

Confessions - Book XI - Chapter VI

by St. Augustine

Transcript

8. But how didst thou speak? Was it in the same manner in which the voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son"[423]? For that voice sounded forth and died away; it began and ended. The syllables sounded and passed away, the second after the first, the third after the second, and thence in order, till the very last after all the rest; and silence after the last. From this it is clear and plain that it was the action of a creature, itself in time, which sounded that voice, obeying thy eternal will. And what these words were which were formed at that time the outer ear conveyed to the conscious mind, whose inner ear lay attentively open to thy eternal Word. But it compared those words which sounded in time with thy eternal word sounding in silence and said: "This is different; quite different! These words are far below me; they are not even real, for they fly away and pass, but the Word of my God remains above me forever." If, then, in words that sound and fade away thou didst say that heaven and earth should be made, and thus madest heaven and earth, then there was already some kind of corporeal creature before heaven and earth by whose motions in time that voice might have had its occurrence in time. But there was nothing corporeal before the heaven and the earth; or if there was, then it is certain that already, without a time-bound voice, thou hadst created whatever it was out of which thou didst make the time-bound voice by which thou didst say, "Let the heaven and the earth be made!" For whatever it was out of which such a voice was made simply did not exist at all until it was made by thee. Was it decreed by thy Word that a body might be made from which such words might come?

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