

Confessions - Book XI - Chapter Xiii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

15. But if the roving thought of someone should wander over the images of past time, and wonder that thou, the Almighty God, the All-creating and All-sustaining, the Architect of heaven and earth, didst for ages unnumbered abstain from so great a work before thou didst actually do it, let him awake and consider that he wonders at illusions. For in what temporal medium could the unnumbered ages that thou didst not make pass by, since thou art the Author and Creator of all the ages? Or what periods of time would those be that were not made by thee? Or how could they have already passed away if they had not already been? Since, therefore, thou art the Creator of all times, if there was any time before thou madest heaven and earth, why is it said that thou wast abstaining from working? For thou madest that very time itself, and periods could not pass by before thou madest the whole temporal procession. But if there was no time before heaven and earth, how, then, can it be asked, "What wast thou doing then?" For there was no "then" when there was no time.

16. Nor dost thou precede any given period of time by another period of time. Else thou wouldst not precede all periods of time. In the eminence of thy ever-present eternity, thou predest all times past, and extendest beyond all future times, for they are still to come--and when they have come, they will be past. But "Thou art always the Selfsame and thy years shall have no end."^[432] Thy years neither go nor come; but ours both go and come in order that all separate moments may come to pass. All thy years stand together as one, since they are abiding. Nor do thy years past exclude the years to come because thy years do not pass away. All these years of ours shall be with thee, when all of them shall have ceased to be. Thy years are but a day, and thy day is not recurrent, but always today. Thy "today" yields not to tomorrow and does not follow yesterday. Thy "today" is eternity. Therefore, thou didst generate the Coeternal, to whom thou didst say, "This day I have begotten thee."^[433] Thou madest all time and before all times thou art, and there was never a time when there was no time.

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