

Confessions - Book VII - Chapter IX

by St. Augustine

Transcript

13. And first of all, willing to show me how thou dost "resist the proud, but give grace to the humble,"[184] and how mercifully thou hast made known to men the way of humility in that thy Word "was made flesh and dwelt among men,"[185] thou didst procure for me, through one inflated with the most monstrous pride, certain books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin.[186] And therein I found, 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 shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Furthermore, I read that the soul of man, though it "bears witness to the light," yet itself "is not the light; but the Word of God, being God, is that true light that lights every man who comes into the world." And further, that "he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." [187] But that "he came unto his own, and his own received him not. And as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name"[188]--this I did not find there.

14. Similarly, I read there that God the Word was born "not of flesh nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor the will of the flesh, but of God." [189] But, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"[190]--I found this nowhere there. And I discovered in those books, expressed in many and various ways, that "the Son was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal in God," [191] for he was naturally of the same substance. But, that "he emptied himself and took upon himself 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 hath 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"[192]--this those books have not. I read further in them that before all times and beyond all times, thy only Son remaineth unchangeably coeternal with thee, and that of his fullness all souls receive that they may be blessed, and that by participation in that wisdom which abides in them, they are renewed that they may be wise. But, that "in due time, Christ died for the ungodly" and that thou "sparedst not thy only Son, but deliveredst him up for us all"[193]--this is not there. "For thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"[194]; that they "that labor and are heavy laden" might "come unto him and he might refresh them" because he is "meek and lowly in heart." [195] "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way; beholding our lowliness and our trouble and forgiving all our sins." [196] But those

who strut in the high boots of what they deem to be superior knowledge will not hear Him who says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls." [197] Thus, though they know God, yet they do not glorify him as God, nor are they thankful. Therefore, they "become vain in their imaginations; their foolish heart is darkened, and professing themselves to be wise they become fools." [198]

15. And, moreover, I also read there how "they changed the glory of thy incorruptible nature into idols and various images--into an image made like corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" [199]: namely, into that Egyptian food [200] for which Esau lost his birthright; so that thy first-born people worshiped the head of a four-footed beast instead of thee, turning back in their hearts toward Egypt and prostrating thy image (their own soul) before the image of an ox that eats grass. These things I found there, but I fed not on them. For it pleased thee, O Lord, to take away the reproach of his minority from Jacob, that the elder should serve the younger and thou mightest call the Gentiles, and I had sought strenuously after that gold which thou didst allow thy people to take from Egypt, since wherever it was it was thine. [201] And thou saidst unto the Athenians by the mouth of thy apostle that in thee "we live and move and have our being," as one of their own poets had said. [202] And truly these books came from there. But I did not set my mind on the idols of Egypt which they fashioned of gold, "changing the truth of God into a lie and worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator." [203]

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