BOOK VII

Neo-Platonism Frees Augustine's Mind

1. 1. By now my misspent, impious adolescence was dead, and I was entering the period of youth, ¹ but as I advanced in age I sank ignobly into foolishness, for I was unable to grasp the idea of substance except as something we can see with our bodily eyes. I was no longer representing you to myself in the shape of a human body, ² God, for since beginning to acquire some inkling of philosophy I always shunned this illusion, and now I was rejoicing to find a different view in the belief of our spiritual mother, your Catholic Church. Yet no alternative way of thinking about you had occurred to me; and here was I, a mere human, and a sinful one at that, striving to comprehend you, the supreme, sole, true God. ²

Materialistic notions of God insufficient

From the core of my being I believed you to be imperishable, inviolable and unchangeable, because although I did not understand why or how this could be, I saw quite plainly and with full conviction that anything perishable is inferior to what is imperishable, and I unhesitatingly reckoned the inviolable higher than anything subject to violation, and what is constant and unchanging better than what can be changed. ³ My heart cried out in vehement protest against all the phantom shapes that thronged my imagination, and I strove with this single weapon to beat away from the gaze of my mind the cloud of filth that hovered round me, ⁴ but hardly had I got rid of it than in another twinkling of an eye ⁵ it was back again, clotted together, invading and clogging my vision, so that even though I was no longer hampered by the image of a human body, I was still forced to imagine something corporeal spread out in space, whether infused into the world or even diffused through the infinity outside it. This was still the case even though I recognized that this substance was imperishable, inviolable and immutable (necessarily so, being superior to anything perishable, subject to violation or changeable); because anything to which I must deny these spatial dimensions seemed to me to be nothing at all, absolutely nothing, not even a void
such as might be left if every kind of body—earthly, watery, aerial or heavenly—were removed from it, for though such a place would be a nothingness, it would still have the quality of space.

2. Whatever was not stretched out in space, or diffused or compacted or inflated or possessed of some such qualities, or at least capable of possessing them, I judged to be nothing at all. Yet in so thinking I was gross of heart and not even luminous to myself; for as my eyes were accustomed to roam among material forms, so did my mind among the images of them, yet I could not see that this very act of perception, whereby I formed those images, was different from them in kind. Yet my mind would never have been able to form them unless it was itself a reality, and a great one.

Hence I thought that even you, Life of my life, were a vast reality spread throughout space in every direction: I thought that you penetrated the whole mass of the earth and the immense, unbounded spaces beyond it on all sides, that earth, sky and all things were full of you, and that they found their limits in you, while you yourself had no limit anywhere. Since material air—I mean the atmosphere above the earth—posed no barrier to the sun's light, which was able to penetrate and pass through it, filling it entirely without bursting it apart or tearing it, I assumed that not only the material sky, air and sea, but even the material earth, were similarly traversable by you, penetrable and open in all their greatest and tiniest parts to your presence, which secretly breathes through them within and without, controlling all that you have made.

I held this view only because I was unable to think in any other way; it was false, because on that showing a larger part of the earth would contain a larger portion of you, and a smaller a lesser portion, and all things would be full of you in such a way that an elephant's body would contain a larger amount of you than a sparrow's, because it is bigger and takes up more space. You would be distributed piecemeal throughout the elements of the world, with greater parts of yourself present where there is plenty of room, and smaller parts in more cramped places. Obviously this is not the case. You had not yet illumined my darkness.

2,3. I had a sufficient argument, Lord, against those self-deceived deceivers who, though so talkative, were dumb because your word did not sound forth from them. Yes, I had a sufficient argument, one which Nebridius had been wont to propose ever since our days in, Carthage, which left us all shaken who heard it. Those so-called powers of darkness, whom they always postulate as a horde deployed in opposition to you: what would they have done to you if you had refused to fight? If the reply is that they could have inflicted some injury on you, it would imply that you are subject to violation and therefore destructible. If, on
the other hand, it is denied that they had power to injure you, there would have been no point in fighting. Yet the fighting is alleged to have been so intense that some portion of yourself, a limb perhaps, or an offspring of your very substance, became entangled with hostile powers and with the natures of beings not created by you, and was by them so far corrupted and changed for the worse that its beatitude was turned to misery, and it could be rescued and purified only with help; and this portion is supposed to be the soul, enslaved, defiled, corrupt, and in need of aid from your Word, which must necessarily be free, pure and unscathed if it is to help, and yet, since it is of the same nature as the soul, must be equally corrupt itself!

It follows that if they admitted that, whatever you are, you are incorruptible (your substance, that is, by which you exist), this whole rigmarole would be shown up as untrue and to be rejected with loathing; but if they alleged that you are corruptible, their position would already be false and no sooner stated than to be condemned. The foregoing argument was therefore quite sufficient, and I ought to have squeezed these people from my gullet and vomited them out, for no escape was left them from the horrible sacrilege of heart and tongue they were committing by thinking and speaking of you in this fashion.

The problem of evil

3.4. I declared and firmly believed that you, our God, our true God, who made not only our souls but our bodies too, and not only our souls and bodies but people everywhere and all things, are subject to no defilement or alteration, and are in all respects unchangeable; yet even so I was still convinced that the cause of evil had not been clarified or disentangled. Nonetheless I saw that, whatever it might be, I must beware of looking for it in such a way as to be forced into believing that the immutable God was changeable, lest I become myself the very thing I was trying to trace. Accordingly I conducted my search without anxiety, certain that those whom I now wholeheartedly shunned were not speaking the truth, because I saw that through their inquiry into the origin of evil they had waxed full of malice, more ready to claim that your substance was vulnerable to evil than that their own perpetrated it.

5. I strained to see for myself the truth of an explanation I had heard: that the cause of evil is the free decision of our will, in consequence of which we act wrongly and suffer your righteous judgment; but I could not see it clearly. I struggled to raise my mental gaze from the depths, but sank back again; I strove repeatedly, but again and again sank back. I was as sure of having a will as I was of being alive, and this it was that
lifted me into your light. When I wanted something, or did not want it, I was absolutely certain that no one else but I was wanting or not wanting it, and I was beginning to perceive that the root of my sin lay there. Any involuntary act I regarded as something I suffered rather than as something I did, and I judged it to be a penalty rather than a fault, being quick to acknowledge that I was not unjustly punished in this way, since I held you to be just. But then I was forced to ask further, "Who made me?"

Was it not my God, who is not merely good, but Goodness itself? Whence, then, did I derive this ability to will evil and refuse good? Is it in me simply so that I should deserve the punishment I suffer? Who established that ability in me, who planted in me this bitter cutting, when my whole being is from my most sweet God? If the devil is responsible, where did the devil come from? If he was a good angel who was transformed into a devil by his own perverted will, what was the origin of this evil will in him that turned him into a devil, when an angel is made entirely by the supremely good creator?"12

I was pushed down again by these thoughts and nearly choked; but never was I sucked into that pit of error where no one confesses to you, because people would rather hold that you suffer evil than that we commit it.

4, 6. My efforts were directed toward discovering more of the truth, on the basis of the discovery already made that what is indestructible is better than anything liable to be destroyed. Accordingly I confessed that, whatever you might be, you must be indestructible. No intelligence has ever conceived of anything better than you, or ever will, for you are the supreme and all-surpassing good; but since the indestructible is most truly and certainly to be esteemed above what is destructible, as I already knew, it followed that you must be indestructible, because otherwise my mind would have been able to attain something better than my God.

From this point, then, where I saw that the indestructible must be superior to what can be destroyed, I should have begun my inquiry by trying to understand where evil resides: that is, whence springs the corruption to which your nature is totally immune. For corruption can touch our God in no way whatever: neither by will, nor by necessity, nor by any unexpected misfortune. He is God, and what he wishes for himself is good, and he is himself the very nature of goodness, whereas to be corrupted is not good. Nor are you forced unwillingly into anything, because your will is not greater than your power: it could be greater only if you were greater than yourself, for God's will and God's power are identical.
with God himself. And what unexpected chance can overtake you, who know everything? No nature exists, except because you know it. What need is there to prove at length why that substance which is God cannot be corruptible? If it were, it would not be God.

5.7. So I was seeking the origin of evil, but seeking in an evil way, and failing to see the evil inherent in my search itself. I conjured up before my mind's eye the whole of creation: all the things in it that we can see, such as earth and sea and stars and trees and living things that are mortal, and all that we do not see in it, such as the heavenly firmament overhead and all the angels and all its spiritual inhabitants; and my imagination gave form to them also, and arranged them in their due places as though they had been corporeal. And I envisaged your creation as one huge mass in which all were arrayed according to bodily kinds, both those things which were really bodily in nature and the bodies I had myself attributed to spirits. I pictured it as enormous, not of such size as it really was, of course, for that I could not know, but as large as my fancy stretched, yet finite on all sides. I imagined you, Lord, who are infinite in every possible respect, surrounding and penetrating it in its every part, like a sea extending in all directions through immense space, a single-unlimited sea which held within itself a sponge as vast as one could imagine but still finite, and the sponge soaked in every fibre of itself by the boundless sea.

This was how I pictured your creation filled with your infinite being, and I reflected, "Look, this is God, and these are the things God has created. God is good, and though he is far more wonderful than they in every respect, still he who is good has created them good; see too how he surrounds and pervades them. Where, then, is evil; where does it come from and how did it creep in? What is its root, its seed? Or does it not exist at all? But in that case, why do we fear and avoid something that has no reality? If we say that our fear is meaningless, then the fear itself is undeniably evil, for it goads and tortures our heart to no purpose, and so the evil is all the greater inasmuch as the object of our fear is non-existent, yet we fear all the same. Either the evil we fear exists, or our fear itself is the evil. So where does it come from, if the good God made all things good? He is the greater good, to be sure, the supreme good, and the things he has made are lesser goods; nonetheless creator and creatures are all good. Whence, then, comes evil? Was something bad in the material he used, so that though he formed it and disposed it in order he left in it some element that was not turned to good? But why? Did he lack the power so to convert and change it all that no evil would remain, he who is omnipotent? In any case, why would he have chosen to use it for making things, rather than using this same almighty power to destroy it entirely? Or could it have existed against his will? Or
again, if matter was eternal, why did he allow it to exist so long, from infinite ages past, and then at last decide to make things out of it? Or, if he suddenly decided to act, surely he, being almighty, could have acted in such a way that it should cease to be, and he alone should exist, he, the complete, true, supreme, infinite Good? Or, supposing that it was unseemly for him who is good not to fashion and build something good as well, ought he not to have done away with all the bad material and destroyed it, and himself originated some good matter instead, which he could use to create everything? If he were able to construct good things only with the help of material he had not himself constructed, he would not be omnipotent."

Such thoughts as these was I turning over in my miserable soul, weighed down as it was by the gnawing anxieties that flowed from my fear that death might overtake me before I had found the truth. Faith in your Christ, our Lord and Savior, as I found it in the Catholic Church, still persisted steadfastly in my heart, though it was a faith still in many ways unformed, wavering and at variance with the norm of her teaching. Yet my mind did not abandon it, but drank it in ever more. deeply as the days passed.

6,8. It was some time since I had rejected the misleading divinations and impious ravings of astrologers. On this score too let your merciful dealings themselves sing praise to you from the innermost depths of my soul,17 0 my God! In my obstinacy you took care of me by providing18 me with a friend: you it was, you and no other, for who else calls us back from our every death-dealing error but the Life that cannot die, the Wisdom who enlightens our needy minds but needs no borrowed light itself, the Wisdom who governs the whole world, even to the fluttering leaves on the trees? Obstinately indeed had I struggled against the shrewd old man, Vindicianus,19 and against Nebridius, a youth of wonderful insight. The former had declared with emphasis, the latter admittedly with more hesitation, but frequently, that the art of foretelling the future is bogus, that human guesswork is often lucky, and that when people talk a great deal many truths about future events are likely to be uttered, not because the speakers know but because they stumble upon them by not keeping their mouths shut. So you provided for me a friend who was keen to consult astrologers, but not well versed in

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*He finally rejects astrology*
their lore. Having sought answers from them out of curiosity, as I have indicated, he already knew a certain amount, which he had heard, he said, from his father. Little did he know how efficacious it was to prove in giving the lie to that superstition.

His name was Firminus. He had been educated in the liberal arts and was a well-spoken man, and since he regarded me as a dear friend he consulted me about certain of his business affairs of which he had high hopes, inquiring how I interpreted his birth horoscope, as they call it. Now I was already inclined toward Nebridius' view of the practice; however, I did not refuse to offer an interpretation or say what came into my mind, doubtful though I was; but I remarked that I was almost persuaded that divination was absurd and meaningless.

Then he told me that his father had been an avid student of books dealing with such matters, and had had a friend who was equally a devotee. As the two men collaborated in research and discussion they became more and more ardently enthusiastic for this nonsense. If even dumb animals in their households were due to produce young, these men would record the exact moments of birth and note the position of the stars at the time, on the pretext of collecting experimental data for what claimed to be a science. Firminus went on to say that he had heard his father tell how, when his mother was pregnant with him, Firminus, a certain slave-girl in the house of his father's friend was expecting a baby at the same time. This fact could not escape the girl's master, who took the utmost care to calculate even the whelping-times of his dogs. So while one man was observing and counting with meticulous precision the days, hours and smaller fractions of hours in his wife's case, the other was doing the same in respect of his maid-servant.

The two women gave birth simultaneously, forcing them to assign exactly the same horoscope, even in the finest detail, to both babies, the one to his son, the other to his slave. It happened like this. As the women went into labor the two friends sent word to each other to let each know what was happening at the other's house, and held messengers in readiness who would announce to each the birth of the child as soon as it occurred. It was easy for them to arrange for instantaneous announcement, since each was master in his own domain. So, Firminus related, the two sets of messengers were dispatched, and met at a point exactly halfway between the two houses, which meant that neither of the
friends could assign a different position of the stars, or record any different moment of time. Yet Firminus was born in easy circumstances among his own relatives, and pursued quite a brilliant career in the world, making money and advancing in rank, while that slave-boy went on serving his masters, with no alleviation whatever of the yoke his status imposed on him. Firminus, who knew him, testified to the fact.

9. As soon as I heard this story, which, in view of the narrator's character, I believed, my obstinate resistance was completely overcome and dropped away. I attempted first of all to rescue Firminus himself from his curiosity about the occult by pointing out to him that if, after inspecting his birth horoscope, I had to make a prediction that accorded with the facts, I would have to say that I read in it that his parents were of excellent standing among his kinsfolk, that his family was a noble one in his home town, and that having been born a gentleman he would receive a good education in the liberal arts; whereas if the slave had consulted me about the indications of his birth horoscope—and his had been precisely the same—I would have to say, if my answer was to match reality, that what I saw in it was a family of the lowest class, a servile status, and all the rest of those very different conditions which marked off his lot from the other man's. The realization that after inspecting the same data I would either have to make divergent predictions in order to give a true answer, or else make the same prediction in the two cases and thereby speak falsely, was to me most certain evidence that when true predictions were offered by diviners who studied horoscopes, such things were the product of luck, not skill; but when false predictions were made, they resulted not from the practitioner's lack of skill, but from his luck letting him down.²¹

10. Approaching the subject from this aspect and pondering these points, I now turned my attention to the case of twins. I hoped to attack and refute and make a laughing-stock of the demented people who make a living by astrology, and I wanted to make sure that none of them would be in a position to retort that either Firminus had lied to me or his father had lied to him. At the birth of twins, then, it usually happens that both are delivered from the womb with only a short interval of time between them; and however great the influence this space of time may be alleged to have in the course of nature, it cannot be measured by human observation and certainly cannot be registered in the charts which an astrologer will later study with a view to making a true forecast. And true it will not be, because anyone who had examined the one same birth horoscope that applied to Esau and Jacob
would have been obliged to foretell the same fate for both of them, whereas in fact their destinies were different. The astrologer would therefore have been wrong; or, if he spoke truly and foretold different things for each, he would have done so on the basis of the same data. He could speak the truth only by chance, then, not by skill.

For in truth it is you, Lord, who are at work, you, the supremely just ruler of the universe, though those who consult astrologers and those who are consulted know it not. By your secret inspiration you make each inquirer hear what befits him, as your unfathomable judgment shall justly assess our souls' secret deserving. Let no human being challenge you, "What is this?" or "Why that?" Let him not ask; no, let him not ask, for he is but human.

Still searching

7. 11. So it was that you, my helper, had already freed me from those bonds, but I was still trying to trace the cause of evil, and found no way out of the difficulty. Yet you allowed no flood of thoughts to sweep me away from the faith whereby I believed that you exist, that your essence is unchangeable, that you care for us humans and judge our deeds, and that in your Son, Christ our Lord, and in the holy scriptures which the authority of your Catholic Church guarantees, you have laid down the way for human beings to reach that eternal life which awaits us after death. These beliefs were unaffected, and persisted strong and unshaken in me as I feverishly searched for the origin of evil.

What agonizing birth-pangs tore my heart, what groans it uttered, O my God! And there, unknown to me, were your hearkening ears, for as I labored hard in my silent search the mute sufferings of my mind reached your mercy as loud cries. You alone knew my pain, no one else; for how little of it could I express in words to my closest friends! Could their ears have caught all the tumult that raged in my soul, when even I had neither time enough nor eloquence to articulate it? Yet even as my heart roared its anguish my clamor found its way to your hearing, and all my longing lay before you, for the light of my eyes was not there at my command: it was within, but I was outside; it occupied no place, but I had fixed my gaze on spatially positioned things, and so I found in them nowhere to rest. Nor did they welcome me or afford me the chance to say, "This is enough, now all is well," nor did they even release me to return to where I could well have found what was enough. I was nobler than they, but lower than
you; and as long as I was subject to you my true joy was your very self, and you had subjected to me all those things which you created below me. The happy mean, the central region where I would find salvation, was to preserve your image in me, serving you and subduing my body; but because I was rearing up against you in my pride, charging head-high against the Lord and crassly presuming on my own strength, even those inferior things gained the upper hand and pressed me down, so that nowhere could I find respite or relief. When I looked outward they crowded upon me thick and fast; when I tried to think the images of these material things blocked my path of return, as though demanding, "Where are you off to, you unworthy, degraded fellow?" All this had sprung from my wounded condition, for you humbled this proud man with a wounding blow? My swollen pride got in the way and kept me from you, and my face was so puffy that my eyes were closed.

8, 12. But you, Lord, abide for ever and will not for ever be angry with us, for you have taken pity on us who are earth and ashes; and so it was pleasing in your sight to give new form to my deformity. You goaded me within to make me chafe impatiently until you should grow clear to my spiritual sight. At the unseen touch of your medicine my swelling subsided, while under the stinging eye-salve of curative pain the fretful, darkened vision of my spirit began to improve day by day.

He reads "the books of the Platonists"

9, 13. You wanted to show me first and foremost how you thwart the proud but give grace to the humble, and with what immense mercy on your part the way of humility was demonstrated to us when your Word was made flesh and dwelt among men and women; and so through a certain man grossly swollen with pride you provided me with some books by the Platonists, translated from the Greek into Latin. In them I read (not that the same words were used, but precisely the same doctrine was taught, buttressed by many and various arguments) that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; he was God. He was with God in the beginning. Everything was made through him; nothing came to be without him. What was made is alive with his life, and that life was the light of humankind. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to master it; and that the human soul, even though it bears testimony about the Light, is not itself the Light, but that God, the Word, is the true Light, which illumines every human person who comes into this world; and that he was in this world, a world made by him, but the world did not know him. But that he came to his
own home, and his own people did not receive him; but to those who did receive him he gave power to become children of God: to those, that is, who believe in his name—none of this did I read there.

14. I also read in them that God, the Word, was born not of blood nor man's desire nor lust of the flesh, but of God; but that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. I did not read there. I certainly observed that in these writings it was often stated, in a variety of ways, that the Son, being in the form of God the Father, deemed it no robbery to be equal to God, because he is identical with him in nature. But that he emptied himself and took on the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men was found in human form, that he humbled himself and was made obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, which is why God raised him from the dead, and gave him a name above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, or in the underworld, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, in the glory of God the Father, of this no mention was made in these books.

I did read in them that your only-begotten Son, coeternal with you, abides before all ages and above all ages, and that of his fullness our souls receive, to become blessed thereby, and that by participation in that Wisdom which abides in itself they are made new in order to become wise; but that at the time of our weakness he died for the wicked, and that you did not spare even your only Son, but delivered him up for us all, these things are not to be found there. For you have hidden these matters from the sagacious and shrewd, and revealed them to little ones, so that those who toil under heavy burdens may come to him and he may give them relief, because he is gentle and humble of heart. He will guide the gentle aright and teach the unassuming his ways, for he sees our lowly estate and our labor, and forgives all our sins. As for those who are raised on the stilts of their loftier doctrine, too high to hear him calling, Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, even if they know God, they do not honor him as God or give him thanks; their thinking has been frittered away into futility and their foolish hearts are benighted, for in claiming to be wise they have become stupid.

15. In consequence what I also read there was the story of their exchanging your glorious, imperishable nature for idols and a variety of man-made things, for the effigy of a perishable human or of birds or animals or crawling creatures; these are the food of the Egyptians, for the sake of which Esau bartered away his dignity as the first-born, just as your first-born people turned back to
Egypt in their hearts, worshiping a beast's head instead of you, and abasing their souls, made in your image, before the image of a calf munching hay.

These things I found there, but I did not eat that food; for it was pleasing in your sight, Lord, to take away from Jacob the shame of his subordination and cause the elder to serve the younger, so you called the Gentiles into your inheritance. And I had come to you from the Gentiles. I set my heart upon the gold which at your bidding your people had brought out of Egypt, because wherever it was, it belonged to you. So you told the Athenians through your apostle that in you we live and move and have our being, and that indeed some of their own authorities had said this, and unquestionably those books I read came from there. I disregarded the idols of the Egyptians, to which they paid homage with gold that belonged to you, for they perverted the truth of God into a lie, worshiping a creature and serving it rather than the creator.

He attempts Platonic ecstasy, but is "beaten back"

10, 16. Warned by these writings that I must return to myself, I entered under your guidance the innermost places of my being; but only because you had become my helper was I able to do so. I entered, then, and with the vision of my spirit, such as it was, I saw the incommutable light far above my spiritual ken, transcending my mind: not this common light which every carnal eye can see, nor any light of the same order but greater, as though this common light were shining much more powerfully, far more brightly, and so extensively as to fill the universe. The light I saw was not this common light at all, but something different, utterly different, from all these things. Nor was it higher than my mind in the sense that oil floats on water or the sky is above the earth; it was exalted because this very light made me, and I was below it because by it I was made. Anyone who knows truth knows it, and whoever knows it knows eternity. Love knows it.

0 eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night. As I first began to know you you lifted me up and showed me that while that which I might see exists indeed, I was not yet capable of seeing it. Your rays beamed intensely upon me, beating back my feeble gaze, and I trembled with love and dread. I knew myself to be far away from you in a region of unlikeness, and I seemed to hear your voice from on high: “I am the food of the mature; grow then, and you will eat me. You will not change me into yourself like bodily food: you will be changed into me.” And I recognized that you have chastened man for his sin and caused my soul to dwindle away like a spider's web, and I said, “Is truth then a nothing, simply because it is not spread out through space either finite or infinite?” Then from
afar you cried to me, “By no means, for I am who am.”

I heard it as one hears a word in the heart, and no possibility of doubt remained to me; I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that truth exists, truth that is seen and understood through the things that are made.

New light on the problem of evil

11, 17. Contemplating other things below you, I saw that they do not in the fullest sense exist, nor yet are they completely non-beings: they are real because they are from you, but unreal inasmuch as they are not what you are. For that alone truly is, which abides unchangeably. As for me, my good is to hold fast to God, for if I do not abide in him, I shall not be able to in myself; whereas he, abiding ever in himself, renews all things. You are my Lord, for you need no goods of mine.

12, 18. It was further made clear to me that things prone to destruction are good, since this destructibility would be out of the question if they were either supremely good or not good at all; because if they were supremely good they would be indestructible, whereas if they were not good at all there would be nothing in them that could be destroyed. Destruction is obviously harmful, yet it can do harm only by diminishing the good. It follows, then, that either destruction harms nothing, which is impossible, or that all things which suffer harm are being deprived of some good; this conclusion is beyond cavil. If, however, they lose all their good, they will not exist at all, for if they were to continue in existence without being any longer subject to destruction, they would be better, because permanently indestructible; and what could be more outrageous than to declare them better for having lost everything that was good in them? Hence if they are deprived of all good, they will be simply non-existent; and so it follows that as long as they do exist, they are good.

Everything that exists is good, then; and so evil, the source of which I was seeking, cannot be a substance, because if it were, it would be good. Either it would be an indestructible substance, and that would mean it was very good indeed, or it would be a substance liable to destruction but then it would not be destructible unless it were good.

I saw, then, for it was made clear to me, that you have made all good things, and that there are absolutely no substances that you have not made. I saw too that you have not made all things equal. They all exist because they are severally good but collectively very good, for our God has made all things exceedingly good.

13, 19. For you evil has no being at all, and this is true not of yourself only but of everything you have created, since apart from you there is nothing that could burst in and disrupt the order you have imposed on it. In some
parts of it certain things are regarded as evil because they do not suit certain others; but these same things do fit in elsewhere, and they are good there, and good in themselves. All these things that are at odds with each other belong to the lower part of creation that we call earth, which has its own cloudy, windy sky, as befits it. Far be it from me ever to say, “These things ought not to be”; because even if I could see these things alone, and longed, certainly, for something better, it would already be incumbent on me to praise you for them alone; for on earth the dragons and all the depths proclaim you worthy of praise, as do the fire, hail, snow, ice and stormy winds that obey your word, the mountains and hills, fruit-bearing trees and all cedars, wild beasts and tame, creeping creatures and birds on the wing. Earth's kings and all its peoples, rulers and the world's judges, young men and maidens, old men and youths, all praise your name. But since in heaven too your creatures praise you, our God, let all your angels tell your praises on high, let all your powers extol you, sun and moon, all stars and the light, the empyrean and the waters above the heavens: let them too praise your name. No longer was I hankering for any elements to be better than they were, because I was now keeping the totality in view; and though I certainly esteemed the higher creatures above the lower, a more wholesome judgment showed me that the totality was better than the higher things on their own would have been.

13,20. There is no wholesomeness for those who find fault with anything you have created, as there was none for me when many of the things you have made displeased me. Since my soul did not dare to find my God displeasing, it was unwilling to admit that anything that displeased it was truly yours. This was why it had strayed away into believing in a duality of substances, but there it found no rest, and only mouthed the opinions of others. Turning back again it had made for itself a god extended through infinite space, all-pervasive, and had thought this god was you, and had set him up in its heart; so it became yet again a temple for its own idol and an abomination in your sight. But when you cradled my stupid head and closed my eyes to the sight of vain things so that I could absent me from myself awhile, and my unwholesome madness was lulled to sleep, then I awoke in you and saw you to be infinite, but in a different sense; and that vision in no way derived from the flesh.

15,21. I turned my gaze to other things and saw that they owe their being to you and that all of them are by you defined, but in a particular sense: not as though contained in a place, but because you hold all things in your Truth as though in your hand; and all of them are true insofar as they exist, and nothing whatever is a deceit unless it is thought to be what it is
not. I saw, further, that all things are set not only in their appropriate places but also in their proper times, and that you, who alone are eternal, did not set to work after incalculable stretches of time, because no stretches of time, neither those which have passed away nor those still to come, would pass or come except because you are at work and you abide eternally.

16,22. Drawing on my own experience I found it unsurprising that bread, which is pleasant to a healthy palate, is repugnant to a sick one, and that diseased eyes hate the light which to the unclouded is delightful. Villains find even your justice disagreeable, and snakes and maggots far more so, yet you have created these things good, and fit for the lower spheres of your world. Indeed, the villains themselves are fit only for these lower regions in the measure that they are unlike you, but for the higher when they come to resemble you more closely.

I inquired then what villainy might be, but I found no substance, only the perversity of a will twisted away from you, God, the supreme substance, toward the depths—a will that throws away its life within and swells with vanity abroad.

Fresh attempt at mounting to God; he attains That Which Is

17,23. I found it amazing that though I now loved your very self, and not some figment of imagination in place of you, I could not continue steadfastly in the enjoyment of my God. I was drawn toward you by your beauty but swiftly dragged away from you by my own weight, swept back headlong and groaning onto these things below myself; and this weight was carnal habit. Nonetheless the memory of you stayed with me, and I had no doubt whatever whom I ought to cling to, though I knew that I was not yet capable of clinging, because the perishable body weighs down the soul, and its earthly habitation oppresses a mind teeming with thoughts. I was fully persuaded that your invisible reality is plainly to be understood through created things, your everlasting power also, and your divinity, for I had been trying to understand how it was possible for me to appreciate the beauty of material things in the sky or on earth, and why the power to make sound judgments about changeable matters was readily available to me, so that I could say, "This thing ought to be like this, but that other different"; and in seeking the reason why I was able to judge as I did I realized that above my changeable mind soared the real, unchangeable truth, which is eternal.

Thus I pursued my inquiry by stages, from material things to the soul that perceives them through the body, and from there to that inner power of the soul to which the body's senses report external impressions. The intelligence of animals can reach as far as this.
I proceeded further and came to the power of discursive reason, to which the data of our senses are referred for judgment. Yet as found in me even reason acknowledged itself to be subject to change, and stretched upward to the source of its own intelligence, withholding its thoughts from the tyranny of habit and detaching itself from the swarms of noisy phantasms. It strove to discover what this light was that bedewed it when it cried out unhesitatingly that the Unchangeable is better than anything liable to change; it sought the fount whence flowed its concept of the Unchangeable—for unless it had in some fashion recognized Immutability, it could never with such certainty have judged it superior to things that change.

And then my mind attained to That Which Is, in the flash of one tremulous glance. Then indeed did I perceive your invisible reality through created things, but to keep my gaze there was beyond my strength. I was forced back through weakness and returned to my familiar surroundings, bearing with me only a loving memory, one that yearned for something of which I had caught the fragrance, but could not yet feast upon.

He realizes the need for Christ the Mediator

Accordingly I looked for a way to gain the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus, who also is God, supreme over all things and blessed for ever. Not yet had I embraced him, though he called out, proclaiming, I am the Way and Truth and the Life, nor had I known him as the food which, though I was not yet strong enough to eat it, he had mingled with our flesh; for the Word became flesh so that your Wisdom, through whom you created all things, might become for us the milk adapted to our infancy. Not yet was I humble enough to grasp the humble Jesus as my God, nor did I know what his weakness had to teach. Your Word, the eternal Truth who towers above the higher spheres of your creation, raises up to himself those creatures who bow before him; but in these lower regions he has built himself a humble dwelling from our clay, and used it to cast down from their pretentious selves those who do not bow before him, and make a bridge to, bring them to himself. He heals their swollen pride and nourishes their love, that they may not wander even further away through self-confidence, but rather weaken as they see before their feet the Godhead grown weak by sharing our garments of skin, and wearily fling themselves down upon him, so that he may arise and lift them up.

I took a different view at the time, regarding Christ my Lord as no more than a man, though a man of excellent wisdom and without peer. I was the more firmly persuaded of this because he had been born of a virgin
and made plain to us by his own example that disdain for temporal goods is a condition for winning immortality; and it seemed to me that through God's solicitude for us in this respect Christ's teaching had acquired incomparable authority. But I could not even begin to guess what a mystery was concealed in the Word made flesh. All I had understood from the facts about him handed down in the scriptures—as, for instance, that he ate, drank, slept, walked, experienced joy and sorrow and spoke to the people—was that his flesh was united to your Word only in conjunction with a human soul and a human consciousness. This must be obvious to anyone who has recognized the immutability of your Word, as I had insofar as I was able, and on this score I had no doubt. It is characteristic of the instability of our soul or mind that it can move its bodily limbs at one moment and not move them at another, can be affected now by some emotion and now again be unaffected, can give expression to wise sentiments at one time and at another remain silent. If these actions were reported of him falsely it would lay the entirety of the scriptures open to suspicion of lying, and then these writings would afford no possibility of saving faith to the human race. In fact, however, the scriptures are trustworthy; and so I acknowledged Christ to be a perfect man: not a human body only, nor a body with a human soul but lacking intelligence. Yet I held that this same man was to be preferred to others not because he was Truth in person, but on account of the outstanding excellence of his human nature and his more perfect participation in wisdom.

Alypius thought that Catholics believed God to be clothed in flesh in such a way that there was in Christ nothing else but godhead and flesh; he did not think their preaching assigned to him a human soul or a human consciousness. Being firmly convinced that the actions Christ was remembered to have performed would have been impossible in the absence of a principle of created, rational life, Alypius was little disposed to Christian faith; but later on he recognized this error to be that of the Apollinarian heretics, and so he came to rejoice with Catholics in their faith and to acquiesce in it. For my own part I admit that it was later still that I learned how sharply divergent is Catholic truth from the falsehood of Photinus with respect to the teaching that the Word was made flesh. Indeed the discrediting of heretics serves to throw into high relief the mind of your Church and the content of sound doctrine; for it was necessary for heresies to emerge in order to show up the people of sound faith among the weak.

Christ the Way

20, 26. these points I was quite certain, but I was far too weak to enjoy you. Yet I readily chattered as though skilled in But in those days, after reading the books of the Platonists and following their advice
to seek for truth beyond corporeal forms, I turned my gaze toward your invisible reality, trying to understand it through created things, and though I was rebuffed I did perceive what that reality was which the darkness of my soul would not permit me to contemplate. I was certain that you exist, that you are infinite but not spread out through space either finite or infinite, and that you exist in the fullest sense because you have always been the same, unvarying in every respect and in no wise subject to change. All other things I saw to have their being from you, and for this I needed but one unassailable proof—the fact that they exist. On the subject, and had I not been seeking your way in Christ our Savior I would more probably have been killed than skilled. For I had already begun to covet a reputation for wisdom, and though fully punished I shed no tears of compunction; rather was I complacently puffed up with knowledge. Where was that charity which builds on the foundation of humility that is Christ Jesus? And when would those books have taught it to me? I believe that you willed me to stumble upon them before I gave my mind to your scriptures, so that the memory of how I had been affected by them might be impressed upon me when later I had been brought to a new gentleness through the study of your books, and your fingers were tending my wounds; thus insight would be mine to recognize the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see the goal but not the way to it and the Way to our beatific homeland, a homeland to be not merely descried but lived in. If I had first become well informed about your holy writings and you had grown sweet to me through my familiarity with them, and then I had afterward chanced upon those other volumes, they might perhaps have torn me loose from the strong root of piety, or else, if I had held firm in the salutary devotion I had absorbed, I might have supposed that it could be acquired equally well from those books, if everyone studied them and nothing else.

Augustine discovers Saint Paul

21, 27. It was therefore with intense eagerness that I seized on the hallowed calligraphy of your Spirit, and most especially the writings of the apostle Paul. In earlier days it had seemed to me that his teaching was self-contradictory, and in conflict with the witness of the law and the prophets, but now as these problems melted away your chaste words presented a single face to me, and I learned to rejoice with reverence.

So I began to read, and discovered that every truth I had read in those other books was taught here also, but now inseparably from your gift of grace, so that no one who sees can boast as though what he sees and the very power to see it were not from you for who has anything that he has not
received? So totally is it a matter of grace that the searcher is not only invited to see you, who are ever the same, but healed as well, so that he can possess you. Whoever is too far off to see may yet walk in the way that will bring him to the place of seeing and possession; for even though a person may be delighted with God's law as far as his inmost self is concerned, how is he to deal with that other law in his bodily members which strives against the law approved by his mind, delivering him as prisoner to the law of sin dominant in his body? You are just, 0 Lord; but we have sinned, and done wrong, and acted impiously, and your hand has lain heavy upon us. With good reason were we assigned to that ancient sinner who presides over death, for he had seduced our will into imitating that perverse will of his by which he refused to stand fast in your truth.

What is a human wretch to do? Who will free him from this death-laden body, if not your grace, given through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you have begotten coeternal with yourself and created at the beginning of all your works? In him the ruler of this world found nothing that deserved death, yet slew him all the same; and so the record of debt that stood against us was annulled.

None of this is to be found in those other books. Not in those pages are traced the lineaments of such loving kindness, or the tears of confession, or the sacrifice of an anguished spirit offered to you from a contrite and humbled heart, or the salvation of a people, or a city chosen to be your bride, or the pledge of the Holy Spirit, or the cup of our ransom. Not there is anyone heard to sing, Shall not my soul surrender itself to God? For my salvation comes from him. He is my very God, my Savior, my protector, and I shall waver no more.

No one there hearkens to a voice calling, Come to me, all you who struggle. They are too scornful to learn from him, because he is gentle and humble of heart, and you have hidden these things from the sagacious and shrewd, and revealed them to little ones.

It is one thing to survey our peaceful homeland from a wooded height but fail to find the way there, and make vain attempts to travel through impassable terrain, while fugitive deserters marshaled by the lion and the dragon obstruct and lurk in ambush; and quite another to walk steadily in the way that leads there, along the well-built road opened up by the heavenly emperor, where no deserters from the celestial army dare commit robbery, for they avoid that way like torment.

In awe-inspiring ways these truths were striking deep roots within me as I read the least of your apostles; I had contemplated your works and was filled with dread.
Reading Guide Questions for Augustine's Confessions, Book VII

1. Augustine opens this book by explaining that it has always been difficult for him to conceive of God correctly [i (1-2); see also v (7)]. How did he conceive of God? Why did he later come to think that his conception of God was false?

2. In section ii (3), Augustine comments on how the Manichees explain the existence of evil, what they think about the human soul, and how it came to be that way. Briefly summarize their position. How does Augustine refute them?

3. In section iii (4), Augustine expresses his dismay that he has no satisfactory explanation for the cause (i.e., source) of evil. His problem is that the Manichees' answer (which is the only one he is aware of) has some profound implications for how God is to be understood. According to Augustine, what are these implications?

4. In section iii (5), Augustine investigates what he had been told, either from the Neoplatonists or from Christians like Ambrose, concerning free will as the reason why humans do wrong. However, Augustine has a problem with--this-answer. What is it?

5. One of the ways that people attempted to know about evil—if not to control it, at least to be prepared for it—was to consult astrologers, whom they claimed were able to read a person's fate in the stars. In section vi (8-10), Augustine describes how Firmimus' story convinced him without a doubt that astrology had nothing to offer that could be trusted concerning the question of the origin of evil. What about the story convinced Augustine that astrology was false?

6. In section ix (13-14), Augustine describes how his search for the source of evil led him to the "books of the Platonists" What did he find there (that is also in the gospel of John and in Paul's letter to the Philippians) that might answer his question? What did he not find there? What explanation does he give for these omissions?

7. Augustine explains how the Neoplatonists taught him
to "return into himself" (that is, to meditate) and there see God. In section x (16), Augustine describes what he saw about God and himself when he meditated. What did he see? What does he conclude after hearing God's voice, saying "Now, I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14)?

8. In section xi (17), Augustine begins to describe how he sought to know about God and the source of evil by examining God's creation. He concludes that things below God (created matter) have being because they come from God, but they do not have being because they are not what God is. What is his point?

9. In section xii (18), Augustine presents an argument that concludes with the statement, 'All things that exist are good' Summarize the argument in your own words. What then does he conclude about evil?

10. In section xiii (19), Augustine makes the observation that there are certain elements of God's creation that are considered evil, despite his belief that God made all things good. How does he account for this?

11. Augustine uses the analogy of bread, which tastes good to a healthy person, but terrible to a sick person, to explain why it is that some people cannot enjoy God and God's word [xvi (22)] Their "sickness," he says, is wickedness. What is wickedness, according to Augustine?

12. In section xvii (23), Augustine describes the three levels of awareness that humans are capable of achieving. What are these? What does Augustine mean, concerning himself when he reached the third stage, when he says, "it attained to that which is"?

1. *Juventus is* associated in his mind with Milan. *Adulescentia* had lasted from 15 to 30.
2. See Jn 17:3.
3. The immutability of God was a key idea for Augustine, as becomes clear especially in this Book VII
5. See 1 Cor 15:52
The Manichees.

The battle between light and darkness was the primary postulate of the Manichees. In the fight some portion of the light-realm had been trapped in matter and darkness; it pervaded all nature but found its highest manifestation in the human soul. The contradiction in which the Manichees thereby involved themselves, spelled out by Augustine here, was used by him in a public disputation with the Manichean Felix, who recanted.

Augustine will examine this question again in *The City of God* XII:1-9, but will find it insoluble.

Plotinus has a similar image, *Enn.* 4.3.9.

See *Sir* 9:3; *Rom* 1:29.

See *Heb* 12:15.

See Ps 106 (107):8 and recurrently.

*Procurasti:* this friend Firminus was "procured" for Augustine by God, as the "books of the Platonists" will be in VII, 9, 13.

See IV, 3, 5.

Or "pursued a career along the world's highways," literally "whitened roads," possibly an allusion to the white surface on Roman roads, where chalk was used.

See IV, 3, 5.

See Ps 17:3(18:2); 29:11(30:10); 58:18(59:17); 62:8(63:7).

*Viam ... vitam,* both titles of Christ; see In 14:6. Allusions to "the Way," implicitly Christ, are frequent in this Book VII.

See Ps 37:9-11(38:8-10).

See X, 27, 38; the language is reminiscent of Porphyry.

In this central position the soul was poised between God and creatures. In XIII, 9, 10 he will develop the idea that love is a weight that drags it up or down.

See Jb 15:26 (Old Latin).

See Ps 88:11(89:10).

See Ps 101:13(102:12).

See Pss 84:6(85:5); 102(103):9.


See PS 18:15 (19:14); Dn 3:40.

See X, 27, 38; I, 7, 12, the special work of the Second Person of the Trinity


That is, Christ. At IX, 13, 35 Augustine speaks of the medicine that hung on the cross, and at IX, 8, 18 of the medicine that watches over us.

See Rv 3:18. Augustine uses this word *collyrium* of the incarnate Christ in *his Homilies on the Gospel of John* 2, 16, and elsewhere.

See Prv 3:34; Jas 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5

See Jn 1:14.

*Procurasti* as in VII, 6, 8.

The translator was Marius Victorinus. It may be significant that Augustine does not identify them more precisely, but commentators have not left it at that. He certainly knew some of Plotinus’ treatises; probably he read some Porphyry at Milan, perhaps in the form of maxims. In *The City of God* VIII, 12 he mentions Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Apuleius Afer as "very noble."
He would have in any case have imbibed some Neo-Platonism from Ambrose’s teaching, to which he continued to listen, and from educated friends.

41 Jn 1:1-12.
42 See In 1:13.
43 Jn 1:14.
44 Phil 2:6-11
45 Jn 1:16.
46 See Wis 7:27.
47 He would have found a kind of trinity in Plotinus: the one, or primordial unity from which everything else derived; the realm of intellect or pure intelligence, in which there was knowledge of differentiated reality; and the realm of soul, where knowledge is groped for. The two latter are emanations from the one and effect the transition to multiplicity. But they are not equal, and the term *logos* is not appropriated to the second element.

48 Rom 5:6.
49 See Rom 8:32.
50 Mt 11:25.
51 See Mt 11:28.
54 Mt 11:29.
55 See Rom 1:21-22. Paul's thought in Rom 1:18-23 is the leitmotif of the following lines: the pagans could and did know God by natural reason, but failed to honor him, and corrupted the truth they had found with polytheism and idolatry.

56 See Rom 1:23
57 See Gn 25:33-34. For Christian writers Egypt traditionally represented the home *par excellence* of idolatry, partly because of the highly developed worship system of ancient Egypt, and partly because of Egypt's special place in the history of the chosen people. In his *Expositions of the Psalms* 46.6 Augustine explains that lentils are "the food of the Egyptians" because grown abundantly there. In the present text Esau's choice to forgo his rights as first-born is seen as prefiguring the choice of the "first-born people."

58 See Acts 7:39.
59 See Ex 32:1-6.
60 See Ps 105(106):20.
61 See Gn 25:23; Rom 9:12. Esau, the elder who yields his privileged place, represents the Jews; Jacob, the younger, the Gentile Christians who inherit Israel's blessing.

62 According to Ex 3:22; 11:2, the departing Israelites took the Egyptians' gold with them. Since Irenaeus and Origen this episode had been allegorically interpreted as the rightful appropriation by Christians of whatever elements of truth and goodness they could find in pagan culture, purified of polytheism and put to better use. Here it is Platonism that is represented by Egyptian gold.

63 See Acts 17:28. In fact the quotation from Aratus is the following words, "For we also are his offspring," which Augustine does not quote. But the point remains: there too, in Athens, there was "gold" before Paul arrived.

64 That is, either from Athens, regarded symbolically as the fountain-head of philosophy, or from Egypt.

65 See Rom 1:25.
66 Plotinus' advice for self-purification as a preparation for the soul's ascent, *Enn.* 1.6.9; see V, 1, 1; V, 3, 4-5. But the phrase also recalls the prodigal son, Lk 15:17

67 See Ps 29:11(30:10).
68 See In 1:9.
An echo of Christ's declaration in Jn 14:7. Augustine immediately goes on to "love" in the next two sentences. These clearly trinitarian terms presumably derive from his subsequent, Christian, reflection on the original experience.

See Ps 1:2; Jer 9:1; Ps 41:4(42:3).

The formula is from Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.8.13, who derived it from Plato's "bottomless sea of unlikeness," *Politics* 273 D6-El. But Lk 15:13 is perhaps equally in Augustine's mind. In his *Expositions of the Psalms* 99, 5 Augustine says, "In your unlikeness to God you have gone far from him; as you become like him you draw near." The idea that distance from God is equivalent to unlikeness became very influential and recurs in many Christian writers and mystics.

He uses eating as a metaphor for assimilating the truth of God in III, 1, 1; IV, 1, 1; X, 6. 8; XIII, 18, 23; but here there may be eucharistic overtones as well.

See Ps 38:12(39:11). In his *Exposition* of this psalm (38, 18) he explains, "What is frailer than a spider's web? You have only to lay a finger lightly on it, and it is a wreck ... and this is what you do to my soul... when you chasten me for my sin."

Ex 3:1.

See Ps 72(73):28.

See Wis 7:27.

See Ps 15(16):2.

See Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.2.5.

See Ps 118(119):37.

See Sir 10:10.

See Wis 9:15, frequently quoted by Augustine in connection with his image of *pondus*, weight.

See Rom 1:20.

See Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.1.11, where it is argued that the abiding principles of beauty and goodness cannot be the property of the individual soul as such, since our rational mind is only intermittently aware of them: they must derive from mind, or the divine source of mind, residing in us.

That is, the "inner sense" he referred to in I, 20, 31, which coordinates sense-impressions and relates them to the perceiving self.


The goal of the Plotinian ascent of the mind to God, but the last phrase echoes 1 Cor 15:52.

In I, 6, 7 the infant Augustine sought from God the milk provided through his nurses; now as a grown man he stands in need of the milk supplied through another infancy, that of the speechless Word, in order to grow strong enough to eat the "food of the mature" mentioned in VII, 10, 16. The reference is primarily to the divine nature, but eucharistic overtones are strong.

See Pry 9:1.

See Gn 2:7.
See 1 Cor 1:25.

See Gn 3:21. In his *Expositions of the Psalms* 103, 1, 8, Augustine interprets these as mortality, following Origen and Ambrose. A rich symbolism developed around this "old" clothing and the "putting on of Christ" in baptism.

Apollinaris of Laodicea, whose theories were condemned in 374, 380, and 381, held that there was no human soul in Christ, its functions being assumed by the Word.

Photinus, Bishop of Sirmium c. 340, denied the pre-existence of Christ, holding that he first came to exist in the Virgin's womb; hence he was only man, though illuminated by special divine influence.

See 1 Tm 1:10; 2 Tm 4:3-4; Ti 1:9; 2:1.

See 1 Cor 11:19. For "the weak" see Rom 14:1, to which Alypius will appeal in the garden scene, VIII, 12, 30.

See Rom 1:20.

See Ps 101:28(102:27); Heb 1:12.

See Rom 11:36.

See Ti 1:4.

*Non peritus sed periturus.*

See 1 Cor 8:1; 13:4.

See 1 Cor 3:11.

This heavenly *patria* is the counter-image to the "region of unlikeness" in which he found himself; see VII, 10, 16.

See Mt 5:17; 7:12; Lk 16:16.

See Ps 11:7(12:6).

See Ps 2:11.

See 1 Cor 4:7.

See Ps 101:28(102:27); Heb 1:12.

See Rom 7:22-23.

See Tb 3:2; Ps 118(119):137.

See Dn 3:27, 29; 1 Kgs 8:47.

See Ps 31(32):4.

See Heb 2:14.

See In 8:44.

See Rom 7:24-25.

See Prv 8:22. The Arians had appealed to this verb "created" in support of their doctrine of the subordination of the Son; Augustine in common with Athanasius, Ambrose, and others interprets it of Christ's humanity

See Lk 23:14-15; In 14:30.

See Col 2:14.

See Ps 50:19(51:17).

See Rv 21:2.

See 2 Cor 5:5; 1:22.


See Mt 11:28-29.

See Mt 11:25.

As Moses saw the promised land from afar, Dt 32:49.

See Ps 90(91):13.

See 1 Cor 15:9.

See Hab 3:2.