

Confessions - Book Xiii - Chapter Xxxiv

by St. Augustine

Transcript

49. We have also explored the question of what thou didst desire to figure forth, both in the creation and in the description of things in this particular order. And we have seen that things taken separately are good, and all things taken together are very good, both in heaven and earth. And we have seen that this was wrought through thy Word, thy only Son, the head and the body of the Church, and it signifies thy predestination before all times, without morning and evening. But when, in time, thou didst begin to unfold the things destined before time, so that thou mightest make hidden things manifest and mightest reorder our disorders--since our sins were over us and we had sunk into profound darkness away from thee, and thy good Spirit was moving over us to help us in due season--thou didst justify the ungodly and also didst divide them from the wicked; and thou madest the authority of thy Book a firmament between those above who would be amenable to thee and those beneath who would be subject to them. And thou didst gather the society of unbelievers[652] into a conspiracy, in order that the zeal of the faithful might become manifest and that they might bring forth works of mercy unto thee, giving their earthly riches to the poor to obtain heavenly riches. Then thou didst kindle the lights in the firmament, which are thy holy ones, who have the Word of Life and who shine with an exalted authority, warranted to them by their spiritual gifts. And then, for the instruction of the unbelieving nations, thou didst out of physical matter produce the mysteries and the visible miracles and the sounds of words in harmony with the firmament of thy Book, through which the faithful should be blessed. After this thou didst form \"the living soul\" of the faithful, through the ordering of their passions by the strength of continence. And then thou didst renew, after thy image and likeness, the mind which is faithful to thee alone, which needs to imitate no human authority. Thus, thou didst subordinate rational action to the higher excellence of intelligence, as the woman is subordinate to the man. Finally, in all thy ministries which were needed to perfect the faithful in this life, thou didst will that these same faithful ones should themselves bring forth good things, profitable for their temporal use and fruitful for the life to come. We see all these things, and they are very good, because thou seest them thus in us--thou who hast given us thy Spirit, by which we may see them so and love thee in them.

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