

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
THE FIRST BOOK	19
Confessions of the greatness and unsearchableness of God—Of God's mercies in infancy and boyhood, and human willfulness—Of his own sins of idleness, abuse of his studies, and of God's gifts up to his fifteenth year.	
THE SECOND BOOK	44
Object of these confessions—Further ills of idleness developed in his sixteenth year—Evils of ill society, which betrayed him into theft.	
THE THIRD BOOK	58
His residence at Carthage from his seventeenth to his nineteenth year—Source of his disorders—Love of shows—Advance in studies, and love of wisdom—Distaste for Scripture—Led astray to the Manichaeans—Refutation of some of their tenets—Grief of his mother, Monnica, at his heresy, and prayers for his conversion—Her vision from God, and answer through a Bishop.	

THE FOURTH BOOK 78

Augustine's life from nineteen to twenty-eight—Himself a Manichæan, and seducing others to the same heresy—Partial obedience amidst vanity and sin, consulting astrologers, only partially shaken herein—Loss of an early friend, who is converted by being baptized when in a swoon—Reflections on grief, on real and unreal friendship, and love of fame—Writes on "the fair and fit," yet cannot rightly, though God had given him great talents, since he entertained wrong notions of God; and so even his knowledge he applied ill.

THE FIFTH BOOK 102

Augustine's twenty-ninth year—Faustus, a snare of Satan to man, made an instrument of deliverance to St. Augustine, by showing the ignorance of the Manichees on those things wherein they professed to have divine knowledge—Augustine gives up all thought of going further among the Manichees—Is guided to Rome and Milan, where he hears St. Ambrose—Leaves the Manichees, and becomes again a Catechumen in the Catholic Church.

THE SIXTH BOOK 126

Arrival of Monnica at Milan—her obedience to St. Ambrose, and his value for her—St. Ambrose's habits—Augustine's gradual abandonment of error—Finds that he has blamed the Catholic Church wrongly—Desire of absolute certainty, but struck with the contrary analogy of God's natural Providence—How shaken in his worldly pursuits—God's guidance of his friend Alypius—Augustine debates with himself and his friends about their mode of life—His inveterate sins, and dread of judgment.

THE SEVENTH BOOK 153

Augustine's thirty-first year—Gradually extricated from his errors, but still with material conceptions of God—Much aided by an argument of Nebridius—Sees that the cause of sin lies in free-will, rejects the Manichean heresy, but cannot altogether embrace the doctrine of the Church—Recovered from the belief in Astrology, but miserably perplexed about the origin of evil—Is led to find in the Platonists the seeds of the doctrine of the Divinity of the Word, but not of His humiliation—Hence he obtains clearer notions of God's majesty, but, not knowing Christ to be the Mediator, remains estranged from Him—All his doubts removed by the study of Holy Scripture, especially St. Paul.

THE EIGHTH BOOK 183

Augustine's thirty-second year—He consults Simplicianus, from him hears the history of the conversion of Victorinus, and longs to devote himself entirely to God, but is mastered by his old habits—Is still further roused by the history of St. Anthony, and the conversion of two courtiers—During a severe struggle, hears a voice from heaven, opens Scripture, and is converted, with his friend Alypius—His mother's vision fulfilled.

THE NINTH BOOK 212

Augustine determines to devote his life to God, and to abandon his profession of Rhetoric, quietly, however—Retires to the country to prepare himself to receive the grace of Baptism, and is baptized with Alypius, and his son Adeodatus—At Ostia, on his way to Africa, his mother, Monnica, dies, in her fifty-sixth year, the thirty-third of Augustine—Her life and character.

THE TENTH BOOK	243
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Having in the former books spoken of himself before his receiving the grace of Baptism, in this Augustine confesses what he then was—He inquires by what faculty we can know God at all, when he enlarges on the mysterious character of the memory, wherein God, being made known, dwells, but which could not discover Him—Examines his own trials under the triple division of temptation, “lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride,”—what Christian continency prescribes as to each—On Christ the Only Mediator, who heals and will heal all infirmities.

NOTES	299
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TO THINK ABOUT	304
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THE FIRST BOOK



CONFESSION OF THE GREATNESS AND UNSEARCHABLENESS OF
GOD, OF GOD'S MERCIES IN INFANCY AND BOYHOOD, AND
HUMAN WILFULNESS; OF HIS OWN SINS OF IDLENESS, ABUSE OF
HIS STUDIES, AND OF GOD'S GIFTS UP TO HIS FIFTEENTH YEAR.

1. GREAT ART THOU, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and Thy wisdom infinite (Pss. 145:3; 147:5). And Thee would man praise; man, but a particle of Thy creation; man, that bears about him his mortality, the witness of his sin, the witness, that *Thou resistest the proud* (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5): yet would man praise Thee; he, but a particle of Thy creation. Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rest in Thee.

Grant me, Lord, to know and understand which is first, to call on Thee or to praise Thee? and, again, to know Thee or to call on Thee? For who can call on Thee, not knowing Thee? For he that knoweth Thee not, may call on Thee as someone other than Thou art. Or, is it rather, that we call on Thee that we may know Thee? But *how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* (Rom. 10:14) or *how shall they believe without a*

preacher? And they that seek the Lord shall praise Him (Ps. 22:26). For *they that seek shall find Him* (Matt. 7:7), and they that find shall praise Him. I will seek Thee, Lord, by calling on Thee; and will call on Thee, believing in Thee; for to us hast Thou been preached. My faith, Lord, shall call on Thee, which Thou hast given me, and by which Thou hast inspired me, through the Incarnation of Thy Son, through the ministry of the Preacher.¹

2. And how shall I call upon my God, my God and Lord, since, when I call for Him, I shall be calling Him to myself? and what room is there within me, where my God can come into me? Where can God come into me, God who made heaven and earth? Is there, indeed, O Lord my God, anything in me that can contain Thee? Do then heaven and earth, which Thou hast made, and wherein Thou hast made me, contain Thee? or, because nothing which exists could exist without Thee, doth therefore whatever exists contain Thee? Since, then, I too exist, why do I desire that Thou shouldest enter into me, who were not, if Thou wert not in me? Why? Because I am not now in hell, and yet Thou art there also. For *if I go down into hell, Thou art there*. I could not be then, O my God, could not be at all, wert Thou not in me; or, rather, unless I were in Thee, *of whom are all things, by whom are all things, in whom are all things*. Even so, Lord, even so. Where do I call Thee, since I am in Thee? or whence canst Thou enter into me? For where can I go beyond heaven and earth, that there my God should come into me, who hath said, *I fill the heaven and the earth?*

3. Do the heaven and earth then contain Thee, since Thou fillest them? or dost Thou fill them and yet overflow, since they do not contain Thee? And where, when the heaven and the earth are filled, pourest Thou forth the remainder of Thyself? Or hast Thou no need that anything contain Thee, who containest all things, since what Thou fillest Thou fillest by containing it? For the vessels which Thou fillest restrict Thee not, since, though they were broken, Thou wert not poured out. And when Thou art *poured out* on us (Acts 2:18), Thou art not cast down, but Thou upliftest us; Thou art not scattered, but Thou gatherest us. But Thou who fillest all things, fillest Thou them with Thy whole self? or, since all things cannot contain Thee wholly, do they contain part of Thee? and all at once the same part? or each its own part, the greater more, the smaller less? And is, then, one part of Thee greater, another less? or, art Thou wholly everywhere, while nothing contains Thee wholly?

4. What art Thou then, my God? What, but the Lord God? *For who is Lord but the Lord? or who is God save our God?* (Ps. 35:3). Most highest, most good, most potent, most omnipotent; most merciful, yet most just; most hidden, yet most present; most beautiful, yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; all-renewing, and *bringing age upon the proud, and they know it not*; ever working, ever at rest; still gathering, yet needing nothing; supporting, filling, and over-spreading; creating, nourishing, and maturing; seeking, yet having all things. Thou lovest, yet without passion;

art jealous, without anxiety; repentest, yet grieveest not; art angry, yet serene; changest Thy works, Thy purpose unchanged; receivest again what Thou findest, yet didst never lose; never in need, yet rejoicing in gains; never covetous, yet exacting usury (Matt. 25:27). Thou receivest over and above, that Thou mayest owe; and who hath anything that is not Thine? Thou payest debts, owing nothing; remittest debts, losing nothing. And what have I now said, my God, my life, my holy joy? or what saith any man when he speaks of Thee? Yet woe to him that speaketh not, since the mute are even the most eloquent.

5. Oh! that I might rest on Thee! Oh! that Thou wouldest enter into my heart, and inebriate it, that I may forget my ills, and embrace Thee, my only good. What art Thou to me? In Thy pity, teach me to utter it. Or what am I to Thee that Thou demandest my love, and, if I give it not, are wroth with me, and threatenest me with grievous woes? Is it then a slight woe to love Thee not? Oh! for Thy mercies' sake, tell me, O Lord my God, what Thou art unto me. *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation* (Ps. 18:31). So speak, that I may hear. Behold, Lord, my heart is turned to Thee; open Thou the ears thereof, and *say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*. After this voice let me run, and take hold on Thee. Hide not Thy face from me. Let me die—lest I die—only let me see Thy face.

6. Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in. It lies in ruins; repair Thou it. It contains that which must offend Thine eyes; I confess and know it. But who shall cleanse it? or to whom should I cry, save Thee? *Lord,*

cleanse me from my secret faults, and spare Thy servant from the power of the enemy. I believe, and therefore do I speak (Pss. 19:12–13; 116:10; 32:5). Lord, thou knowest. *Have I not confessed against myself my transgressions unto Thee, and Thou, my God, hast forgiven the iniquity of my heart? I contend not in judgment with Thee* (Job 9:3), who art the truth; I fear to deceive myself; *lest mine iniquity lie unto itself* (Ps. 26:12). Therefore I contend not in judgment with Thee; *for if Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall abide it?* (Ps. 130:3).

7. Yet allow me to speak unto Thy mercy, me, *dust and ashes* (Gen. 18:27). Yet allow me to speak, since I speak to Thy mercy, and not to scornful man. Thou too, perhaps, despisest me, yet wilt Thou *return and have compassion* upon me (Jer. 12:15). For what would I say, O Lord my God, but that I know not whence I came into this dying life (shall I call it?) or living death. Then immediately did the comforts of Thy compassion take me up, as I heard (for I remember it not) from the parents of my flesh, out of whose substance Thou didst sometime fashion me. Thus there received me the comforts of woman's milk. For neither my mother nor my nurses filled their own breasts for me; but Thou didst bestow the food of my infancy through them, according to Thine ordinance, whereby Thou distributest Thy riches through the hidden springs of all things. Thou also gavest me to want no more than Thou gavest; and to my nurses willingly to give me what Thou gavest them. For they, with an heaven-taught affection, willingly gave me, what they abounded with from Thee. For

this my good from them, was good for them. Nor, indeed, from them was it, but through them; for from Thee, O God, come all good things, and *from my God is all my health*. This I since learned, Thou, through these Thy gifts, within me and outside me, proclaiming Thyself unto me. For then I knew but to suck; to be satisfied in what pleased, and cry at what hurt my flesh; nothing more.

8. Afterwards I began to smile; first in sleep, then waking: for so it was told me about myself, and I believed it; for we see the like in other infants, though of myself I remember it not. Thus, little by little, I became conscious where I was; and to have a wish to express my wishes to those who could satisfy them, and I could not; for the wishes were within me, and they without; nor could they by any power of theirs enter within my spirit. So I tossed about at random limbs and voice, making the few signs I could, and such as I could, like, though in truth very little like, what I wished. And when I was not presently obeyed (my wishes being hurtful or unintelligible), then I was indignant with my elders for not submitting to me, with those owing me no service, for not serving me; and avenged myself on them by tears. Such have I learnt about infants from observing them; and, that I was myself such, they, without knowing it, have shown me better than my nurses who knew it.

9. But my infancy died long since, and I live. But Thou, Lord, who for ever livest, and in whom nothing dies: for before all that can be called "before," Thou art, and art God and Lord of all

which Thou hast created: in Thee abide, fixed for ever, the first causes of all things unabiding; and of all things changeable, the springs abide in Thee unchangeable: and in Thee live the eternal reasons of all things unreasoning and temporal. Tell me, Lord, Thy suppliant; say, all-pitying, to me, Thy pitiable one; say, did my infancy succeed another age of mine that died before it? Was it that which I spent within my mother's womb? for of that I have heard something, and have myself seen women with child? and what before that life again, O God my joy, was I any where or any body? For this have I none to tell me, neither father nor mother, nor experience of others, nor mine own memory. Dost Thou laugh at me for asking this, and bid me praise Thee and acknowledge Thee, for all I do know?

10. I acknowledge Thee, Lord of heaven and earth, and praise Thee for my first rudiments of being, and my infancy, whereof I remember nothing; for Thou hast endowed man that he should from others guess much concerning himself; and believe much on the strength of weak women. Even then I had being and life, and (at my infancy's close) I could seek for signs, whereby to make known to others my sensations. Whence could such a being be, save from Thee, Lord? Shall any be his own artificer? Or can there elsewhere be derived any channel, which may stream essence and life into us, save from Thee, O Lord, in whom essence and life are one? for Thou Thyself art supremely Essence and Life. *For Thou art most high, and art not changed* (Mal. 3:6), neither in Thee doth Today come to a close; yet in Thee doth it

come to a close; because all such things also are in Thee. For they had no way to pass away, unless Thou upheldest them. And since *Thy years fail not* (Ps. 102:27), Thy years are this very day. How many of ours and our fathers' years have flowed away through Thy "today," and from it received the measure and the mould of such being as they had; and still others shall flow away, and so receive the measure of their degree of being. But *Thou art still the same* (Ibid.), and all things of tomorrow, and all beyond, and all of yesterday, and all behind it, Thou hast done today. What is it to me, if anyone comprehend not this? Let him also rejoice and say, *What thing is this?* (Ex. 16:15). Let him rejoice even thus; and be content rather by not discovering to discover Thee, than by discovering not to discover Thee.

11. Hear, O God. Alas, for man's sin! So saith man, and Thou pitiest him; for Thou madest him, but sin in him Thou madest not. Who remindeth me of the sins of my infancy? *for in Thy sight none is pure from sin, not even the infant whose life is but a day upon the earth* (Job 25:4). Who brings this to my mind? Doth not each little infant, in whom I see what of myself I remember not? What then was my sin? Was it that I hung upon the breast and cried? For should I now so do for food suitable to my age, justly should I be laughed at and reproved. What I then did was worthy of reproof; but since I could not understand reproof, custom and reason forbade me to be reproved. For those habits, when grown, we root out and cast away. Now no man, though he roots out the bad, wittingly casts away what is good

(John 15:2). Or was it then good, even for a while, to cry for what, if given, would be harmful? bitterly to resent, that persons free, and its own elders, yea, that very authors of its birth, served it not? that many other persons besides, wiser than it, obeyed not the orders of its good pleasure? to do its best to strike and hurt, because commands were not obeyed, which had been obeyed to its hurt? The weakness then of infant limbs, not its will, is its innocence. Myself have seen and known even a baby envious; it could not speak, yet it turned pale and looked bitterly on its foster-brother. Who knows not this? Mothers and nurses tell you, that they subdue these things by I know not what remedies. Is that too innocence, when the fountain of milk is flowing in rich abundance, not to endure one to share it, though in extremest need, and whose very life as yet depends thereon? We bear gently with all this, not as being no or slight evils, but because they will disappear as years increase; for, though tolerated now, the very same tempers are utterly intolerable when found in later years.

12. Thou, then, O Lord my God, who gavest life to this my infancy, furnishing thus with senses (as we see) the body Thou gavest, equipping it with limbs, ornamenting its proportions, and, for its general good and safety, implanting in it all vital functions, Thou commandest me to praise Thee for these things, *to confess unto Thee, and sing unto Thy name, Thou most Highest* (Ps. 92:1). For Thou art God, Almighty and Good, even hadst Thou done nothing but only this, which none could do but Thou: whose oneness is the mould of all things; who out of Thy own

fairness makest all things fair; and orderest all things by Thy law. This age then, Lord, whereof I have no remembrance which I take on others' word, and guess from other infants that I have passed, true though the guess be, I am yet reluctant to count in this life of mine which I live in this world. For no less than that which I spent in my mother's womb, is it hid from me in the shadows of forgetfulness. But if *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me* (Ps. 51:7), where, I beseech Thee, O my God, where, Lord, or when, was I Thy servant innocent? But, lo! that period I pass by; and what have I now to do with that, of which I can recall no trace?

13. Passing hence from infancy, I came to boyhood, or rather it came to me, displacing infancy. Nor did that depart,—(for whither went it?)—and yet it was no more. For I was no longer a speechless infant, but a speaking boy. This I remember; and have since observed how I learned to speak. It was not that my elders taught me words (as, soon after, other sorts of learning) in any set method; but I, longing by cries and broken accents and various motions of my limbs to express my thoughts, so that I might have my will, and yet unable to express all I wished, or to whom I willed, did myself, by the understanding which Thou, my God, gavest me, practise the sounds in my memory. When they named any thing, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered what they called what they would point out, by the name they uttered. And that they meant this thing and no other, was plain from the motion of their body, and natural language, as it

were, of all nations, expressed by the countenance, glances of the eye, gestures of the limbs, and tones of the voice, indicating the affections of the mind, as it pursues, possesses, rejects, or shuns. And thus by constantly hearing words, as they occurred in various sentences, I understood gradually for what they stood; and having broken in my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave expression to my will. Thus I exchanged with those about me these current signs of our wills and so launched deeper into the stormy exchanges of human life, yet depending on parental authority and the desires of my elders.

14. O God my God, what miseries and mockeries did I now experience, when obedience to my teachers was proposed to me, as proper in a boy, in order that in this world I might prosper, and excel in the art of speech, which should serve to the "praise of men," and to deceitful riches. Next I was sent to school to get learning, in which I (poor wretch) knew not what use there was; and yet, if slow in learning, I was beaten. For this was judged right by our forefathers; and many, passing the same course before us, formed for us weary paths, through which we were fain to pass; multiplying toil and grief upon the sons of Adam. But, Lord, we found that men called upon Thee, and we learnt from them to think of Thee (according to our powers) as of some great One, who, though hidden from our senses, couldst hear and help us. For so I began, as a boy, to pray to Thee, my aid and refuge; and broke the restraints of my tongue to call on Thee, praying Thee, though small, yet with no small earnestness, that I might not be beaten

at school. And when Thou heardest me not (*not thereby giving me over to folly*) (Ps. 21:3), my elders, yea, my very parents, who yet wished me no ill, laughed at my punishments, my then great and grievous ill.

15. Is there, Lord, any man of soul so great, and cleaving to Thee with so intense affection (for a sort of stupidity will in a way do it); but is there any one, who, from clinging devoutly to Thee, is endowed with so great a spirit, that he can think as lightly of the racks and hooks and other torments (against which, throughout all lands, men call on Thee with extreme dread), mocking at those by whom they are feared most bitterly, as our parents laughed at the torments which we suffered in boyhood from our masters? For we feared not our torments less; nor prayed we less to Thee to escape them. And yet we sinned, in writing or reading or studying less than was exacted of us. For we lacked not, O Lord, memory or capacity, whereof Thy will gave enough for our age; but our sole delight was play; and for this we were punished by those who yet themselves were doing the same thing. But elder folks' idleness is called "business;" that of boys, being really the same, is punished by those elders; and none pities either boys or men. For will any-one of sound discretion approve of my being beaten as a boy, because, by playing at ball, I made less progress in studies which I was to learn, only that, as a man, I might play in an unseemly fashion? And what else did he, who beat me? who, surpassed in some trifling discussion with his fellow-tutor, was more embittered and jealous than I, when beaten at ball by a play-fellow?

16. And yet, I sinned herein, O Lord God, the Creator and Disposer of all things in nature, the only ruler over sin, O Lord my God, I sinned in transgressing the commands of my parents and those my masters. For what they, with whatever motive, would have me learn, I might afterward have put to good use. For I disobeyed, not from a better choice, but from love of play, loving the pride of victory in my contests, and to have my ears tickled with false stories, that they might itch the more; the same curiosity flashing from my eyes more and more, for the shows and games of my elders. Yet those who give these shows are held in such honor, that almost all wish the same for their children, and yet are very willing that they should be beaten, if those very games detain them from the studies, whereby they would have them produce similar plays. Look with pity, Lord, on these things, and deliver us who call upon Thee now; deliver those too who call not on Thee yet, that they may call on Thee, and Thou mayest deliver them.

17. As a boy, then, I had already heard of an eternal life, promised us through the humility of the Lord our God stooping to our pride; and even from the womb of my mother, who greatly trusted in Thee, I was sealed with the mark of His cross and seasoned with His salt.² Thou sawest, Lord, how while yet a boy, being seized one time with sudden oppression of the stomach, and like near to death—Thou sawest, my God, for Thou wert my keeper, with what eagerness and what faith I sought, from the pious care of my mother and Thy Church, the mother of us all,

the baptism of Thy Christ my God and Lord. Whereupon the mother of my flesh, being much troubled (since, with a heart pure in Thy faith, she even more lovingly *travailed in birth* [Gal. 4:19] of my salvation), would in eager haste have provided for my consecration and cleansing by the healthgiving sacraments, confessing Thee, Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins. However, I suddenly recovered. And so, as if I must needs be again polluted should I live, my cleansing was deferred, because the defilements of sin would, after that washing, bring greater and more perilous guilt. I then already believed; and my mother, and the whole household, except my father: yet did not he overthrow the power of my mother's piety in me, that as he did not yet believe, so neither should I. For it was her earnest care, that Thou my God, rather than he, shouldest be my father; and in this Thou didst aid her to prevail over her husband, whom she, the better, obeyed, therein also obeying Thee, who hast so commanded her.

18. I beseech Thee, my God, for I wish to know, if so Thou willest, for what purpose my baptism was then deferred? Was it for my good that the rein was laid loose, as it were, upon me, for me to sin? or was it not laid loose? If not, why does it still echo in our ears on all sides, "Let him alone, let him do as he will, for he is not yet baptized"? but as to bodily health, no one says, "Let him be worse wounded, for he is not yet healed." How much better then, had I been quickly healed; and then, by my friends' diligence and my own, my soul's recovered health had been kept safe in Thy keeping who gavest it. Better indeed. But how many and

great waves of temptation seemed to hang over me after my boyhood! These my mother foresaw; and preferred to expose to them the clay whence I might afterwards be moulded, than the very cast, when made.³

19. In boyhood itself, however (so much less dreaded for me than youth), I loved not study, and hated to be driven to it. Yet I was forced; and this was well done towards me, but I did not do well; for, unless forced, I had not learnt. But no one doth well against his will, even though what he doth, is good. Yet neither did they well who forced me, but what was good came to me from Thee, my God. For they were unaware how I should employ what they forced me to learn, except to satisfy the insatiate desires of a wealthy beggary, and a base glory. But Thou, *by whom the very hairs of our head are numbered* (Matt. 10:30), didst use for my good the error of all who urged me to learn; and my own, who would not learn, Thou didst use for my punishment—a fit penalty for so small a boy and so great a sinner. So by those who did not well, Thou didst well for me; and by my own sin Thou didst justly punish me. For Thou hast commanded, and so it is, that every inordinate affection should be its own punishment.

20. But why did I so much hate the Greek, which I studied as a boy? I do not yet fully know. For the Latin I loved; not what my first masters, but what the so-called grammarians taught me. For those first lessons, reading, writing, and arithmetic, I thought as great a burden and penalty as any Greek. And yet whence was this too, but from the sin and vanity of this life, because *I was flesh*,

and a breath that passeth away and cometh not again? (Ps. 78:39). For those first studies were better certainly, because more certain; by them I obtained, and still retain, the power of reading what I find written, and myself writing what I want to; whereas in the others, I was forced to learn the wanderings of one Æneas, forgetful of my own, and to weep for dead Dido, because she killed herself for love; the while, with dry eyes, I endured my miserable self dying among these things, far from Thee, O God my life.

21. For what more miserable than a miserable being who takes no pity on himself; weeping the death of Dido for love to Æneas, but weeping not for his own death for want of love to Thee, O God. Thou light of my heart, Thou bread of my inmost soul, Thou Power who givest vigour to my mind, who quickenest my thoughts, I loved Thee not. I committed fornication against Thee, and all around me fornicating sounds echoed "Well done! well done!" *for the friendship of this world is fornication against Thee* (Jam. 4:4); and "Well done! well done!" echoes on till one is ashamed not to be thus a man. And all this I lamented not. I who wept for Dido slain, and "seeking by the sword a stroke and wound extreme," myself seeking the while a worse extreme, the extremest and lowest of Thy creatures, having forsaken Thee, I was turning into earth. And if forbid to read all this, I was grieved that I might not read what grieved me. Madness like this is thought a higher and richer learning, than that by which I learned to read and write.

22. But now, my God, cry Thou aloud in my soul; and let Thy

truth tell me, "Not so, not so. Far better was that first study." For, lo, I would readily forget the wanderings of Æneas and all the rest, rather than how to read and write. But over the entrance of the Grammar School is an emblem⁴ drawn! true; yet is this not so much an emblem of anything learned, as a cloke of error. Let not those, whom I no longer fear, cry out against me, while I confess to Thee, my God, whatever my soul will, and acquiesce in the condemnation of my evil ways, that I may love Thy good ways. Let not either buyers or sellers of grammar-learning cry out against me. For if I question them whether it is true, that Æneas came once upon a time to Carthage, as the Poet tells, that less learned will reply that they know not, the more learned that he never did. But should I ask with what letters the name "Æneas" is written, every one who has learnt this will answer me correctly, as to the signs which men have conventionally settled. If, again, I should ask, which might be forgotten with least detriment to the concerns of life, reading and writing or these poetic fictions? who does not foresee, what all must answer who have not wholly lost their minds? I sinned, then, when as a boy I preferred those empty to those more profitable studies, or rather loved the one and hated the other. "One and one, two;" "two and two, four;" this was to me a hateful sing-song: "the wooden horse lined with armed men," and "the burning of Troy," and "Creusa's shade and sad similitude," were the choice spectacle of my vanity.

23. Why then did I hate the Greek classics, which have the like tales? For Homer also skillfully wove the like fictions, and is

most sweetly-vain, yet was he bitter to my boyish taste. And so I suppose would Virgil be to Grecian children, when forced to learn him as I was Homer. Difficulty, in truth, the difficulty of a foreign tongue, dashed, as it were, with gall all the sweetness of Grecian fable. For not one word of it did I understand, and to make me understand I was urged vehemently with cruel threats and punishments. Time was also (as an infant), I knew no Latin; but this I learned without fear or suffering, by mere observation, amid the caresses of my nursery and jests of friends, smiling and sportively encouraging me. This I learned without any pressure of punishment to urge me on, for my heart urged me to give birth to it conceptions, which I could only do by learning words not of those who taught, but of those who talked with me; in whose ears also I gave birth to the thoughts, whatever I conceived. No doubt then, that a free curiosity has more force in our learning these things, than a frightening enforcement. Only this enforcement restrains the rovings of that freedom, through Thy laws, O my God, Thy laws, from the teacher's rod to the martyr's ordeals, being able to temper for us a wholesome bitterness, recalling us to Thyself from that deadly pleasure which lures us from Thee.

24. Hear, Lord, my prayer; let not my soul falter under Thy discipline, nor let me falter in confessing unto Thee all Thy mercies, whereby Thou hast drawn me out of all my most evil ways, that Thou mightest become a delight to me above all the allurements which I once pursued; that I may most entirely love Thee, and clasp Thy hand with all my heart, and Thou mayest yet res-

cue me from every temptation, even unto the end. For, behold, O Lord, my King and my God, for Thy service be whatever useful thing my childhood learned; for Thy service, that I speak—write—read—reckon. For Thou didst grant me Thy discipline, while I was learning vain things; and my sin of delighting in those vanities Thou hast forgiven. In them, indeed, I learnt many a useful word, but these may as well be learned in things which are not vain; and that is the safe path for the steps of youth.

25. But woe is thee, thou torrent of men's ways! Who shall stand against thee? How long shalt thou not be dried up? How long will you sweep the sons of Eve into that huge and hideous ocean, which even that can scarcely overpass who climb the cross? Did not I read in thee of Jove the thunderer and the adulterer? Both, doubtless, he could not be; but so the feigned thunder might countenance and pander to real adultery. And now which of our gowned masters, lends a sober ear to one who from their own school cries out, "These were Homer's fictions, transferring things human to the gods; would he had brought down things divine to us!" yet more truly had he said, "These are indeed his fictions; but attributing a divine nature to wicked men, that crimes might be no longer crimes, and whoso commits them might seem to imitate not prodigal men, but the celestial gods."

26. And yet, thou hellish torrent, into thee are cast the sons of men with rich rewards, for mastering such learning;

and a great solemnity is made of it, when this is going on in the forum, within sight of laws appointing a salary beside the scholar's payments; and thou lashest thy rocks and roarest, "Hence words are learnt; hence eloquence; most necessary to gain your ends, or maintain opinions." As if we should have never known such words as "golden shower," "lap," "beguile," "temples of the heavens," or others in that passage, unless Terrence had brought a lewd youth upon the stage, setting up Jupiter as his example of seduction.

Viewing a picture, where the tale was drawn,
Of Jove's descending in a golden shower
To Danae's lap, a woman to beguile.

And then mark how he excites himself to lust as if by heavenly instruction;

And what God? Great Jove,
Who shakes heav'n's highest temples with his thunder,
And I, poor mortal man, not do the same!
I did it, and with all my heart I did it.

Not one whit more easily are the words learnt for all this vileness; but by their means the vileness is committed with less shame. Not that I blame the words, being, as it were, choice and precious vessels; but that wine of error which is drunk to us in them by intoxicated teachers; and if we, too, drink not, we are

beaten, and have no sober judge to whom we may appeal. Yet, O my God (in whose presence I now safely may remember this), all this unhappily I learnt willingly with great delight, and for this was pronounced a boy of great promise.

27. Bear with me, my God, while I say something of my abilities, Thy gift, and on what foolish things I wasted it. For a task was set me, troublesome enough to my soul, upon terms of praise or shame, and fear of flogging, to speak the words of Juno, as she raged and mourned that she could not

This Trojan prince from Latium turn.

Which words I had heard that Juno never uttered; but we were forced to go astray in the footsteps of these poetic fictions, and to say in prose much what he expressed in verse. And his speaking was most applauded, in whom the passions of rage and grief were most preeminent, and clothed in the most fitting language, maintaining the dignity of the character. What is it to me, O my true life, my God, that my declamation was applauded above so many of my own age and class? Is not all this smoke and wind? And was there nothing else whereon to exercise my wit and tongue? Thy praises, Lord, Thy praises might have stayed the yet tender shoot of my heart by the support of Thy Scriptures; so it would not have trailed away amid these empty trifles, a defiled prey for the fowls of the air. For in more ways than one do men sacrifice to the rebellious angels.

28. But what marvel was it that I was thus carried away to vanities, and went out from Thy presence, O my God, when men were set before me as models, who, if in relating some action of theirs, in itself not ill, they committed some barbarism of language, being censured, were dejected; but when in rich and adorned and well-ordered discourse they related their own disordered life, being much praised, they gloried? These things Thou seest, Lord, and holdest Thy peace; *long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth* (Ps. 86:15). Wilt Thou hold Thy peace for ever? And even now Thou drawest out of this horrible pit and soul that seeketh Thee, that thirsteth for Thy pleasures, *whose heart saith unto Thee, I have sought Thy face; Thy face, Lord, will I seek* (Ps. 27:8). For *darkened* affections (Rom. 1:21) is removal from Thee. For it is not by our feet, or change of place, that men leave Thee, or return unto Thee. Or did that Thy younger son look out for horses or chariots, or ships, fly with visible wings, or journey by the motion of his limbs, that he might in a far country waste in riotous living all Thou gavest at his departure? (Lk. 15:13). A loving Father, when Thou gavest, and more loving unto him, when he returned empty. So then in lustful, that is, in darkened affections, is the true distance from Thy face.

29. Behold, O Lord God, yea, behold patiently as Thou art wont, how carefully the sons of men observe the propriety of rules of letters and syllables received from those who spake before them, neglecting the eternal covenant of everlasting salva-

tion received from Thee. Insomuch, that a teacher or learner of the ancient laws of pronounciation will more offend men, by speaking without the aspirate, of a "*uman being*," in spite of the laws of grammar, than if he, a "*human being*," hate a "*human being*" in spite of Thee. As if any enemy could be more hurtful than the hatred with which he is incensed against him; or could wound more deeply him whom he persecutes, than he wounds his own soul by his enmity. Assuredly no knowledge of letters can be so innate as the record of conscience, "*that he is doing to another what from another he would be loth to suffer.*" How hidden are Thy ways, O God, Thou only great, *that sittest silent on high* and by an unwearied law dispensing penal blindness to lawless desires (Isa. 33:5). In quest of the fame of eloquence, a man standing before a human judge, surrounded by a human throng, declaiming against his enemy with fiercest hatred, will take heed most watchfully, lest, by an error of the tongue, he murder the word "*human-being*;" but takes no heed, lest, through the fury of his spirit, he murder the real human being.

30. This was the world at whose gate unhappy I lay in my boyhood; this the stage, where I had feared more to commit a barbarism, than having committed one, to envy those who had not. These things I speak and confess to Thee, my God; for which I had praise from them, whom I then thought it all virtue to please. For I saw not the abyss of vileness, wherein *I was cast away from Thine eyes* (Ps. 31:22). Before them what more foul than I was already, displeasing even such as myself? with innumerable lies

deceiving my tutor, my masters, my parents, from love of play, eagerness to see frivolous shows, and restlessness to imitate them! Thefts also I committed, from my parents' cellar and table, enslaved by greediness, or that I might have something to give to boys, who sold me their playthings, which all the while they liked no less than I. In this play, too, I often sought dishonest conquests, conquered myself meanwhile by vain desire of preeminence. And what was I so loth to endure, or, when I detected it, upbraided I so fiercely, as that I was doing to others? and for which if, detected, I was upbraided, I chose rather to quarrel, than to yield. And is this the innocence of boyhood? Not so, Lord, not so; I cry Thy mercy, O my God. For these very sins, as the later years come, these very sins are transferred from tutors and masters, from nuts and balls and sparrows, to magistrates and kings, to gold and manors and slaves, just as severer punishments displace the rod. It was the low stature then of childhood, which Thou our King didst commend as an emblem of lowliness, which Thou saidst, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 19:14).

31. Yet, Lord, to Thee, the Creator and Governor of the universe, most excellent and most good, thanks were due to Thee our God, even hadst Thou destined for me boyhood only. For even then I was, I lived, and felt; and had an implanted providence over my own well-being,—a trace of that mysterious Unity, whence I was derived,—I guarded by the inward sense the integrity of my senses, and in these small pursuits, and in my thoughts on things small, I learnt to delight in truth, I hated to

be deceived, had a vigorous memory, was gifted with speech, was encouraged by friendship, avoided pain, baseness, ignorance. In so small a creature, what was not wonderful, not admirable? But all are gifts of my God; it was not I, who gave them to myself; and good these are, and these together are myself. Good, then, is He that made me, and He is my good; and before Him will I exult for every good which as a boy I had. For it was my sin, that not in Him, but in His creatures—myself and others—I sought for pleasures, honors, truths, and so fell headlong into sorrows, conflicts, errors. Thanks be to Thee, my joy and my glory and my confidence, my God, thanks be to Thee for Thy gifts; but do Thou preserve them to me. For so wilt Thou preserve me, and those things shall be increased and perfected, which Thou hast given me, and I myself shall be with Thee, since even to exist Thou hast given me.