Confessions - Book X - Chapter Xxxi

by St. Augustine

Transcript

43. There is yet another \"evil of the day\"[351] to which I wish I were sufficient. By eating and drinking we restore the daily losses of the body until that day when thou destroyest both food and stomach, when thou wilt destroy this emptiness with an amazing fullness and wilt clothe this corruptible with an eternal incorruption. But now the necessity of habit is sweet to me, and against this sweetness must I fight, lest I be enthralled by it. Thus I carry on a daily war by fasting, constantly \"bringing my body into subjection,\"[352] after which my pains are banished by pleasure. For hunger and thirst are actual pain. They consume and destroy like fever does, unless the medicine of food is at hand to relieve us. And since this medicine at hand comes from the comfort we receive in thy gifts (by means of which land and water and air serve our infirmity), even our calamity is called pleasure.

44. This much thou hast taught me: that I should learn to take food as medicine. But during that time when I pass from the pinch of emptiness to the contentment of fullness, it is in that very moment that the snare of appetite lies baited for me. For the passage itself is pleasant; there is no other way of passing thither, and necessity compels us to pass. And while health is the reason for our eating and drinking, yet a perilous delight joins itself to them as a handmaid; and indeed, she tries to take precedence in order that I may want to do for her sake what I say I want to do for health\\

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