

Confessions - Book IV - Chapter Xvi

by St. Augustine

Transcript

26. But I pushed on toward thee, and was pressed back by thee that I might know the taste of death, for "thou resistest the proud."^[112] And what greater pride could there be for me than, with a marvelous madness, to assert myself to be that nature which thou art? I was mutable--this much was clear enough to me because my very longing to become wise arose out of a wish to change from worse to better--yet I chose rather to think thee mutable than to think that I was not as thou art. For this reason I was thrust back; thou didst resist my fickle pride. Thus I went on imagining corporeal forms, and, since I was flesh I accused the flesh, and, since I was "a wind that passes away,"^[113] I did not return to thee but went wandering and wandering on toward those things that have no being--neither in thee nor in me, nor in the body. These fancies were not created for me by thy truth but conceived by my own vain conceit out of sensory notions. And I used to ask thy faithful children--my own fellow citizens, from whom I stood unconsciously exiled--I used flippantly and foolishly to ask them, "Why, then, does the soul, which God created, err?" But I would not allow anyone to ask me, "Why, then, does God err?" I preferred to contend that thy immutable substance was involved in error through necessity rather than admit that my own mutable substance had gone astray of its own free will and had fallen into error as its punishment.

27. I was about twenty-six or twenty-seven when I wrote those books, analyzing and reflecting upon those sensory images which clamored in the ears of my heart. I was straining those ears to hear thy inward melody, O sweet Truth, pondering on "the beautiful and the fitting" and longing to stay and hear thee, and to rejoice greatly at "the Bridegroom"

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