

Confessions - Book X - Chapter Xlii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

67. Whom could I find to reconcile me to thee? Should I have approached the angels? What kind of prayer? What kind of rites? Many who were striving to return to thee and were not able of themselves have, I am told, tried this and have fallen into a longing for curious visions and deserved to be deceived. Being exalted, they sought thee in their pride of learning, and they thrust themselves forward rather than beating their breasts.[391] And so by a likeness of heart, they drew to themselves the princes of the air,[392] their conspirators and companions in pride, by whom they were deceived by the power of magic. Thus they sought a mediator by whom they might be cleansed, but there was none. For the mediator they sought was the devil, disguising himself as an angel of light.[393] And he allured their proud flesh the more because he had no fleshly body.

They were mortal and sinful, but thou, O Lord, to whom they arrogantly sought to be reconciled, art immortal and sinless. But a mediator between God and man ought to have something in him like God and something in him like man, lest in being like man he should be far from God, or if only like God he should be far from man, and so should not be a mediator. That deceitful mediator, then, by whom, by thy secret judgment, human pride deserves to be deceived, had one thing in common with man, that is, his sin. In another respect, he would seem to have something in common with God, for not being clothed with the mortality of the flesh, he could boast that he was immortal. But since "the wages of sin is death,"[394] what he really has in common with men is that, together with them, he is condemned to death.

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