

Augustine of Hippo:

***The Confessions* (Book VII) (397-400 A.D.)**

He recalls the beginning of his youth, i.e. the thirty-first year of his age, in which very grave errors as to the nature of God and the origin of evil being distinguished, and the Sacred Books more accurately known, he at length arrives at a clear knowledge of God, not yet rightly apprehending Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1. He Regarded Not God Indeed Under the Form of a Human Body, But as a Corporeal Substance Diffused Through Space.

1. Dead now was that evil and abominable youth of mine, and I was passing into early manhood: as I increased in years, the fouler became I in vanity, who could not conceive of any substance but such as I saw with my own eyes. I thought not of You, O God, under the form of a human body. Since the time I began to hear something of wisdom, I always avoided this; and I rejoiced to have found the same in the faith of our spiritual mother, Your Catholic Church. But what else to imagine You I knew not. And I, a man, and such a man, sought to conceive of You, the sovereign and only true God; and I did in my inmost heart believe that You were incorruptible, and inviolable, and unchangeable; because, not knowing whence or how, yet most plainly did I see and feel sure that that which may be corrupted must be worse than that which cannot, and what cannot be violated did I without hesitation prefer before that which can, and deemed that which suffers no change to be better than that which is changeable. Violently did my heart cry out against all my phantasms, and with this one blow I endeavoured to beat away from the eye of my mind all that unclean crowd which fluttered around it. And lo, being scarce put off, they, in the twinkling of an eye, pressed in multitudes around me, dashed against my face, and beclouded it; so that, though I thought not of You under the form of a human body, yet was I constrained to image You to be something corporeal in space, either infused into the world, or infinitely diffused beyond it — even that incorruptible, inviolable, and unchangeable, which I preferred to the corruptible, and violable, and changeable; since whatsoever I conceived, deprived of this space, appeared as nothing to me, yea, altogether nothing, not even a void, as if a body were removed from its place and the place should remain empty of any body at all, whether earthy, terrestrial, watery, aerial, or celestial, but should remain a void place — a spacious nothing, as it were.

2. I therefore being thus gross-hearted, nor clear even to myself, whatsoever was not stretched over certain spaces, nor diffused, nor crowded together, nor swelled out, or which did not or could not receive some of these dimensions, I judged to be altogether nothing. For over such forms as my eyes are wont to range did my heart then range; nor did I see that this same observation, by which I formed those same images, was not of this kind, and yet it could not have formed them had not itself been something great. In like manner did I conceive of You, Life of my life, as vast through infinite spaces, on every side penetrating the whole mass of the world, and beyond it, all ways, through immeasurable and boundless spaces; so that the earth should have You, the heaven have You, all things have You, and they bounded in You, but Thou nowhere. For as the body of this air which is above the earth prevents not the light of the sun from passing through

it, penetrating it, not by bursting or by cutting, but by filling it entirely, so I imagined the body, not of heaven, air, and sea only, but of the earth also, to be pervious to You, and in all its greatest parts as well as smallest penetrable to receive Your presence, by a secret inspiration, both inwardly and outwardly governing all things which You have created. So I conjectured, because I was unable to think of anything else; for it was untrue. For in this way would a greater part of the earth contain a greater portion of You, and the less a lesser; and all things should so be full of You, as that the body of an elephant should contain more of You than that of a sparrow by how much larger it is, and occupies more room; and so should Thou make the portions of Yourself present unto the several portions of the world, in pieces, great to the great, little to the little. But You are not such a one; nor had Thou as yet enlightened my darkness.

Chapter 2. The Disputation of Nebridius Against the Manichæans, on the Question Whether God Be Corruptible or Incorruptible.

3. It was sufficient for me, O Lord, to oppose to those deceived deceivers and dumb praters (dumb, since Your word sounded not forth from them) that which a long while ago, while we were at Carthage, Nebridius used to propound, at which all we who heard it were disturbed: What could that reputed nation of darkness, which the Manichæans are in the habit of setting up as a mass opposed to You, have done unto You had Thou objected to fight with it? For had it been answered, 'It would have done You some injury,' then should Thou be subject to violence and corruption; but if the reply were: 'It could do You no injury,' then was no cause assigned for Your fighting with it; and so fighting as that a certain portion and member of You, or offspring of Your very substance, should be blended with adverse powers and natures not of Your creation, and be by them corrupted and deteriorated to such an extent as to be turned from happiness into misery, and need help whereby it might be delivered and purged; and that this offspring of Your substance was the soul, to which, being enslaved, contaminated, and corrupted, Your word, free, pure, and entire, might bring succour; but yet also the word itself being corruptible, because it was from one and the same substance. So that should they affirm You, whatsoever You are, that is, Your substance whereby You are, to be incorruptible, then were all these assertions false and execrable; but if corruptible, then that were false, and at the first utterance to be abhorred. This argument, then, was enough against those who wholly merited to be vomited forth from the surfeited stomach, since they had no means of escape without horrible sacrilege, both of heart and tongue, thinking and speaking such things of You.

Chapter 3. That the Cause of Evil is the Free Judgment of the Will.

4. But I also, as yet, although I said and was firmly persuaded, that Thou our Lord, the true God, who made not only our souls but our bodies, and not our souls and bodies alone, but all creatures and all things, were uncontaminable and inconvertible, and in no part mutable: yet understood I not readily and clearly what was the cause of evil. And yet, whatever it was, I perceived that it must be so sought out as not to constrain me by it to believe that the immutable God was mutable, lest I myself should become the thing that I was seeking out. I sought, therefore, for it free from care, certain of the untruthfulness of what these asserted, whom I shunned with my whole heart; for I perceived that through seeking after the origin of evil, they were filled with malice, in that they liked better to think that Your Substance did suffer evil than that their own did commit it.

5. And I directed my attention to discern what I now heard, that free will was the cause of our doing evil, and Your righteous judgment of our suffering it. But I was unable clearly to discern it. So, then, trying to draw the eye of my mind from that pit, I was plunged again therein, and trying often, was as often plunged back again. But this raised me towards Your light, that I knew as well that I had a will as that I had life: when, therefore, I was willing or unwilling to do anything, I was most certain that it was none but myself that was willing and unwilling; and immediately I perceived that there was the cause of my sin. But what I did against my will I saw that I suffered rather than did, and that judged I not to be my fault, but my punishment; whereby, believing You to be most just, I quickly confessed myself to be not unjustly punished. But again I said: Who made me? Was it not my God, who is not only good, but goodness itself? Whence came I then to will to do evil, and to be unwilling to do good, that there might be cause for my just punishment? Who was it that put this in me, and implanted in me the root of bitterness, seeing I was altogether made by my most sweet God? If the devil were the author, whence is that devil? And if he also, by his own perverse will, of a good angel became a devil, whence also was the evil will in him whereby he became a devil, seeing that the angel was made altogether good by that most Good Creator? By these reflections was I again cast down and stifled; yet not plunged into that hell of error (where no man confesses unto You), to think that You allow evil, rather than that man does it.

Chapter 4. That God is Not Corruptible, Who, If He Were, Would Not Be God at All.

6. For I was so struggling to find out the rest, as having already found that what was incorruptible must be better than the corruptible; and You, therefore, whatsoever You were, did I acknowledge to be incorruptible. For never yet was, nor will be, a soul able to conceive of anything better than You, who art the highest and best good. But whereas most truly and certainly that which is incorruptible is to be preferred to the corruptible (like as I myself did now prefer it), then, if Thou were not incorruptible, I could in my thoughts have reached unto something better than my God. Where, then, I saw that the incorruptible was to be preferred to the corruptible, there ought I to seek You, and there observe whence evil itself was, that is, whence comes the corruption by which Your substance can by no means be profaned. For corruption, truly, in no way injures our God — by no will, by no necessity, by no unforeseen chance — because He is God, and what He wills is good, and Himself is that good; but to be corrupted is not good. Nor are You compelled to do anything against Your will in that Your will is not greater than Your power. But greater should it be were You Yourself greater than Yourself; for the will and power of God is God Himself. And what can be unforeseen by You, who know all things? Nor is there any sort of nature but You know it. And what more should we say why that substance which God is should not be corruptible, seeing that if it were so it could not be God?

Chapter 5. Questions Concerning the Origin of Evil in Regard to God, Who, Since He is the Chief Good, Cannot Be the Cause of Evil.

7. And I sought whence is evil? And sought in an evil way; nor saw I the evil in my very search. And I set in order before the view of my spirit the whole creation, and whatever we can discern in it, such as earth, sea, air, stars, trees, living creatures; yea, and whatever in it we do not see, as the firmament of heaven, all

the angels, too, and all the spiritual inhabitants thereof. But these very beings, as though they were bodies, did my fancy dispose in such and such places, and I made one huge mass of all Your creatures, distinguished according to the kinds of bodies — some of them being real bodies, some what I myself had feigned for spirits. And this mass I made huge — not as it was, which I could not know, but as large as I thought well, yet every way finite. But You, O Lord, I imagined on every part environing and penetrating it, though every way infinite; as if there were a sea everywhere, and on every side through immensity nothing but an infinite sea; and it contained within itself some sponge, huge, though finite, so that the sponge would in all its parts be filled from the immeasurable sea. So conceived I Your Creation to be itself finite, and filled by You, the Infinite. And I said, Behold God, and behold what God has created; and God is good, yea, most mightily and incomparably better than all these; but yet He, who is good, has created them good, and behold how He encircles and fills them. Where, then, is evil, and whence, and how crept it in hither? What is its root, and what its seed? Or has it no being at all? Why, then, do we fear and shun that which has no being? Or if we fear it needlessly, then surely is that fear evil whereby the heart is unnecessarily pricked and tormented — and so much a greater evil, as we have naught to fear, and yet do fear. Therefore either that is evil which we fear, or the act of fearing is in itself evil. Whence, therefore, is it, seeing that God, who is good, has made all these things good? He, indeed, the greatest and chiefest Good, has created these lesser goods; but both Creator and created are all good. Whence is evil? Or was there some evil matter of which He made and formed and ordered it, but left something in it which He did not convert into good? But why was this? Was He powerless to change the whole lump, so that no evil should remain in it, seeing that He is omnipotent? Lastly, why would He make anything at all of it, and not rather by the same omnipotency cause it not to be at all? Or could it indeed exist contrary to His will? Or if it were from eternity, why did He permit it so to be for infinite spaces of times in the past, and was pleased so long after to make something out of it? Or if He wished now all of a sudden to do something, this rather should the Omnipotent have accomplished, that this evil matter should not be at all, and that He only should be the whole, true, chief, and infinite Good. Or if it were not good that He, who was good, should not also be the framer and creator of what was good, then that matter which was evil being removed, and brought to nothing, He might form good matter, whereof He might create all things. For He would not be omnipotent were He not able to create something good without being assisted by that matter which had not been created by Himself. Such like things did I revolve in my miserable breast, overwhelmed with most gnawing cares lest I should die ere I discovered the truth; yet was the faith of Your Christ, our Lord and Saviour, as held in the Catholic Church, fixed firmly in my heart, unformed, indeed, as yet upon many points, and diverging from doctrinal rules, but yet my mind did not utterly leave it, but every day rather drank in more and more of it.

Chapter 6. He Refutes the Divinations of the Astrologers, Deduced from the Constellations.

8. Now also had I repudiated the lying divinations and impious absurdities of the astrologers. Let Your mercies, out of the depth of my soul, confess unto you for this also, O my God. For Thou, Thou altogether — for who else is it that calls us back from the death of all errors, but that Life which knows not how to die, and the Wisdom which, requiring no light, enlightens the minds that do, whereby the universe is governed, even to the fluttering leaves of trees?— You provided also for my obstinacy wherewith I struggled with Vindicianus, an acute old man, and Nebridius, a young one of remarkable talent; the former vehemently declaring, and the latter frequently, though with a certain measure of doubt, saying, That no art existed by which to foresee future things, but that men's surmises had oftentimes the help of luck, and

that of many things which they foretold some came to pass unawares to the predictors, who lighted on it by their oft speaking. Thou, therefore, provided a friend for me, who was no negligent consulter of the astrologers, and yet not thoroughly skilled in those arts, but, as I said, a curious consulter with them; and yet knowing somewhat, which he said he had heard from his father, which, how far it would tend to overthrow the estimation of that art, he knew not. This man, then, by name Firminius, having received a liberal education, and being well versed in rhetoric, consulted me, as one very dear to him, as to what I thought on some affairs of his, wherein his worldly hopes had risen, viewed with regard to his so-called constellations; and I, who had now begun to lean in this particular towards Nebridius' opinion, did not indeed decline to speculate about the matter, and to tell him what came into my irresolute mind, but still added that I was now almost persuaded that these were but empty and ridiculous follies. Upon this he told me that his father had been very curious in such books, and that he had a friend who was as interested in them as he was himself, who, with combined study and consultation, fanned the flame of their affection for these toys, insomuch that they would observe the moment when the very dumb animals which bred in their houses brought forth, and then observed the position of the heavens with regard to them, so as to gather fresh proofs of this so-called art. He said, moreover, that his father had told him, that at the time his mother was about to give birth to him (Firminius), a female servant of that friend of his father's was also great with child, which could not be hidden from her master, who took care with most diligent exactness to know of the birth of his very dogs. And so it came to pass that (the one for his wife, and the other for his servant, with the most careful observation, calculating the days and hours, and the smaller divisions of the hours) both were delivered at the same moment, so that both were compelled to allow the very selfsame constellations, even to the minutest point, the one for his son, the other for his young slave. For so soon as the women began to be in travail, they each gave notice to the other of what was fallen out in their respective houses, and had messengers ready to dispatch to one another so soon as they had information of the actual birth, of which they had easily provided, each in his own province, to give instant intelligence. Thus, then, he said, the messengers of the respective parties met one another in such equal distances from either house, that neither of them could discern any difference either in the position of the stars or other most minute points. And yet Firminius, born in a high estate in his parents' house, ran his course through the prosperous paths of this world, was increased in wealth, and elevated to honours; whereas that slave — the yoke of his condition being unrelaxed — continued to serve his masters, as Firminius, who knew him, informed me.

9. Upon hearing and believing these things, related by so reliable a person, all that resistance of mine melted away; and first I endeavoured to reclaim Firminius himself from that curiosity, by telling him, that upon inspecting his constellations, I ought, were I to foretell truly, to have seen in them parents eminent among their neighbours, a noble family in its own city, good birth, becoming education, and liberal learning. But if that servant had consulted me upon the same constellations, since they were his also, I ought again to tell him, likewise truly, to see in them the meanness of his origin, the abjectness of his condition, and everything else altogether removed from and at variance with the former. Whence, then, looking upon the same constellations, I should, if I spoke the truth, speak diverse things, or if I spoke the same, speak falsely; thence assuredly was it to be gathered, that whatever, upon consideration of the constellations, was foretold truly, was not by art, but by chance; and whatever falsely, was not from the unskillfulness of the art, but the error of chance.

10. An opening being thus made, I ruminated within myself on such things, that no one of those dotards (who followed such occupations, and whom I longed to assail, and with derision to confute) might urge against me that Firminius had informed me falsely, or his father him: I turned my thoughts to those that are born twins, who generally come out of the womb so near one to another, that the small distance of time between them — how much force soever they may contend that it has in the nature of things — cannot be noted by human observation, or be expressed in those figures which the astrologer is to examine that he may pronounce the truth. Nor can they be true; for, looking into the same figures, he must have foretold the same of Esau and Jacob, whereas the same did not happen to them. He must therefore speak falsely; or if truly, then, looking into the same figures, he must not speak the same things. Not then by art, but by chance, would he speak truly. For Thou, O Lord, most righteous Ruler of the universe, the inquirers and inquired of knowing it not, work by a hidden inspiration that the consulter should hear what, according to the hidden deservings of souls, he ought to hear, out of the depth of Your righteous judgment, to whom let not man say, What is this? or Why that? Let him not say so, for he is man.

Chapter 7. He is Severely Exercised as to the Origin of Evil.

11. And now, O my Helper, had Thou freed me from those fetters; and I inquired, Whence is evil? and found no result. But You suffered me not to be carried away from the faith by any fluctuations of thought, whereby I believed You both to exist, and Your substance to be unchangeable, and that You had a care of and would judge men; and that in Christ, Your Son, our Lord, and the Holy Scriptures, which the authority of Your Catholic Church pressed upon me, You had planned the way of man's salvation to that life which is to come after this death. These things being safe and immoveably settled in my mind, I eagerly inquired, Whence is evil? What torments did my travailing heart then endure! What sighs, O my God! Yet even there were Your ears open, and I knew it not; and when in stillness I sought earnestly, those silent contritions of my soul were strong cries unto Your mercy. No man knows, but only Thou, what I endured. For what was that which was thence through my tongue poured into the ears of my most familiar friends? Did the whole tumult of my soul, for which neither time nor speech was sufficient, reach them? Yet went the whole into Your ears, all of which I bellowed out from the sightings of my heart; and my desire was before You, and the light of my eyes was not with me; for that was within, I without. Nor was that in place, but my attention was directed to things contained in place; but there did I find no resting-place, nor did they receive me in such a way as that I could say, It is sufficient, it is well; nor did they let me turn back, where it might be well enough with me. For to these things was I superior, but inferior to You; and You are my true joy when I am subjected to You, and You had subjected to me what You created beneath me. And this was the true temperature and middle region of my safety, to continue in Your image, and by serving You to have dominion over the body. But when I lifted myself proudly against You, and ran against the Lord, even on His neck, with the thick bosses of my buckler, Job 15:26 even these inferior things were placed above me, and pressed upon me, and nowhere was there alleviation or breathing space. They encountered my sight on every side in crowds and troops, and in thought the images of bodies obtruded themselves as I was returning to You, as if they would say unto me, Where are you going, unworthy and base one? And these things had sprung forth out of my wound; for you humble the proud like one that is wounded, and through my own swelling was I separated from You; yea, my too much swollen face closed up my eyes.

Chapter 8. By God's Assistance He by Degrees Arrives at the Truth.

12. But You, O Lord, shall endure for ever, yet not for ever are You angry with us, because You commiserate our dust and ashes; and it was pleasing in Your sight to reform my deformity, and by inward stings You disturbed me, that I should be dissatisfied until You were made sure to my inward sight. And by the secret hand of Your remedy was my swelling lessened, and the disordered and darkened eyesight of my mind, by the sharp anointings of healthful sorrows, was from day to day made whole.

Chapter 9. He Compares the Doctrine of the Platonists Concerning the Λόγος With the Much More Excellent Doctrine of Christianity.

13. And You, willing first to show me how You resist the proud, but give grace to the humble and by how great art act of mercy You had pointed out to men the path of humility, in that Your Word was made flesh and dwelt among men — You procured for me, by the instrumentality of one inflated with most monstrous pride, certain books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin. And therein I read, not indeed in the same words, but to the selfsame effect, enforced by many and various reasons, 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 was not anything made that was made. That which was made by Him is life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehends it not. John 1:1-5 And that the soul of man, though it bears witness of the light, yet itself is not that light; but the Word of God, being God, is that true light that lights every man that comes into the world. John 1:9 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 received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name. This I did not read there.

14. In like manner, I read there that God the Word was born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. But that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, I read not there. For I discovered in those books that it was in many and various ways said, that the Son was in the form of the Father, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, for that naturally He was the same substance. But that He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him from the dead, and given Him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; Philippians 2:6-11 those books have not. For that before all times, and above all times, Your only-begotten Son remains unchangeably co-eternal with You; and that of His fullness souls receive, John 1:16 that they may be blessed; and that by participation of the wisdom remaining in them they are renewed, that they may be wise, is there. But that in due time Christ died for the ungodly, Romans 5:6 and that You spared not Your only Son, but delivered Him up for us all, Romans 8:32 is not there. Because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; Matthew 11:25 that they that labour and are heavy laden might come unto Him and He might refresh them, because He is meek and lowly in heart. The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek

will He teach His way; looking upon our humility and our distress, and forgiving all our sins. But such as are puffed up with the elation of would-be sublimer learning, do not hear Him saying, Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:29 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Romans 1:21-22

15. And therefore also did I read there, that they had changed the glory of Your incorruptible nature into idols and various forms — into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, namely, into that Egyptian food for which Esau lost his birthright; Genesis 25:33-34 for that Your first-born people worshipped the head of a four-footed beast instead of You, turning back in heart towards Egypt, and prostrating Your image — their own soul— before the image of an ox that eats grass. These things found I there; but I fed not on them. For it pleased You, O Lord, to take away the reproach of diminution from Jacob, that the elder should serve the younger; Romans 9:12 and You have called the Gentiles into Your inheritance. And I had come unto You from among the Gentiles, and I strained after that gold which You willed Your people to take from Egypt, seeing that wheresoever it was it was Yours. And to the Athenians Thou said by Your apostle, that in You we live, and move, and have our being; as one of their own poets has said. Acts 17:28 And verily these books came from thence. But I set not my mind on the idols of Egypt, whom they ministered to with Your gold, Hosea 2:8 who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. Romans 1:25

Chapter 10. Divine Things are the More Clearly Manifested to Him Who Withdraws into the Recesses of His Heart.

16. And being thence warned to return to myself, I entered into my inward self, Thou leading me on; and I was able to do it, for You had become my helper. And I entered, and with the eye of my soul (such as it was) saw above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Unchangeable Light. Not this common light, which all flesh may look upon, nor, as it were, a greater one of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be much more resplendent, and with its greatness fill up all things. Not like this was that light, but different, yea, very different from all these. Nor was it above my mind as oil is above water, nor as heaven above earth; but above it was, because it made me, and I below it, because I was made by it. He who knows the Truth knows that Light; and he that knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. O Eternal Truth, and true Love, and loved Eternity! You are my God; to You do I sigh both night and day. When I first knew You, You lifted me up, that I might see there was that which I might see, and that yet it was not I that did see. And Thou beat back the infirmity of my sight, pouring forth upon me most strongly Your beams of light, and I trembled with love and fear; and I found myself to be far off from You, in the region of dissimilarity, as if I heard this voice of Yours from on high: I am the food of strong men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you convert me, like the food of your flesh, into you, but you shall be converted into me. And I learned that You correct man for iniquity, and You make my soul consume away like a spider. And I said, Is Truth, therefore, nothing because it is neither diffused through space, finite, nor infinite? And You cried to me from afar, Yea, verily, 'I Am that I Am.' And I heard this, as things are heard in the heart, nor was there room for doubt; and I should more readily doubt

that I live than that Truth is not, which is clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.
Romans 1:20

Chapter 11. That Creatures are Mutable and God Alone Immutable.

17. And I viewed the other things below You, and perceived that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. They are, indeed, because they are from You; but are not, because they are not what You are. For that truly is which remains immutably. It is good, then, for me to cleave unto God, for if I remain not in Him, neither shall I in myself; but He, remaining in Himself, renews all things. Wisdom 7:27 And You are the Lord my God, since You stand not in need of my goodness.

Chapter 12. Whatever Things the Good God Has Created are Very Good.

18. And it was made clear unto me that those things are good which yet are corrupted, which, neither were they supremely good, nor unless they were good, could be corrupted; because if supremely good, they were incorruptible, and if not good at all, there was nothing in them to be corrupted. For corruption harms, but, less it could diminish goodness, it could not harm. Either, then, corruption harms not, which cannot be; or, what is most certain, all which is corrupted is deprived of good. But if they be deprived of all good, they will cease to be. For if they be, and cannot be at all corrupted, they will become better, because they shall remain incorruptibly. And what more monstrous than to assert that those things which have lost all their goodness are made better? Therefore, if they shall be deprived of all good, they shall no longer be. So long, therefore, as they are, they are good; therefore whatsoever is, is good. That evil, then, which I sought whence it was, is not any substance; for were it a substance, it would be good. For either it would be an incorruptible substance, and so a chief good, or a corruptible substance, which unless it were good it could not be corrupted. I perceived, therefore, and it was made clear to me, that Thou made all things good, nor is there any substance at all that was not made by You; and because all that You have made are not equal, therefore all things are; because individually they are good, and altogether very good, because our God made all things very good.

Chapter 13. It is Meet to Praise the Creator for the Good Things Which are Made in Heaven and Earth.

19. And to You is there nothing at all evil, and not only to You, but to Your whole creation; because there is nothing without which can break in, and mar that order which You have appointed it. But in the parts thereof, some things, because they harmonize not with others, are considered evil; whereas those very things harmonize with others, and are good, and in themselves are good. And all these things which do not harmonize together harmonize with the inferior part which we call earth, having its own cloudy and windy sky concordant to it. Far be it from me, then, to say, These things should not be. For should I see nothing but these, I should indeed desire better; but yet, if only for these, ought I to praise You; for that You are to be praised is shown from the earth, dragons, and all deeps; fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy winds fulfilling Your word; mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; both young

men and maidens; old men and children, praise Your name. But when, from the heavens, these praise You, praise You, our God, in the heights, all Your angels, all Your hosts, sun and moon, all you stars and light, the heavens of heavens, and the waters that be above the heavens, praise Your name. I did not now desire better things, because I was thinking of all; and with a better judgment I reflected that the things above were better than those below, but that all were better than those above alone.

Chapter 14. Being Displeased with Some Part Of God's Creation, He Conceives of Two Original Substances.

20. There is no wholeness in them whom anything of Your creation displeased no more than there was in me, when many things which You made displeased me. And, because my soul dared not be displeased at my God, it would not allow anything to be Yours which displeased it. Hence it had gone into the opinion of two substances, and resisted not, but talked foolishly. And, returning thence, it had made to itself a god, through infinite measures of all space; and imagined it to be You, and placed it in its heart, and again had become the temple of its own idol, which was to You an abomination. But after You had fomented the head of me unconscious of it, and closed my eyes lest they should behold vanity, I ceased from myself a little, and my madness was lulled to sleep; and I awoke in You, and saw You to be infinite, though in another way; and this sight was not derived from the flesh.

Chapter 15. Whatever Is, Owes Its Being to God.

21. And I looked back on other things, and I perceived that it was to You they owed their being, and that they were all bounded in You; but in another way, not as being in space, but because You hold all things in Your hand in truth: and all things are true so far as they have a being; nor is there any falsehood, unless that which is not is thought to be. And I saw that all things harmonized, not with their places only, but with their seasons also. And that Thou, who only art eternal, did not begin to work after innumerable spaces of times; for that all spaces of times, both those which have passed and which shall pass, neither go nor come, save through You, working and abiding.

Chapter 16. Evil Arises Not from a Substance, But from the Perversion of the Will.

22. And I discerned and found it no marvel, that bread which is distasteful to an unhealthy palate is pleasant to a healthy one; and that the light, which is painful to sore eyes, is delightful to sound ones. And Your righteousness displeases the wicked; much more the viper and little worm, which You have created good, fitting in with inferior parts of Your creation; with which the wicked themselves also fit in, the more in proportion as they are unlike You, but with the superior creatures, in proportion as they become like to You. And I inquired what iniquity was, and ascertained it not to be a substance, but a perversion of the will, bent aside from You, O God, the Supreme Substance, towards these lower things, and casting out its bowels, and swelling outwardly.

Chapter 17. Above His Changeable Mind, He Discovers the Unchangeable Author of Truth.

23. And I marvelled that I now loved You, and no phantasm instead of You. And yet I did not merit to enjoy my God, but was transported to You by Your beauty, and presently torn away from You by my own weight, sinking with grief into these inferior things. This weight was carnal custom. Yet was there a remembrance of You with me; nor did I any way doubt that there was one to whom I might cleave, but that I was not yet one who could cleave unto You; for that the body which is corrupted presses down the soul, and the earthly dwelling weighs down the mind which thinks upon many things. Wisdom 9:15 And most certain I was that Your invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even Your eternal power and Godhead. Romans 1:20 For, inquiring whence it was that I admired the beauty of bodies whether celestial or terrestrial, and what supported me in judging correctly on things mutable, and pronouncing, This should be thus, this not,—inquiring, then, whence I so judged, seeing I did so judge, I had found the unchangeable and true eternity of Truth, above my changeable mind. And thus, by degrees, I passed from bodies to the soul, which makes use of the senses of the body to perceive; and thence to its inward faculty, to which the bodily senses represent outward things, and up to which reach the capabilities of beasts; and thence, again, I passed on to the reasoning faculty, unto which whatever is received from the senses of the body is referred to be judged, which also, finding itself to be variable in me, raised itself up to its own intelligence, and from habit drew away my thoughts, withdrawing itself from the crowds of contradictory phantasms; that so it might find out that light by which it was besprinkled, when, without all doubting, it cried out, that the unchangeable was to be preferred before the changeable; whence also it knew that unchangeable, which, unless it had in some way known, it could have had no sure ground for preferring it to the changeable. And thus, with the flash of a trembling glance, it arrived at that which is. And then I saw Your invisible things understood by the things that are made. Romans 1:20 But I was not able to fix my gaze thereon; and my infirmity being beaten back, I was thrown again on my accustomed habits, carrying along with me naught but a loving memory thereof, and an appetite for what I had, as it were, smelt the odour of, but was not yet able to eat.

Chapter 18. Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is the Only Way of Safety.

24. And I sought a way of acquiring strength sufficient to enjoy You; but I found it not until I embraced that Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2:5 who is over all, God blessed for ever, Romans 9:5 calling unto me, and saying, I am the way, the truth, and the life, John 14:6 and mingling that food which I was unable to receive with our flesh. For the Word was made flesh, John 1:14 that Your wisdom, by which You created all things, might provide milk for our infancy. For I did not grasp my Lord Jesus, — I, though humbled, grasped not the humble One; nor did I know what lesson that infirmity of His would teach us. For Your Word, the Eternal Truth, pre-eminent above the higher parts of Your creation, raises up those that are subject unto Itself; but in this lower world built for Itself a humble habitation of our clay, whereby He intended to abase from themselves such as would be subjected and bring them over unto Himself, allaying their swelling, and fostering their love; to the end that they might go on no further in self-confidence, but rather should become weak, seeing before their feet the Divinity weak by taking our coats of skins; and wearied, might cast themselves down upon It, and It rising, might lift them up.

Chapter 19. He Does Not Yet Fully Understand the Saying of John, that The Word Was Made

Flesh.

25. But I thought differently, thinking only of my Lord Christ as of a man of excellent wisdom, to whom no man could be equalled; especially for that, being wonderfully born of a virgin, He seemed, through the divine care for us, to have attained so great authority of leadership — for an example of contemning temporal things for the obtaining of immortality. But what mystery there was in, The Word was made flesh, I could not even imagine. Only I had learned out of what is delivered to us in writing of Him, that He ate, drank, slept, walked, rejoiced in spirit, was sad, and discoursed; that flesh alone did not cleave unto Your Word, but with the human soul and body. All know thus who know the unchangeableness of Your Word, which I now knew as well as I could, nor did I at all have any doubt about it. For, now to move the limbs of the body at will, now not; now to be stirred by some affection, now not; now by signs to enunciate wise sayings, now to keep silence, are properties of a soul and mind subject to change. And should these things be falsely written of Him, all the rest would risk the imputation, nor would there remain in those books any saving faith for the human race. Since, then, they were written truthfully, I acknowledged a perfect man to be in Christ — not the body of a man only, nor with the body a sensitive soul without a rational, but a very man; whom, not only as being a form of truth, but for a certain great excellency of human nature and a more perfect participation of wisdom, I decided was to be preferred before others. But Alypius imagined the Catholics to believe that God was so clothed with flesh, that, besides God and flesh, there was no soul in Christ, and did not think that a human mind was ascribed to Him. And, because He was thoroughly persuaded that the actions which were recorded of Him could not be performed except by a vital and rational creature, he moved the more slowly towards the Christian faith. But, learning afterwards that this was the error of the Apollinarian heretics, he rejoiced in the Catholic faith, and was conformed to it. But somewhat later it was, I confess, that I learned how in the sentence, The Word was made flesh, the Catholic truth can be distinguished from the falsehood of Photinus. For the disapproval of heretics makes the tenets of Your Church and sound doctrine to stand out boldly. For there must be also heresies, that the approved may be made manifest among the weak. 1 Corinthians 11:19

Chapter 20. He Rejoices that He Proceeded from Plato to the Holy Scriptures, and Not the Reverse.

26. But having then read those books of the Platonists, and being admonished by them to search for incorporeal truth, I saw Your invisible things, understood by those things that are made; Romans 1:20 and though repulsed, I perceived what that was, which through the darkness of my mind I was not allowed to contemplate — assured that You were, and were infinite, and yet not diffused in space finite or infinite; and that Thou truly art, who art the same ever, varying neither in part nor motion; and that all other things are from You, on this most sure ground alone, that they are. Of these things was I indeed assured, yet too weak to enjoy You. I chattered as one well skilled; but had I not sought Your way in Christ our Saviour, I would have proved not skilful, but ready to perish. For now, filled with my punishment, I had begun to desire to seem wise; yet mourned I not, but rather was puffed up with knowledge. 1 Corinthians 8:1 For where was that charity building upon the foundation of humility, which is Jesus Christ? 1 Corinthians 3:11 Or, when would these books teach me it? Upon these, therefore, I believe, it was Your pleasure that I should fall before I studied Your Scriptures, that it might be impressed on my memory how I was affected by them; and that afterwards when I was subdued by Your books, and when my wounds were touched by Your healing fingers, I might discern and distinguish what a difference there is between presumption and confession — between those who saw whither they were to go, yet saw not the way, and the way which

leads not only to behold but to inhabit the blessed country. For had I first been moulded in Your Holy Scriptures, and had Thou, in the familiar use of them, grown sweet unto me, and had I afterwards fallen upon those volumes, they might perhaps have withdrawn me from the solid ground of piety; or, had I stood firm in that wholesome disposition which I had thence imbibed, I might have thought that it could have been attained by the study of those books alone.

Chapter 21. What He Found in the Sacred Books Which are Not to Be Found in Plato.

27. Most eagerly, then, did I seize that venerable writing of Your Spirit, but more especially the Apostle Paul; and those difficulties vanished away, in which he at one time appeared to me to contradict himself, and the text of his discourse not to agree with the testimonies of the Law and the Prophets. And the face of that pure speech appeared to me one and the same; and I learned to rejoice with trembling. So I commenced, and found that whatsoever truth I had there read was declared here with the recommendation of Your grace; that he who sees may not so glory as if he had not received not only that which he sees, but also that he can see (for what has he which he has not received?); and that he may not only be admonished to see You, who art ever the same, but also may be healed, to hold You; and that he who from afar off is not able to see, may still walk on the way by which he may reach, behold, and possess You. For though a man delight in the law of God after the inward man, Romans 7:22 what shall he do with that other law in his members which wars against the law of his mind, and brings him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members? For You are righteous, O Lord, but we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and Your hand is grown heavy upon us, and we are justly delivered over unto that ancient sinner, the governor of death; for he induced our will to be like his will, whereby he remained not in Your truth. What shall wretched man do? Who shall deliver him from the body of this death, but Your grace only, through Jesus 'Christ our Lord,' Romans 7:24-25 whom You have begotten co-eternal, and created in the beginning of Your ways, in whom the Prince of this world found nothing worthy of death, John 18:38 yet killed he Him, and the handwriting which was contrary to us was blotted out? Colossians 2:14 This those writings contain not. Those pages contain not the expression of this piety — the tears of confession, Your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, the salvation of the people, the espoused city, Revelation 21:2 the earnest of the Holy Ghost, 2 Corinthians 5:5 the cup of our redemption. No man sings there, Shall not my soul be subject unto God? For of Him comes my salvation, for He is my God and my salvation, my defender, I shall not be further moved. No one there hears Him calling, Come unto me all you that labour. They scorn to learn of Him, because He is meek and lowly of heart; Matthew 11:28-29 for You have hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Matthew 11:25 For it is one thing, from the mountain's wooded summit to see the land of peace, Deuteronomy 32:49 and not to find the way there — in vain to attempt impassable ways, opposed and waylaid by fugitives and deserters, under their captain the lion 1 Peter 5:8 and the dragon; Revelation 12:3 and another to keep to the way that leads there, guarded by the host of the heavenly general, where they rob not who have deserted the heavenly army, which they shun as torture. These things did in a wonderful manner sink into my bowels, when I read that least of Your apostles, and had reflected upon Your works, and feared greatly.

Source: J.G. Pilkington, Trans. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1. Ed. by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.)