

# Confessions - Book Xii - Chapter Viii

by St. Augustine

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## Transcript

8. That heaven of heavens was thine, O Lord, but the earth which thou didst give to the sons of men to be seen and touched was not then in the same form as that in which we now see it and touch it. For then it was invisible and unformed and there was an abyss over which there was no light. The darkness was truly over the abyss, that is, more than just in the abyss. For this abyss of waters which now is visible has even in its depths a certain light appropriate to its nature, perceptible in some fashion to fishes and the things that creep about on the bottom of it. But then the entire abyss was almost nothing, since it was still altogether unformed. Yet even there, there was something that had the possibility of being formed. For thou, O Lord, hadst made the world out of unformed matter, and this thou didst make out of nothing and didst make it into almost nothing. From it thou hast then made these great things which we, the sons of men, marvel at. For this corporeal heaven is truly marvelous, this firmament between the water and the waters which thou didst make on the second day after the creation of light, saying, \"Let it be done,\" and it was done.[468] This firmament thou didst call heaven, that is, the heaven of this earth and sea which thou madest on the third day, giving a visible shape to the unformed matter which thou hadst made before all the days. For even before any day thou hadst already made a heaven, but that was the heaven of this heaven: for in the beginning thou hadst made heaven and earth.

But this earth itself which thou hadst made was unformed matter; it was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the abyss. Out of this invisible and unformed earth, out of this formlessness which is almost nothing, thou didst then make all these things of which the changeable world consists--and yet does not fully consist in itself[469]--for its very changeableness appears in this, that its times and seasons can be observed and numbered. The periods of time are measured by the changes of things, while the forms, whose matter is the invisible earth of which we have spoken, are varied and altered.

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