity above delights us and the pleasure found in a temporal good holds us fast from below, it is the same soul that wills this course or that, but not with its whole will. Therefore, it is rent asunder by grievous hurt as long as it prefers the first because of its truth but does not put away the other because of habit.

## CHAPTER 11

## The Voice of Continence

(25) Thus I was sick and tormented, and I upbraided myself much more bitterly than ever before.<sup>1</sup> I twisted and turned in my chain, until it might be completely broken, although now I was scarcely held by it, but still held by it I was. Within

(by God)



the hidden depths of my soul, O Lord, you urged me on. By an austere mercy you redoubled the scourges<sup>2</sup> of fear and shame, lest I should give in again, and lest that thin little remaining strand should not be broken through but should grow strong again and bind me yet more firmly.

Within myself I said: "Behold, let it be done now, now let it be done," and by those words I was already moving on to a decision. By then I had almost made it, and yet I did not make it. Still, I did not slip back into my former ways, but close by I stood my ground and regained my breath. Again I tried, and I was but a little away from my goal, just a little away from it, and I all but reached it and laid hold of it. Yet I was not quite there, and I did not reach it, and I did not catch hold of it. I still hesitated to die to death and to live to life, for the ingrown worse had more power over me than the untried better. The nearer came that moment in time when I was to become something different, the greater terror did it strike into me. Yet it did not strike me back, nor did it turn me away, but it held me in suspense.

(26) My lovers of old, trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities,<sup>3</sup> held me back. They plucked at my fleshly garment, and they whispered softly: "Do you cast us off?" and "From that moment we shall no more be with you forever and ever!" and again, "From that moment no longer will this thing and that be allowed to you, forever and ever!" What did they suggest by what I have called "this thing and that," what, O my God, did they suggest? May your mercy turn away all that from your servant's soul! What filth did they suggest! What deeds of shame! But now by far less than half did I hear them. For now it was not as if they were openly contradicting me, face to face, but as if they were muttering behind my back, and as if they were furtively picking at me as I left them, to make me look back again. Yet they did delay me, for I hesitated to tear myself away, and shake myself free of them, and leap over to that place where I was called to be. For an overpowering habit kept saying to me, "Do you think that you can live without them?"

(27) But now it asked this in a very feeble voice. For from that way in which I had set my face and where I trembled to

slight hesitation

del. lovers

\* delay

Lot's wife

\* habit

there appeared to me the chaste dignity of continence, serene and joyous, but in no wanton fashion, virtuously alluring, so that I would come to her and hesitate no longer. To lift me up and embrace me, she stretched forth her holy hands, filled with varied kinds of good examples. Many were the boys and girls, there too a host of youths, men and women of every age, grave widows and aged virgins, and in all these continence herself was in no wise barren but a fruitful mother<sup>4</sup> of children, of joys born of you, O Lord, her spouse.

She smiled upon me with an enheartening mockery, as if to say: "Cannot you do what these youths and these maidens do? Or can these youths and these maidens do this of themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me to them. Why do you stand on yourself, and thus stand not at all? Cast yourself on him. Have no fear. He will not draw back and let you fall. Cast yourself trustfully on him: he will receive you and he will heal you." I felt great shame for I still heard the murmurings of those trifles, and still I delayed and hung there in suspense. Again she smiled, as if to say: "Turn deaf ears to those unclean members of yours upon the earth, so that they may be mortified. They tell you of delights, but not as does the law of the Lord your God."<sup>5</sup> This debate within my heart was solely of myself against myself. But Alypius, standing close by my side, silently awaited the outcome of my strange emotion.

extreme care

continence is God's gift

CHAPTER 12

The Voice as of a Child

(28) But when deep reflection had dredged out of the secret recesses of my soul all my misery and heaped it up in full view of my heart, there arose a mighty storm, bringing with it a mighty downpour of tears. That I might pour it all forth with its own proper sounds, I arose from Alypius's side—to be alone seemed more proper to this ordeal of weeping—and went farther apart, so that not even his presence would be a hindrance to me. Such was I at that moment, and he sensed it, for I suppose that I had said something in which the sound of my voice already appeared to be choked with weeping. So I had

weeping

alone



arisen, while he, in deep wonder, remained there where we were sitting. I flung myself down, how I do not know, under a certain fig tree, and gave free rein to my tears.<sup>1</sup> The flood burst from my eyes, an acceptable sacrifice to you.<sup>2</sup> Not indeed in these very words but to this effect I spoke many things to you: "And you, O Lord, how long?<sup>3</sup> How long, O Lord, will you be angry forever?<sup>4</sup> Remember not our past iniquities."<sup>5</sup> For I felt that I was held by them, and I gasped forth these mournful words, "How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not in this very hour an end to my uncleanness?"

(29) Such words I spoke, and with most bitter contrition I wept within my heart. And lo, I heard 'em a nearby house, a voice like that of a boy or a girl, I know not which, chanting and repeating over and over, "Take up and read. Take up and read." Instantly, with altered countenance, I began to think most intently whether children made use of any such chant in some kind of game, but I could not recall hearing it anywhere. I checked the flow of my tears and got up, for I interpreted this solely as a command given to me by God to open the book and read the first chapter I should come upon. For I had heard how Anthony had been admonished by a reading from the Gospel at which he chanced to be present, as if the words read were addressed to him: "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me,"<sup>6</sup> and that by such a portent he was immediately converted to you.

So I hurried back to the spot where Alypius was sitting, for I had put there the volume of the apostle when I got up and left him. I snatched it up, opened it, and read in silence the chapter on which my eyes first fell. Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in strife and envying; but put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.<sup>7</sup> No further wished I to read, nor was there need to do so. Instantly, in truth, at the end of this sentence, as if before a peaceful light streaming into my heart, all the dark shadows of doubt fled away.

(30) Then, having inserted my finger, or with some other

mark, I closed the book, and, with a countenance now calm, I told it all to Alypius. What had taken place in him, which I did not know about, he then made known to me. He asked to see what I had read: I showed it to him, and he looked also at what came after what I had read for I did not know what followed. It was this that followed: "Now him that is weak in the faith take unto you,"<sup>8</sup> which he applied to himself and disclosed to me. By this admonition he was strengthened, and by a good resolution and purpose, which were entirely in keeping with his character, wherein both for a long time and for the better he had greatly differed from me, he joined me without any painful hesitation.

Thereupon we went in to my mother; we told her the story, and she rejoiced. We related just how it happened. She was filled with exultation and triumph, and she blessed you, "who are able to do above that which we ask or think."<sup>10</sup> She saw that through me you had given her far more than she had long begged for by her piteous tears and groans. For you had converted me to yourself, so that I would seek neither wife nor ambition in this world, for I would stand on that rule of faith where, so many years before, you had showed me to her.<sup>11</sup> You turned her mourning into a joy<sup>12</sup> far richer than that she had desired, far dearer and purer than that she had sought in grandchildren born of my flesh.<sup>13</sup>