
SAINT AUGUSTINE

THE CONFESSIONS

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

This edition of the works of St. Augustine combines the efforts of *Città Nuova Editrice* in their editing and publication of the Latin texts of St. Augustine, and *New City Press* in their project *The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century*.

Latin Text of St. Augustine

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Notes by the Author of the English Translation

The Latin text principally used is that of Lucas Verheijen, O.S.A., in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, Volume XXVII (Turnhout, 1990), with an occasional departure where the text established by Professor J.J. O'Donnell clarifies matters, particularly with regard to punctuation.

The earliest manuscripts recognized only a division into thirteen books. Separate chapters within these were marked in printed editions from the late fifteenth century; and paragraphs were numbered within the chapters by the Maurist edition of 1679. In the present translation all three sets of numbers are shown.

The title to each book, and the subheads within the text, have been added by the translator, and to these subheads the list of contents corresponds.

The magisterial work of Professor J.J. O'Donnell, Augustine, *Confessions*, Volume I, *Introduction and Text*; Volume II, *Commentary on Books 1-7*; Volume III, *Commentary on Books 8-13* (Oxford, 1992), will transform the task of translation for generations to come. The debt of the present translator to this work will be evident on every page.

DEDICATED WITH LOVE TO
OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL

Contents

REVISIONS II

Chapter 6 (32): Thirteen Books of <i>The Confessions</i>	1
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BOOK 1 – INFANCY AND BOYHOOD

Opening prayer and meditation	3
Infancy.....	7
Learning to speak.....	11
Augustine goes to school.....	12
His baptism is deferred.....	14
Latin and Greek studies.....	16
Childish sins.....	23
Thanksgiving.....	24

BOOK 2 – ADOLESCENCE

Sexual awakening.....	27
A year at home	29
Adolescent lust.....	30
He robs a pear tree.....	32
Question of motives.....	33
The prodigal's wanderings begin.....	38

BOOK 3 – STUDENT YEARS AT CARTHAGE

Student life: sex and shows.....	41
The “wreckers”	44
The quest for wisdom: Cicero's <i>Hortensius</i>	45
Distaste for Scripture	46
He joins the Manichees	47
Monica, grieved, is consoled by a vision	55
“A son of tears”	57

BOOK 4 – AUGUSTINE THE MANICHEE

Augustine sells rhetorical skills.....	59
He begins to cohabit with an unnamed girl	60
He investigates astrology.....	61
Death of a friend at Thagaste	63
Consolation in other friends at Carthage.....	67
Transience of created things.....	69
What is beauty? He writes a book.....	73
He reads Aristotle's <i>Categories</i>	77

BOOK 5 – FAUSTUS AT CARTHAGE, AUGUSTINE TO ROME AND MILAN

Prologue	81
Augustine hopes to question Faustus	83
Valid observations of the natural world by “philosophers”	83
Manichean assertions about natural phenomena are astray.....	86
Augustine is disappointed in Faustus	87
Indiscipline among his students prompts move to Rome.....	90

Monica's opposition; Augustine departs by stealth	92
Illness in Rome; Manichean contacts	93
Appeal of Academic skepticism	95
Augustine teaches in Rome	98
He wins a teaching post in Milan; he arrives in Milan and meets Ambrose	99
 BOOK 6 – MILAN, 385: PROGRESS, FRIENDS, PERPLEXITIES	
A slow progress towards the Catholic faith	103
Bishop Ambrose	106
Augustine finds some enlightenment	108
Hollowness of his secular ambitions; the drunken beggar	111
Alypius	113
Nebridius	119
Perplexities and plans: philosophy and the problem of continence	119
Projected marriage	123
Dream of an ideal community	124
Dismissal of Augustine's common-law wife; his grief	125
 BOOK 7 – NEO-PLATONISM FREES AUGUSTINE'S MIND	
Materialistic notions of God insufficient	127
The problem of evil	130
He finally rejects astrology	133
Still searching	136
He reads "the books of the Platonists"	138
He attempts Platonic ecstasy, but is "beaten back"	141
New light on the problem of evil	142
Fresh attempt at mounting to God; he attains That Which Is	146
He realizes the need for Christ the Mediator	147
Christ the Way	149
Augustine discovers Saint Paul	150
 BOOK 8 – CONVERSION	
Conversation with Simplicianus	153
Story of Victorinus' conversion	155
Augustine longs to imitate him, but is hindered by lustful habit	161
Conversation with Ponticianus	163
Story of conversion of two court officials at Trier	164
Struggle in the garden	168
"Pick it up and read"	175
Conversion of Augustine and Alypius; Monica's joy	176
 BOOK 9 – DEATH AND REBIRTH	
Retirement in Cassiciacum	179
Augustine decides to renounce his career	180
To Cassiciacum with his mother, son, and friends	184
He lives with the psalms	185
They return to Milan and are baptized	189
Use of hymns in liturgy	190
Discovery of the bodies of two saints	191
Monica's story	192
Ostia	197
Monica's death	200

Augustine's grief.....	201
Peace	206
 BOOK 10 – MEMORY	
Motives for confession.....	207
Looking for God in creatures.....	212
Looking for God in himself: the fields of memory.....	215
Universal desire for happiness	227
In memory he knows God	231
“Give what you command”	234
Concupiscence of the flesh: sense of touch	234
Taste.....	236
Smell	239
Hearing.....	240
Sight.....	241
Concupiscence of the eyes	244
The third great temptation: pride	246
Summary of all his discoveries.....	251
The Mediator, priest and victim.....	252
 BOOK 11 – TIME AND ETERNITY	
Augustine prays for understanding of the Scriptures.....	257
In the Beginning God made heaven and earth.....	260
God creates in his Word	262
This Word is eternal.....	264
The eternal Word is the Beginning.....	264
“What was God doing before that?” Meaningless question.....	266
Time, a creature of God—what is it?	269
Movements of the heavenly bodies are not time itself, but only markers of it	276
Perhaps time is tension of our consciousness	279
Our time and God's eternity	283
 BOOK 12 – HEAVEN AND EARTH	
Heaven's heaven is the spiritual creation	287
Formless matter, the abyss.....	288
There was no time there	292
Summary of foregoing remarks on spiritual and material creation	295
Disagreements about the spiritual and material creation	296
Augustine's response to those who disagree	300
The author's intention must be sought, in charity	302
“If I had been Moses”	310
How fruitful are these verses of Genesis!	311
Conclusion: the one Truth, many human approaches	315
 BOOK 13 – THE DAYS OF CREATION, PROPHECY OF THE CHURCH	
Why did God create?	319
Not for any deserving on the creature's side	321
God's Spirit, Third Person of the Trinity	323
Allegorical interpretation of Gen 1. Day One: Light	328
Day Two: The vault of Scripture	331
Day Three: Bitter sea, dry land, fruitfulness.....	334
Day Four: Lamps of wisdom and knowledge.....	335

Day Five: Sea creatures represent signs and sacraments 338

Day Six: Animals, the living soul 340

Humanity in God’s image and likeness..... 343

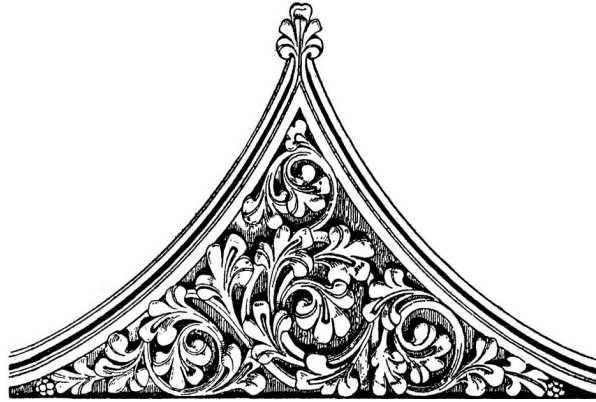
Increase and multiply..... 346

God assigns them their food 348

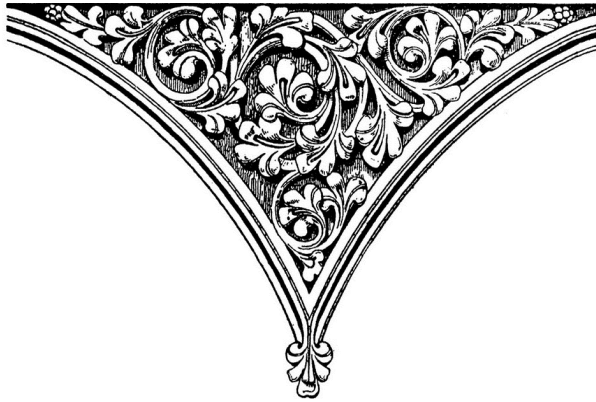
God saw that it was exceedingly good (against the Manichees) 352

Summary of literal exegesis; man and woman 355

Summary of allegorical exegesis..... 356



THE CONFESSIONS



REVISIONS II

Chapter 6 (32): Thirteen Books of The Confessions

1. *Confessionum* mearum libri tredecim, et de malis et de bonis meis Deum laudant iustum et bonum, atque in eum excitant humanum intellectum et affectum. Interim quod ad me attinet, hoc in me egerunt cum scriberentur et agunt cum leguntur. Quid de illis alii sentiant, ipsi viderint; multis tamen fratribus eos multum placuisse et placere scio.

A primo usque ad decimum de me scripti sunt, in tribus ceteris de Scripturis Sanctis, ab eo quod scriptum est: *in principio fecit Deus caelum et terram*, usque *ad Sabbati requiem*.

2. In quarto libro, cum de amici morte animi mei miseriam confiterer, dicens quod anima nostra una quodammodo facta fuerat ex duabus: *et ideo*, inquam, *forte mori metuebam, ne totus ille moreretur, quem multum amaveram*. Quae mihi quasi declamatio levis quam gravis confessio videtur, quamvis utcumque temperata sit haec ineptia in eo quod additum est: *forte*.

Et in libro tertio decimo quod *dixi firmamentum factum inter spirituales aquas superiores et corporales inferiores*, non satis considerate dictum est; res autem in abdito est valde.

Hoc opus sic incipit: *magnus es, Domine*.

1. The thirteen books of my *Confessions* concern both my bad and my good actions, for which they praise our just and good God. In so doing they arouse the human mind and affections toward him. As far as I am concerned, they had this effect upon me in my writing of them, and still do when I read them now. What others think about them is for them to say; but I know that they have given pleasure in the past, and still do give pleasure, to many of my brethren.

The first ten books were written about myself; the last three about Holy Scripture, from the words: *in the beginning God created heaven and earth*¹ as far as *the Sabbath rest*.²

2. In the fourth book, after I confessed the misery of my soul on the death of a friend, saying that in some way our soul had been made one from two, I say: *and perhaps I was so afraid of death because I did not want the whole of him to die, whom I had loved so dearly*.³ This seems to me, as it were, a trifling pronouncement rather than a serious confession, although this absurdity may be moderated to some extent by the word *perhaps* which I added.

And what I said in the thirteenth book: *the barrier was made between the spiritual waters on high and the lower waters*,⁴ was said without sufficient deliberation. The subject, however, is exceedingly obscure.

This work begins as follows: *great are you, O Lord*.

1. Gen 1, 1.

2. See Gen 2, 2.

3. See *Confessions* IV, 6, 11.

4. Ibid. XIII, 32, 47.

BOOK 1

INFANCY AND BOYHOOD

Opening prayer and meditation

Chapter 1

1. *Magnus es, Domine, et laudabilis valde: magna virtus tua et sapientiae tuae non est numerus.* Et laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccati sui et testimonium, quia *superbis resistis*; et tamen laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae. Tu excitas, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.

Da mihi, Domine, scire et intellegere, utrum sit prius invocare te an laudare te et scire te prius sit an invocare te. Sed quis te invocat nesciens te? Aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens.

An potius invocaris, ut sciaris? *Quomodo autem invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? Aut quomodo credunt sine praedicante? Et laudabunt Dominum qui requirunt eum.* Quaerentes enim inveniunt eum et invenientes laudabunt eum.

Quaeram te, Domine, invocans te et invocem te credens in te; praedicatus enim es nobis. Invocat te, Domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem Filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui.

1. *Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise;*¹ *your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning.*² And so we humans, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you—we who carry our mortality about with us,³ carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that *you thwart the proud.*⁴ Yet these humans, due part of your creation as they are, still do long to praise you. You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.

Grant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first: to call upon you or to praise you? To know you or to call upon you? Must we know you before we can call upon you? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake.

Or should you be invoked first, so that we may then come to know you? But *how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?*⁵ But Scripture tells us that *those who seek the Lord will praise him,*⁶ for as they seek they find him,⁷ and on finding him they will praise him.

Let me seek you, then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher.

1. See Ps 47:2(48:1); 95(96):4; 144(145):3.

2. See Ps 146(147):5.

3. See 2 Cor 4:10.

4. See 1 Pet 5:5.

5. See Rom 10:14.

6. See Ps 21:27(22:26).

7. See Matt 7:7–8; Luke 11:10.

Chapter 2

2. Et quomodo invocabo Deum meum, Deum et Dominum meum, quoniam utique in me ipsum eum vocabo, cum invocabo eum? Et quis locus est in me, quo veniat in me Deus meus? Quo Deus veniat in me, *Deus*, qui *fecit caelum et terram*? Itane, Domine Deus meus, est quidquam in me, quod capiat te? An vero caelum et terra, quae fecisti et in quibus me fecisti, capiunt te? An quia sine te non esset quidquid est, fit, ut quidquid est capiat te? Quoniam itaque et ego sum, quid peto, ut venias in me, qui non essem, nisi esses in me? Non enim ego iam inferi, et tamen etiam ibi es. Nam *etsi descendero in infernum, ades*. Non ergo essem, Deus meus, non omnino essem, nisi esses in me.

An potius non essem, nisi essem in te, *ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia*? Etiam sic, Domine, etiam sic. Quo te invoco, cum in te sim? Aut unde venias in me? Quo enim recedam extra caelum et terram, ut inde in me veniat Deus meus, qui dixit: *caelum et terram ego impleo*?

2. How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into myself?⁸ Is there any place within me into which my God might come? How should the *God* who *made heaven and earth*⁹ come into me? Is there any room in me for you, Lord, my God? Even heaven and earth, which you have made and in which you have made me—can even they contain you? Since nothing that exists would exist without you, does it follow that whatever exists does in some way contain you? But if this is so, how can I, who am one of these existing things, ask you to come into me, when I would not exist at all unless you were already in me? Not yet am I in hell, after all, but even if I were, you would be there too; for *if I descend to the underworld, you are there*.¹⁰ No, my God, I would not exist, I would not be at all, were you not in me.

Or should I say, rather, that I should not exist if I were not in you, *from whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things*?¹¹ Yes, Lord, that is the truth, that is indeed the truth. To what place can I invite you, then, since I am in you? Or where could you come from, in order to come into me? To what place outside heaven and earth could I travel, so that my God could come to me there, the God who said, *I fill heaven and earth*?¹²

Chapter 3

3. Capiunt ergone te caelum et terra, quoniam tu imples ea? An imples et restat, quoniam non te capiunt? Et quo refundis quidquid impleto caelo et terra restat ex te? An non opus habes, ut quoquam continearis, qui contines omnia, quoniam quae imples continendo imples?

Non enim vasa, quae te plena sunt, stabilem te faciunt, quia etsi frangantur non effunderis. Et cum effunderis super nos, non tu iaces, sed erigis nos, nec

3. So then, if you fill heaven and earth, does that mean that heaven and earth contain you? Or, since clearly they cannot hold you, is there something of you left over when you have filled them? Once heaven and earth are full, where would that remaining part of you overflow? Or perhaps you have no need to be contained by anything, but rather contain everything yourself, because whatever you fill you contain, even as you fill it?

The vessels which are full of you do not lend you stability, because even if they break you will not be spilt. And when you pour yourself out over us,¹³ you do not lie there

8. The point is more forceful in Latin: *invocare*, “to call upon,” is literally “to call into.”

9. See Gen 1:1.

10. See Ps 138(139):8.

11. See Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6.

12. Jer 23:24.

13. See Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18.

tu dissiparis, sed conligis nos. Sed quae implem omnia, te toto implem omnia.

An quia non possunt te totum capere omnia, partem tui capiunt et eandem partem simul omnia capiunt? An singulas singula et maiores maiora, minores minora capiunt? Ergo est aliqua pars tua maior, aliqua minor? An ubique totus es et res nulla te totum capit?

spilt but raise us up; you are not scattered, but gather us together.¹⁴ Yet all those things which you fill, you fill with the whole of yourself.

Should we suppose, then, that because all things are incapable of containing the whole of you, they hold only a part of you, and all of them the same part? Or does each thing hold a different part, greater things larger parts, and lesser things smaller parts? Does it even make sense to speak of larger or smaller parts of you? Are you not everywhere in your whole being, while there is nothing whatever that can hold you entirely?

Chapter 4

4. Quid es ergo Deus meus? Quid, rogo, nisi Dominus Deus? *Quis enim Dominus praeter Dominum? Aut quis Deus praeter Deum nostrum?* Summe, optime, potentissime, omnipotentissime, misericordissime et iustissime, secretissime et praesentissime, pulcherrime et fortissime, stabilis et incomprehensibilis, immutabilis, mutans omnia, numquam novus, numquam vetus, innovans omnia et *in vetustatem perducens superbos et nesciunt*; semper agens, semper quietus, colligens et non egens, portans et implens et protegens, creans et nutriendus et perficiens, quaerens, cum nihil desit tibi. Amas nec aestuas, zelas et securus es, paenitet te et non doles, irasceris et tranquillus es, opera mutas nec mutas consilium; recipis quod invenis et numquam amisisti; numquam inops et gaudes lucris, numquam avarus et usuras exis.

Supererogatur tibi, ut debeas, et quis habet quidquam non tuum? Reddis debita nulli debens, donas debita nihil perdens. Et quid diximus, Deus meus, vita mea, dulcedo mea sancta, aut quid dicit aliquis, cum de te dicit? Et vae tacentibus de te, quoniam loquaces muti sunt.

4. What are you, then, my God? What are you, I ask, but the Lord God? For *who else is lord except the Lord, or who is god if not our God?*¹⁵ You are most high, excellent, most powerful, omnipotent, supremely merciful and supremely just, most hidden yet intimately present, infinitely beautiful and infinitely strong, steadfast yet elusive, unchanging yourself though you control the change in all things, never new, never old, renewing all things¹⁶ yet *wearing down the proud though they know it not*;¹⁷ ever active, ever at rest, gathering while knowing no need, supporting and filling and guarding, creating and nurturing and perfecting, seeking although you lack nothing. You love without frenzy, you are jealous yet secure, you regret without sadness,¹⁸ you grow angry yet remain tranquil, you alter your works but never your plan; you take back what you find although you never lost it; you are never in need yet you rejoice in your gains, never avaricious yet you demand profits.¹⁹

You allow us to pay you more than you demand, and so you become our debtor, yet which of us possesses anything that does not already belong to you? You owe us nothing, yet you pay your debts; you write off our debts to you, yet you lose nothing thereby. After saying all that, what have we said, my God, my life, my holy sweetness? What does anyone who speaks of you really say? Yet woe betide those who fail to speak, while the chatterboxes go on saying nothing.²⁰

14. The immediate background here is probably the yearning of dispersed Israel for ingathering at the end-time, as expressed in many psalms; but there may also be echoes of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the return of the many to the One, and possibly of Manichean beliefs concerning the dispersal of the divine being into fragments.

15. See Ps 17:32 (18:31).

16. See Wis 7:27.

17. See Job 9:5.

18. See Gen 6:6–7.

19. See Matt 25:27.

20. Possibly an allusion to the Manichees, whose verbosity Augustine mentions in V, 7, 12.

Chapter 5

5. Quis mihi dabit adquiescere in te? Quis dabit mihi, ut venias in cor meum et inebries illud, ut obliviscar mala mea et unum bonum meum amplectar, te? Quid mihi es? Miserere, ut loquar. Quid tibi sum ipse, ut amari te iubeas a me et, nisi faciam, irascaris mihi et mineris ingentes miserias? Parvane ipsa est, si non amem te? Ei mihi! Dic mihi per miserationes tuas, Domine Deus meus, quid sis mihi. *Dic animae meae: salus tua ego sum.* Sic dic, ut audiam. Ecce aures cordis mei ante te, Domine; aperi eas et *dic animae meae: salus tua ego sum.* Curram post vocem hanc et apprehendam te. Noli abscondere a me faciem tuam; moriar, ne moriar, ut eam uideam.

6. Angusta est domus animae meae, quo venias ad eam: dilatetur abs te. Ruinosa est: refice eam. Habet quae offendant oculos tuos: fateor et scio. Sed quis mundabit eam? Aut cui alteri praeter te clamabo: *ab occultis meis munda me, Domine, et ab alienis parce servo tuo? Credo, propter quod et loquor.*

Domine, tu scis. Nonne tibi prolocutus sum *adversum me delicta mea*, Deus meus, et tu *dimisisti impietatem cordis mei*? Non iudicio contendo tecum, qui veritas es; et ego nolo fallere me ipsum, ne mentiatur iniquitas mea sibi. Non ergo iudicio contendo tecum, quia, *si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit?*

5. Who will grant me to find peace in you? Who will grant me this grace, that you would come into my heart and inebriate it, enabling me to forget the evils that beset me²¹ and embrace you, my only good? What are you to me? Have mercy on me, so that I may tell. What indeed am I to you, that you should command me to love you, and grow angry with me if I do not, and threaten me with enormous woes? Is not the failure to love you woe enough in itself? Alas for me! Through your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. *Say to my soul, I am your salvation.*²² Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and *say to my soul, I am your salvation.* Let me run toward this voice and seize hold of you. Do not hide your face from me:²³ let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.²⁴

6. The house of my soul is too small for you to enter: make it more spacious by your coming. It lies in ruins: rebuild it. Some things are to be found there which will offend your gaze; I confess this to be so and know it well. But who will clean my house? To whom but yourself can I cry, *cleanse me of my hidden sins, O Lord, and for those incurred through others pardon your servant?*²⁵ I believe, and so I will speak.²⁶

*You know everything, Lord.*²⁷ Have I not laid my own transgressions bare before you to my own condemnation, my God, and have you not forgiven the wickedness of my heart?²⁸ I do not argue my case against you,²⁹ for you are truth itself; nor do I wish to deceive myself, lest my iniquity be caught in its own lies.³⁰ No, I do not argue the case with you, because *if you, Lord, keep the score of our iniquities, then who, Lord, can bear it?*³¹

21. See Jer 44:9.

22. Ps 34(35):3.

23. See Deut 32:20.

24. See Exod 33:23.

25. Ps 18(19):13.

26. See Ps 115(116):10; 2 Cor 4:13.

27. See John 21:17.

28. See Ps 31(32):5.

29. See Job 9:2–3.

30. See Ps 26(27):12.

31. Ps 129(130):3.

Infancy

Chapter 6

7. Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me *terram et cinerem*, sine tamen loqui, quoniam ecce misericordia tua est, non homo, irrisor meus, cui loquor. Et tu fortasse irrides me, sed conversus misereberis mei. Quid enim est quod volo dicere, Domine, nisi quia nescio, unde venerim huc, in istam dico vitam mortalem an mortem vitalem? Nescio.

Et susceperunt me *consolationes miserationum tuarum*, sicut audiui a parentibus carnis meae, ex quo et in qua me formasti in tempore; non enim ego memini. Exceperunt ergo me *consolationes* lactis humani, nec mater mea vel nutrices meae sibi ubera implebant, sed tu mihi per eas dabas alimentum infantiae secundum institutionem tuam et divitias usque ad fundum rerum dispositas.

Tu etiam mihi dabas nolle amplius, quam dabas, et nutrientibus me dare mihi velle quod eis dabas; dare enim mihi per ordinatum affectum volebant quo abundabant ex te. Nam bonum erat eis bonum meum ex eis, quod ex eis non, sed per eas erat; ex te quippe bona omnia, Deus, et ex Deo meo salus mihi universa.

Quod animadverti postmodum clamante te mihi per haec ipsa, quae tribuis intus et foris. Nam tunc sugere noram et adquiescere delectationibus, flere autem offensiones carnis meae, nihil amplius.

8. Post et ridere coepi, dormiens primo, deinde vigilans. Hoc enim de me mihi indicatum est et credidi, quoniam sic videmus alios infantes; nam ista mea non memini.

7. Yet allow me to speak, though I am but *dust and ashes*,³² allow me to speak in your merciful presence, for it is to your mercy that I address myself, not to some man who would mock me. Perhaps you too are laughing at me,³³ but still you will turn mercifully toward me;³⁴ for what is it that I am trying to say, Lord, except that I do not know whence I came into this life that is but a dying, or rather, this dying state that leads to life? I do not know where I came from.³⁵

But this I know, that I was welcomed by *the tender care your mercy* provided for me, for so I have been told by the parents who gave me life according to the flesh, those parents through whose begetting and bearing you formed me within time, although I do not remember it myself. The *comforts* of human milk were waiting for me, but my mother and my nurses did not fill their own breasts; rather you gave me an infant's nourishment through them in accordance with your plan, from the riches deeply hidden in creation.

You restrained me from craving more than you provided, and inspired in those who nurtured me the will to give me what you were giving them, for their love for me was patterned on your law,³⁶ and so they wanted to pass on to me the overflowing gift they received from you. It was a bounty for them, and a bounty for me from them; or, rather, not from them but only through them, for in truth all good things are from you, O God. Everything I need for health and salvation flows from my God.

This I learned later as you cried the truth aloud to me through all you give me, both within and without. At that time I knew only how to suck and be deliciously comforted, and how to cry when anything hurt my body, but no more.

8. After this I began to smile, at first only in my sleep and then when I was awake.³⁷ So I have been told, and I believe it on the strength of what we see other babies doing, for I do not remember doing it myself.

32. See Gen 18:27; Job 42:6.

33. See Ps 2:4; 36(37):13; Wis 4:18. Augustine is markedly sensitive to the mockery. Elsewhere he speaks of his own mocking attitude in earlier days (for example, III, 10, 18; IV, 4, 8), and regards the mocking spirit that delights in the discomfiture of others as typical of gratuitous evil-doing; see III, 8, 16.

34. See Jer 12:15.

35. All his life Augustine remained agnostic about the origin of the human soul.

36. Human love derived from and conformable to divine love, a very Augustinian idea.

37. Possibly an allusion to Virgil, *Eclogues* IV, 60. It was common in ancient wisdom to think of man as the only animal that could laugh: *animal cachinnabile*.

Et ecce paulatim sentiebam, ubi essem, et voluntates meas volebam ostendere eis, per quos implerentur, et non poteram, quia illae intus erant, foris autem illi nec ullo suo sensu valebant introire in animam meam. Itaque iactabam membra et voces, signa similia voluntatibus meis, pauca quae poteram, qualia poteram: non enim erant veresimilia.

Et cum mihi non obtemperabatur vel non intellecto vel ne obsesset, indignabar non subditis maioribus et liberis non servientibus et me de illis flendo vindicabam.

Tales esse infantes didici, quos discere potui, et me talem fuisse magis mihi ipsi indicaverunt nescientes quam scientes nutritores mei.

9. Et ecce infantia mea olim mortua est et ego vivo. Tu autem, Domine, qui et semper vivis et nihil moritur in te, quoniam ante primordia saeculorum et ante omne, quod vel ante dici potest, tu es et Deus es Dominusque omnium, quae creasti, et apud te rerum omnium instabilium stant causae et rerum omnium mutabilium immutabiles manent origines et omnium irrationalium et temporalium sempiternae vivunt rationes, dic mihi supplici tuo, Deus, et miseriors misero tuo, dic mihi, utrum alicui iam aetati meae mortuae successerit infantia mea. An illa est, quam egi intra viscera matris meae? Nam et de illa mihi nonnihil indicatum est et praegnantem ipse vidi feminas. Quid ante hanc etiam, dulcedo mea, Deus meus? Fuine alicubi aut aliquis? Nam quis mihi dicat ista, non habeo; nec pater nec mater potuerunt nec aliorum experimentum nec memoria mea. An irrides me ista quaerentem teque de hoc, quod novi, laudari a me iubes et confiteri me tibi?

10. *Confiteor tibi, Domine caeli et terrae*, laudem dicens tibi de primordiis et infantia mea, quae non memini; et dedisti ea homini ex aliis de se conicere et auctoritatibus etiam muliercularum multa de se credere. Eram enim et vivebam etiam tunc et signa, quibus sensa mea nota aliis facerem, iam in fine infantiae quaerebam.

Little by little I began to notice where I was, and I would try to make my wishes known to those who might satisfy them; but I was frustrated in this, because my desires were inside me, while other people were outside and could by no effort of understanding enter my mind. So I tossed about and screamed, sending signals meant to indicate what I wanted, those few signs that were the best I could manage, though they did not really express my desires.

Often I did not get my way, either because people did not understand or because what I demanded might have harmed me, and then I would throw a tantrum because my elders were not subject to me, nor free people willing to be my slaves; so I would take revenge on them by bursting into tears.³⁸

I have learned that babies behave like this from those I have been able to watch, and they without knowing it have taught me more surely what I was like myself than did my nurses who knew me well.

9. My infancy has been so long dead now, whereas I am alive. But you, O Lord, are ever living and in you nothing dies, for you exist before the dawn of the ages, before anything that can be called “before”; you are God and Lord of everything that you have created. In you stand firm the causes of all unstable things; in you the unchangeable origins of all changeable things abide; in you live the eternal ideas of all irrational and transient creatures. Tell me, I beg you, tell your miserable suppliant, O merciful God, whether my infancy was itself the sequel to some earlier age, now dead and gone. Was there nothing before it, except the life I lived in my mother’s womb? Some information about that has been given me, and I have myself seen pregnant women. But then, my God, my sweetness, what came before that? Was I somewhere else? Was I even someone? I have nobody to tell me: neither father nor mother could enlighten me, nor the experience of others, nor any memory of my own. Are you laughing at me for asking you these questions,³⁹ and are you perhaps commanding me to praise you and confess to you simply about what I do know?

10. *Confess to you I will, Lord of heaven and earth*,⁴⁰ and praise you for my earliest days and my infancy, which I do not remember. You allow a person to infer by observing others what his own beginnings were like; we can learn much about ourselves even from the reports of women-folk. Already I had existence and life, and as my unspeaking stage drew to a close I began to look for signs whereby I might communicate my ideas to others.

38. Throughout these paragraphs Augustine is continually conscious of the literal meaning of *in-fans*, one who is unable to speak.

39. See Ps 2:4; 36(37):13; Wis 4:18.

40. See Matt 11:25.

Unde hoc tale animal nisi abs te, Domine? An quisquam se faciendi erit artifex? Aut ulla vena trahitur aliunde, qua esse et vivere currat in nos, praeterquam quod tu facis nos, Domine, cui esse et vivere non aliud atque aliud, quia summe esse ac summe vivere id ipsum est?

Summus enim es et non mutaris, neque peragitur in te hodiernus dies, et tamen in te peragitur, quia in te sunt et ista omnia; non enim haberent vias transeundi, nisi contineres ea. Et quoniam anni tui non deficiunt, anni tui hodiernus dies: et quam multam dies nostri et patrum nostrorum per hodiernum tuum transierunt et ex illo acceperunt modos et utcumque extiterunt, et transibunt adhuc alii et accipient et utcumque existent. *Tu autem idem ipse es et omnia crastina atque ultra omniaque hesterna et retro hodie facies, hodie fecisti.*

Quid ad me, si quis non intellegat? Gaudeat et ipse dicens: *Quid est hoc?* Gaudeat etiam sic et amet non inveniundo invenire potius quam inveniundo non invenire te.

Where could a living creature like this have come from, if not from you, Lord? Are any of us skillful enough to fashion ourselves? Could there be some channel hollowed out from some other source through which existence and life might flow to us, apart from yourself, Lord, who create us? Could we derive existence and life from anywhere other than you, in whom to be and to live are not two different realities, since supreme being and supreme life are one and the same?

You are supreme and you do not change,⁴¹ and in you there is no “today” that passes. Yet in you our “today” does pass, inasmuch as all things exist in you, and would have no means even of passing away if you did not contain them. Because your years do not fail,⁴² your years are one “Today.” How many of our days and our ancestors’ days have come and gone in this “Today” of yours, have received from it their manner of being and have existed after their fashion, and how many others will likewise receive theirs, and exist in their own way? *Yet you are the selfsame:* all our tomorrows and beyond, all our yesterdays and further back, you will make in your Today, you have made in your Today.

What does it matter to me, if someone does not understand this? Let such a person rejoice even to ask the question, *what does this mean?* Yes, let him rejoice in that, and choose to find by not finding rather than by finding fail to find you.

Chapter 7

II. Exaudi, Deus. Vae peccatis hominum! Et homo dicit haec, et misereris eius, quoniam tu fecisti eum et peccatum non fecisti in eo. Quis me commemorat peccatum infantiae meae, quoniam *nemo mundus* a peccato coram te, nec infans, cuius est *unius diei vita super terram*? Quis me commemorat? An quilibet tantillus nunc parvulus, in quo video quod non memini de me?

Quid ergo tunc peccabam? An quia uberibus inhiabam plorans? Nam si nunc faciam, non quidem uberibus, sed escae congruenti annis meis ita inhians, deridebor atque reprehendar iustissime. Tunc ergo reprehendenda faciebam, sed quia reprehendentem intellegere non poteram, nec mos reprehendi me nec

II. O God, hear me. Alas for the sins of humankind! A human it is who here bewails them, and you treat him mercifully because you made him, though the sin that is in him is not of your making. Who is there to remind me of the sin of my infancy (for sin there was: *no one is free* from sin in your sight, not even an infant whose *span of earthly life is but a single day*);⁴³ who can remind me of it? Some little mite who is a tiny child now, in whom I might observe conduct I do not remember in myself?

What then was my sin at that age? Was it perhaps that I cried so greedily for those breasts? Certainly if I behaved like that now, greedy not for breasts, of course, but for food suitable to my age, I should provoke derision and be very properly rebuked. My behavior then was equally deserving of rebuke, but since I would not have been able to under-

41. See Mal 3:6.

42. See Ps 101:28(102:27); Heb 1:12.

43. See Job 14:4–5.

ratio sinebat. Nam extirpamus et eicimus ista crescentes.

Nec vidi quemquam scientem, cum aliquid purgat, bona proicere. An pro tempore etiam illa bona erant, flendo petere etiam quod noxie daretur, indignari acriter non subiectis hominibus liberis et maioribus hisque, a quibus genitus est, multisque praeterea prudentioribus non ad nutum voluntatis obtemperantibus feriendo nocere niti quantum potest, quia non oboeditur imperiis, quibus perniciose oboeditur?

Ita imbecillitas membrorum infantilium innocens est, non animus infantium. Vidi ego et expertus sum zelantem parvulum; nondum loquebatur et intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu collactaneum suum. Quis hoc ignorat? Expiare se dicunt ista matres atque nutrices nescio quibus remediis.

Nisi vero et ista innocentia est, in fonte lactis ubertim manante atque abundante opis egentissimum et illo adhuc uno alimento vitam ducentem consortem non pati. Sed blande tolerantur haec, non quia nulla vel parva, sed quia aetatis accessu peritura sunt. Quod licet probes, cum ferri aeque animo eadem ipsa non possunt, quando in aliquo annosiore deprehenduntur.

12. Tu itaque, Domine Deus meus, qui dedisti vitam infanti et corpus, quod ita, ut videmus, instruxisti sensibus, compegisti membris, figura decorasti proque eius universitate atque incolumitate omnes conatus animantis insinuasti,

iubes me laudare te in istis et *confiteri tibi et psallere nomini tuo, Altissime*, quia Deus es omnipotens et bonus, etiamsi sola ista fecisses, quae nemo alius potest facere nisi tu, une, a quo est omnis modus, formosissime, qui formas omnia et lege tua ordinas omnia.

Hanc ergo aetatem, Domine, quam me vixisse non memini, de qua aliis credidi et quam me egisse ex

stand anyone who scolded me, neither custom nor common sense allowed any rebuke to be given. After all, we eradicate these habits and throw them off as we grow up.

Yes, but I have never seen any sensible person throw away good things when clearing out, so can we suppose that even in an infant such actions were good—the actions of a child who begs tearfully for objects that would harm him if given, gets into a tantrum when free persons, older persons and his parents, will not comply with his whims, and tries to hurt many people who know better by hitting out at them as hard as his strength allows, simply because they will not immediately fall in with his wishes or obey his commands, commands which would damage him if they were carried out?

The only innocent feature in babies is the weakness of their frames; the minds of infants are far from innocent. I have watched and experienced for myself the jealousy of a small child: he could not even speak, yet he glared with livid fury at his fellow-nursling. Everyone has seen this. Mothers and nurses claim to have some means of their own to charm away such behavior.⁴⁴

Is this to be regarded as innocence, this refusal to tolerate a rival for a richly abundant fountain of milk, at a time when the other child stands in greatest need of it and depends for its very life on this food alone? Behavior of this kind is cheerfully condoned, however, not because it is trivial or of small account, but because everyone knows that it will fade away as the baby grows up. This is clear from the fact that those same actions are by no means calmly tolerated if detected in anyone of more mature years.

12. Your will is that I should praise you, O Lord my God, who gave life and a body to that infant; you will me to praise you who equipped him with faculties, built up his limbs, and adorned him with a distinctive shape, as we can see. You implanted in him all the urges proper to a living creature to ensure his coherence and safety;

and now you command me to praise you for those gifts, and to *confess* to you and *sing to your name, O Most High*,⁴⁵ because you are God, almighty and good, and would be so even if you had wrought no other works than these, since none but yourself, the only God, can bring them into existence. From you derives all manner of being, O God most beautiful, who endow all things with their beautiful form and by your governance direct them in their due order.⁴⁶

But it irks me, Lord, to link that phase of my existence with my present life, the life I live now in this world; I do

44. Possibly a reference to some pagan custom, or perhaps only to the device of distracting the child's attention.

45. See Ps 91:2(92:1).

46. A *quo est omnis modus, formosissime, qui formas omnia et lege tua ordinas omnia*, an invocation of the Trinity. Triadic patterns occur frequently in Augustine, though the vocabulary varies. The allusion is sometimes directly to the