

The Confessions (Book XIII)

Augustine of Hippo

Patristic · Nicene & Post-Nicene · Confession

STROMATA 77

Downloaded from The Stromata (thestromata.com). Free for personal, educational, and ministry use.

INTRODUCTION

The final book moves through the six days of creation as an extended allegory of the soul's journey toward God, and ends with the seventh day — a sabbath that has no evening. The Confessions closes where it began: with the restless heart. But now the rest is in view, not as a memory but as a promise. Augustine's last question is whether God needs our works or our love, and his answer — that God asks us to love, that our loving is itself the gift God gives and then receives back — is, quietly, the thesis of the whole.

Of the goodness of God explained in the creation of things, and of the Trinity as found in the first words of Genesis. The story concerning the origin of the world (Genesis 1) is allegorically explained, and he applies it to those things which God works for sanctified and blessed man. Finally, he makes an end of this work, having implored eternal rest from God.

Chapter 1. He Calls Upon God, and Proposes to Himself to Worship Him.

I Call upon You, my God, my mercy, who made me, and who did not forget me, though forgetful of You. I call You into my soul, which by the desire which Thou inspirest in it Thou preparest for Your reception. Do not Thou forsake me calling upon You, who anticipated me before I called, and importunately urged with manifold calls that I should hear You from afar, and be converted, and call upon You who called me. For Thou, O Lord, have blotted out all my evil deserts, that You might not repay into my hands wherewith I have fallen from You, and You have anticipated all my good deserts, that You might repay into Your hands wherewith You made me; because before I was, You were, nor was I \[anything\] to which You might grant being. And yet behold, I am, out of Your goodness, anticipating all this which You have made me, and of which You have made me. For neither had Thou stood in need of me, nor am I such a good as to be helpful unto You, my Lord and God; not that I may so serve You as though You were fatigued in working, or lest Your power may be less if lacking my assistance nor that, like the land, I may so cultivate You that You would be uncultivated did I cultivate You not but that I may serve and worship You, to the end that I may have well-being from You; from whom it is that I am one susceptible of well-being.

Chapter 2. All Creatures Subsist from the Plenitude of Divine Goodness.

For of the plenitude of Your goodness Your creature subsists, that a good, which could profit You nothing, nor though of You was equal to You, might yet be, since it could be made of You. For what did heaven and earth, which You made in the beginning, deserve of You? Let those spiritual and corporeal natures, which Thou in Your wisdom made, declare what they deserve of You to depend thereon — even the inchoate and formless, each in its own kind, either spiritual or corporeal, going into excess, and into remote unlikeness unto You (the spiritual, though formless, more excellent than if it were a formed body; and the corporeal, though formless, more excellent than if it were altogether nothing), and thus they as formless would depend upon Your Word, unless by the same Word they were recalled to Your Unity, and endued with form, and from You, the one sovereign Good, were all made very good. How have they deserved of You, that they should be even formless, since they would not be even this except from You?

How has corporeal matter deserved of You, to be even invisible and formless, Genesis 1:2 since it were not even this had Thou not made it; and therefore since it was not, it could not deserve of You that it should be made? Or how could the inchoate spiritual creature deserve of You, that even it should flow darksomenly like the deep — unlike You, had it not been by the same Word turned to that by Whom it was created, and by Him so enlightened become light, although not equally, yet conformably to that Form which is equal unto You? For as to a body, to be is not all one with being beautiful, for then it could not be deformed; so also to a created spirit, to live is not all one with living wisely, for then it would be wise unchangeably. But it is good for it always to hold fast unto You, lest, in turning from You, it lose that light which it has obtained in turning to You, and relapse into a light resembling the darksome deep. For even we ourselves, who in respect of the soul are a spiritual creature, having turned away from You, our light, were in that life sometimes darkness; Ephesians 5:8 and do labour amidst the remains of our darkness, until in Your Only One we become Your righteousness, like the mountains of God. For we have been Your judgments, which are like the great deep.

Chapter 3. Genesis I. 3 — Of Light,— He Understands as It is Seen in the Spiritual Creature.

But what Thou said in the beginning of the creation, Let there be light, and there was light, Genesis 1:3 I do not unfitly understand of the spiritual creature; because there was even then a kind of life, which You might illuminate. But as it had not deserved of You that it should be such a life as could be enlightened, so neither, when it already was, has it deserved of You that it should be enlightened. For neither could its formlessness be pleasing unto You, unless it became light — not by merely existing, but by beholding the illuminating light, and cleaving unto it; so also, that it lives, and lives happily, it owes to nothing whatsoever but to Your grace; being converted by means of a better change unto that which can be changed neither into better nor into worse; the which Thou only art because Thou only simply art, to whom it is not one thing to live, another to live blessedly, since You are Yourself Your own Blessedness.

Chapter 4. All Things Have Been Created by the Grace of God, and are Not of Him as Standing in Need of Created Things.

What, therefore, could there be wanting unto Your good, which You Yourself art, although these things had either never been, or had remained formless — the which You made not out of any want, but out of the plenitude of Your goodness, restraining them and converting them to form not as though Your joy were perfected by them? For to You, being perfect, their imperfection is displeasing, and therefore were they perfected by You, and were pleasing unto You; but not as if You were imperfect, and were to be perfected in their perfection. For Your good Spirit was borne over the waters, Genesis 1:2 not borne up by them as if He rested upon them. For those in whom Your good Spirit is said to rest, Numbers 11:25 He causes to rest in Himself. But Your incorruptible and unchangeable will, which in itself is all-sufficient for itself, was borne over that life which You had made, to which to live is not all one with living happily, since, flowing in its own darkness, it lives also; for which it remains to be converted unto Him by whom it was made, and to live more and more by the fountain of life, and in His light to see light, and to be perfected, and enlightened, and made happy.

Chapter 5. He Recognises the Trinity in the First Two Verses of Genesis.

Behold now, the Trinity appears unto me in an enigma, which Thou, O my God, art, since Thou, O Father, in the Beginning of our wisdom — Which is Your Wisdom, born of Yourself, equal and co-eternal unto You — that is, in Your Son, hast created heaven and earth. Many things have we said of the heaven of heavens, and of the earth invisible and formless, and of the darksome deep, in reference to the wandering defects of its spiritual deformity, were it not converted unto Him from whom was its life, such as it was, and by His enlightening became a beauteous life, and the heaven of that heaven which was afterwards set between water and water. And under the name of God, I now held the Father, who made these things; and under the name of the Beginning, the Son, in whom He made these things; and believing, as I did, that my God was the Trinity, I sought further in His holy words, and behold, Your Spirit was borne over the waters. Behold the Trinity, O my God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — the Creator of all creation.

Chapter 6. Why the Holy Ghost Should Have Been Mentioned After the Mention of Heaven and Earth.

But what was the cause, O Thou true-speaking Light? Unto You do I lift up my heart, let it not teach me vain things; disperse its darkness, and tell me, I beseech You, by our mother charity, tell me, I beseech You, the reason why, after the mention of heaven, and of the earth invisible and formless, and darkness upon the deep, Your Scripture should then at length mention Your Spirit? Was it because it was meet that it should be spoken of Him that He was borne over, and this could not be said, unless that were first mentioned over which Your Spirit may be understood to have been borne? For neither was He borne over the Father, nor the Son, nor could it rightly be said that He was borne over if He were borne over nothing. That, therefore, was first to be spoken of over which He might be borne; and then He, whom it

was not meet to mention otherwise than as having been borne. Why, then, was it not meet that it should otherwise be mentioned of Him, than as having been borne over?

Chapter 7. That the Holy Spirit Brings Us to God.

Hence let him that is able now follow Your apostle with his understanding where he thus speaks, because Your love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us; Romans 5:5 and where, concerning spiritual gifts, he teaches and shows unto us a more excellent way of charity; and where he bows his knees unto You for us, that we may know the super-eminent knowledge of the love of Christ. Ephesians 3:14-19 And, therefore, from the beginning was He super-eminent above the waters. To whom shall I tell this? How speak of the weight of lustful desires, pressing downwards to the steep abyss? And how charity raises us up again, through Your Spirit which was borne over the waters? To whom shall I tell it? How tell it? For neither are there places in which we are merged and emerge. What can be more like, and yet more unlike? They be affections, they be loves; the filthiness of our spirit flowing away downwards with the love of cares, and the sanctity of Yours raising us upwards by the love of freedom from care; that we may lift our hearts unto You where Your Spirit is borne over the waters; and that we may come to that pre-eminent rest, when our soul shall have passed through the waters which have no substance.

Chapter 8. That Nothing Whatever, Short of God, Can Yield to the Rational Creature a Happy Rest.

The angels fell, the soul of man fell and they have thus indicated the abyss in that dark deep, ready for the whole spiritual creation, unless You had said from the beginning, Let there be light, and there had been light, and every obedient intelligence of Your celestial City had cleaved to You, and rested in Your Spirit, which unchangeably is borne over everything changeable. Otherwise, even the heaven of heavens itself would have been a darksome deep, whereas now it is light in the Lord. For even in that wretched restlessness of the spirits who fell away, and, when unclothed of the garments of Your light, discovered their own darkness, dost Thou sufficiently disclose how noble You have made the rational creature; to which nought which is inferior to You will suffice to yield a happy rest, and so not even herself. For Thou, O our God, shall enlighten our darkness; from You are derived our garments of light, and then shall our darkness be as the noonday. Give Yourself unto me, O my God, restore Yourself unto me; behold, I love You, and if it be too little, let me love You more strongly. I cannot measure my love, so that I may come to know how much there is yet wanting in me, ere my life run into Your embracements, and not be turned away until it be hidden in the secret place of Your Presence. This only I know, that woe is me except in You — not only without, but even also within myself; and all plenty which is not my God is poverty to me.

Chapter 9. Why the Holy Spirit Was Only Borne Over The Waters.

But was not either the Father or the Son borne over the waters? If we understand this to mean in space, as a body, then neither was the Holy Spirit; but if the incommutable super-eminence of Divinity above everything mutable, then both Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost were borne over the waters. Why, then, is this said of Your Spirit only? Why is it said of Him alone? As if He had been in place who is not in place, of whom only it is written, that He is Your gift? In Your gift we rest; there we enjoy You. Our rest is our place. Love lifts us up there, and Your good Spirit lifts our lowliness from the gates of death. In Your good pleasure lies our peace. The body by its own weight gravitates towards its own place. Weight goes not downward only, but to its own place. Fire tends upwards, a stone downwards. They are propelled by their own weights, they seek their own places. Oil poured under the water is raised above the water; water poured upon oil sinks under the oil. They are propelled by their own weights, they seek their own places. Out of order, they are restless; restored to order, they are at rest. My weight is my love; by it am I borne wherever I am borne. By Your Gift we are inflamed, and are borne upwards; we wax hot inwardly, and go forwards. We ascend Your ways that be in our heart, and sing a song of degrees; we glow inwardly with Your fire, with Your good fire, and we go, because we go upwards to the peace of Jerusalem; for glad was I when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. There has Your good pleasure placed us, that we may desire no other thing than to dwell there forever.

Chapter 10. That Nothing Arose Save by the Gift of God.

Happy creature, which, though in itself it was other than You, has known no other state than that as soon as it was made, it was, without any interval of time, by Your Gift, which is borne over everything mutable, raised up by that calling whereby Thou said, Let there be light, and there was light. Whereas in us there is a difference of times, in that we were darkness, and are made light; Ephesians 5:8 but of that it is only said what it would have been had it not been enlightened. And this is so spoken as if it

had been fleeting and darksome before; that so the cause whereby it was made to be otherwise might appear — that is to say, being turned to the unfailing Light it might become light. Let him who is able understand this; and let him who is not, ask of You. Why should he trouble me, as if I could enlighten any man that comes into the world?

Chapter 11. That the Symbols of the Trinity in Man, to Be, to Know, and to Will, are Never Thoroughly Examined.

Which of us understands the Almighty Trinity? And yet which speaks not of It, if indeed it be It? Rare is that soul which, while it speaks of It, knows what it speaks of. And they contend and strive, but no one without peace sees that vision. I could wish that men would consider these three things that are in themselves. These three are far other than the Trinity; but I speak of things in which they may exercise and prove themselves, and feel how far other they be. But the three things I speak of are, To Be, to Know, and to Will. For I Am, and I Know, and I Will; I Am Knowing and Willing; and I Know myself to Be and to Will; and I Will to Be and to Know. In these three, therefore, let him who can see how inseparable a life there is — even one life, one mind, and one essence; finally, how inseparable is the distinction, and yet a distinction. Surely a man has it before him; let him look into himself, and see, and tell me. But when he discovers and can say anything of these, let him not then think that he has discovered that which is above these Unchangeable, which Is unchangeably, and Knows unchangeably, and Wills unchangeably. And whether on account of these three there is also, where they are, a Trinity; or whether these three be in Each, so that the three belong to Each; or whether both ways at once, wondrously, simply, and yet diversely, in Itself a limit unto Itself, yet illimitable; whereby It is, and is known unto Itself, and suffices to Itself, unchangeably the Self-same, by the abundant magnitude of its Unity — who can readily conceive? Who in any wise express it? Who in any way rashly pronounce thereon?

Chapter 12. Allegorical Explanation of Genesis, Chap. I., Concerning the Origin of the Church and Its Worship.

Proceed in your confession, say to the Lord your God, O my faith, Holy, Holy, Holy, O Lord my God, in Your name have we been baptized, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in Your name do we baptize, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Matthew 28:19 because among us also in His Christ did God make heaven and earth, namely, the spiritual and carnal people of His Church. Yea, and our earth, before it received the form of doctrine, Romans 6:17 was invisible and formless, and we were covered with the darkness of ignorance. For Thou correctest man for iniquity, and Your judgments are a great deep. But because Your Spirit was borne over the waters, Genesis 1:3 Your mercy forsook not our misery, and Thou said, Let there be light, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 3:2 Repent, let there be light. And because our soul was troubled within us, we remembered You, O Lord, from the land of Jordan, and that mountain equal unto Yourself, but little for our sakes; and upon our being displeased with our darkness, we turned unto You, and there was light. And, behold, we were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord. Ephesians 5:8

Chapter 13. That the Renewal of Man is Not Completed in This World.

But as yet by faith, not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7 for we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope. Romans 8:24 As yet deep calls unto deep but in the noise of Your waterspouts. And as yet does he that says, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, 1 Corinthians 3:1 even he, as yet, does not count himself to have apprehended, and forgets those things which are behind, and reaches forth to those things which are before, Philippians 3:13 and groans being burdened; and his soul thirsts after the living God, as the hart after the water-brooks, and says, When shall I come? desiring to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven; 2 Corinthians 5:2 and calls upon this lower deep, saying, Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2 And, Be not children in understanding, howbeit in malice be children, that in understanding you may be perfect; and O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Galatians 3:1 But now not in his own voice, but in Yours who sent Your Spirit from above; Acts 2:19 through Him who ascended up on high, Ephesians 4:8 and set open the flood-gates of His gifts, Malachi 3:10 that the force of His streams might make glad the city of God. For, for Him does the friend of the bridegroom John 3:29 sigh, having now the first-fruits of the Spirit laid up with Him, yet still groaning within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body; Romans 8:23 to Him he sighs, for he is a member of the Bride; for Him is he jealous, for he is the friend of the Bridegroom; John 3:29 for Him is he jealous, not for himself; because in the voice of Your waterspouts, not in his own voice, does he call on that other deep, for whom being jealous he fears, lest that, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in our Bridegroom, You only Son. What a light of beauty will that be when we shall see Him as He is, and those tears be passed away which have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?

Chapter 14. That Out of the Children of the Night and of the Darkness, Children of the Light and of the Day are Made.

And so say I too, O my God, where are You? Behold where You are! In You I breathe a little, when I pour out my soul by myself in the voice of joy and praise, the sound of him that keeps holy-day. And yet it is cast down, because it relapses and becomes a deep, or rather it feels that it is still a deep. Unto it does my faith speak which You have kindled to enlighten my feet in the night, Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? hope in God; His word is a lamp unto my feet. Hope and endure until the night — the mother of the wicked — until the anger of the Lord be overpast, Job 14:13 whereof we also were once children who were sometimes darkness, the remains whereof we carry about us in our body, dead on account of sin, Romans 8:10 until the day break and the shadows flee away. Song of Songs 2:17 Hope in the Lord. In the morning I shall stand in Your presence, and contemplate You; I shall for ever confess unto You. In the morning I shall stand in Your presence, and shall see the health of my countenance, my God, who also shall quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit that dwells in us, Romans 8:11 because in mercy He was borne over our inner darksome and floating deep. Whence we have in this pilgrimage received an earnest 2 Corinthians 1:22 that we should now be light, while as yet we are saved by hope, Romans 8:24 and are the children of light, and the children

of the day — not the children of the night nor of the darkness, which yet we have been. Between whom and us, in this as yet uncertain state of human knowledge, Thou only dividest, who provest our hearts and callest the light day, and the darkness night. Genesis 1:5 For who discerns us but Thou? But what have we that we have not received of You? 1 Corinthians 4:7 Out of the same lump vessels unto honour, of which others also are made to dishonour. Romans 9:21

Chapter 15. Allegorical Explanation of the Firmament and Upper Works, Ver. 6.

Or who but Thou, our God, made for us that firmament Genesis 1:6 of authority over us in Your divine Scripture? As it is said, For heaven shall be folded up like a scroll; and now it is extended over us like a skin. For Your divine Scripture is of more sublime authority, since those mortals through whom You dispensed it unto us underwent mortality. And You know, O Lord, You know, how Thou with skins clothed men when by sin they became mortal. Whence as a skin have You stretched out the firmament of Your Book; that is to say, Your harmonious words, which by the ministry of mortals You have spread over us. For by their very death is that solid firmament of authority in Your discourses set forth by them more sublimely extended above all things that are under it, the which, while they were living here, was not so eminently extended. You had not as yet spread abroad the heaven like a skin; You had not as yet announced everywhere the report of their deaths.

Let us look, O Lord, upon the heavens, the work of Your fingers; clear from our eyes that mist with which You have covered them. There is that testimony of Yours which gives wisdom unto the little ones. Perfect, O my God, Your praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. Nor have we known any other books so destructive to pride, so destructive to the enemy and the defender, who resists Your reconciliation in defense of his own sins. I know not, O Lord, I know not other such pure words which so persuade me to confession, and make my neck submissive to Your yoke, and invite me to serve You for nought. Let me understand these things, good Father. Grant this to me, placed under them; because You have established these things for those placed under them.

Other waters there be above this firmament, I believe immortal, and removed from earthly corruption. Let them praise Your Name — those super-celestial people, Your angels, who have no need to look up at this firmament, or by reading to attain the knowledge of Your Word, — let them praise You. For they always behold Your face, Matthew 18:10 and therein read without any syllables in time what Your eternal will wills. They read, they choose, they love. They are always reading; and that which they read never passes away. For, by choosing and by loving, they read the very unchangeableness of Your counsel. Their book is not closed, nor is the scroll folded up, Isaiah 34:4 because You Yourself art this to them, yea, and art so eternally; because You have appointed them above this firmament, which You have made firm over the weakness of the lower people, where they might look up and learn Your mercy, announcing in time You who hast made times. For Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds. The clouds pass away, but the heaven remains. The preachers of Your Word pass away from this life into another; but Your Scripture is spread abroad over the people, even to the end of the world. Yea, both heaven and earth shall pass away, but Your Words shall not pass away. Matthew 24:35 Because the scroll shall be rolled together, Isaiah 34:4 and the grass over which it was spread shall with its goodliness pass away; but Your Word remains for ever, which now appears unto us in the dark image of the clouds, and through the glass of the heavens, not as it is; 1 Corinthians 13:12 because we also, although we be the well-beloved of Your Son, yet it has not yet appeared what we shall be. 1 John 3:2 He looks through the lattice Song of Songs 2:9 of our flesh, and He is fair-speaking, and has inflamed us, and we run after His odours. Song of Songs 1:3 But when He shall appear, then shall we be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2 As He is, O Lord, shall we see Him, although the time be not yet.

Chapter 16. That No One But the Unchangeable Light Knows Himself.

For altogether as You are, Thou only know, Who art unchangeably, and know unchangeably, and willest unchangeably. And Your Essence Knows and Wills unchangeably; and Your Knowledge Is, and Wills unchangeably; and Your Will Is, and Knows unchangeably. Nor does it appear just to You, that as the Unchangeable Light knows Itself, so should It be known by that which is enlightened and changeable. Therefore unto You is my soul as land where no water is, because as it cannot of itself enlighten itself, so it cannot of itself satisfy itself. For so is the fountain of life with You, like as in Your light we shall see light.

Chapter 17. Allegorical Explanation of the Sea and the Fruit-Bearing Earth — Verses 9 and 11.

Who has gathered the embittered together into one society? For they have all the same end, that of temporal and earthly happiness, on account of which they do all things, although they may fluctuate with an innumerable variety of cares. Who, O Lord, unless Thou, said, Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear, which thirsts after You? For the sea also is Yours, and You have made it, and Your hands prepared the dry land. For neither is the bitterness of men's wills, but the gathering together of waters called sea; for Thou even curbest the wicked desires of men's souls, and fixest their bounds, how far they may be permitted to advance, and that their waves may be broken against each other; and thus dost Thou make it a sea, by the order of Your dominion over all things.

But as for the souls that thirst after You, and that appear before You (being by other bounds divided from the society of the sea), them Thou waterest by a secret and sweet spring, that the earth may bring forth her fruit, and, You, O Lord God, so commanding, our soul may bud forth works of mercy according to their kind, — loving our neighbour in the relief of his bodily necessities, having seed in itself according to its likeness, when from our infirmity we compassionate even to the relieving of the needy; helping them in a like manner as we would that help should be brought unto us if we were in a like need; not only in the things that are easy, as in herb yielding seed, but also in the protection of our assistance, in our very strength, like the tree yielding fruit; that is, a good turn in delivering him who suffers an injury from the hand of the powerful, and in furnishing him with the shelter of protection by the mighty strength of just judgment.

Chapter 18. Of the Lights and Stars of Heaven — Of Day and Night, Ver. 14.

Thus, O Lord, thus, I beseech You, let there arise, as You make, as You give joy and ability — let truth spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven, and let there be lights in the firmament. Genesis 1:14 Let us break our bread to the hungry, and let us bring the houseless poor to our house. Isaiah 58:7 Let us clothe the naked, and despise not those of our own flesh. The which fruits having sprung forth from the earth, behold, because it is good; Genesis 1:12 and let our temporary light burst forth; Isaiah 58:8 and let us, from this inferior fruit of action, possessing the delights of contemplation and of the Word of Life above, let us appear as lights in the world, Philippians 2:15 clinging

to the firmament of Your Scripture. For therein You make it plain unto us, that we may distinguish between things intelligible and things of sense, as if between the day and the night; or between souls, given, some to things intellectual, others to things of sense; so that now not Thou only in the secret of Your judgment, as before the firmament was made, dividest between the light and the darkness, but Your spiritual children also, placed and ranked in the same firmament (Your grace being manifest throughout the world), may give light upon the earth, and divide between the day and night, and be for signs of times; because old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new; 2 Corinthians 5:17 and because our salvation is nearer than when we believed; Romans 13:11-12 and because the night is far spent, the day is at hand; Romans 13:11-12 and because You will crown Your year with blessing, sending the labourers of Your goodness into Your harvest, Matthew 9:38 in the sowing of which others have laboured, sending also into another field, whose harvest shall be in the end. Matthew 13:39 Thus Thou grantest the prayers of him that asks, and blessest the years of the just; Proverbs 10:6 but You are the same, and in Your years which fail not Thou preparest a garner for our passing years. For by an eternal counsel Thou dost in their proper seasons bestow upon the earth heavenly blessings.

For, indeed, to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, as if the greater light, on account of those who are delighted with the light of manifest truth, as in the beginning of the day; but to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, as if the lesser light; to another faith; to another the gift of healing; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues. And all these as stars. For all these works the one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every man his own as He wills; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 and making stars appear manifestly, to profit withal. 1 Corinthians 12:7 But the word of knowledge, wherein are contained all sacraments, which are varied in their periods like the moon, and the other conceptions of gifts, which are successively reckoned up as stars, inasmuch as they come short of that splendour of wisdom in which the fore-mentioned day rejoices, are only for the beginning of the night. For they are necessary to such as he Your most prudent servant could not speak unto as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal 1 Corinthians 3:1 — even he who speaks wisdom among those that are perfect. 1 Corinthians 2:6 But the natural man, as a babe in Christ — and a drinker of milk — until he be strengthened for solid meat, and his eye be enabled to look upon the Sun, let him not dwell in his own deserted night, but let him be contented with the light of the moon and the stars. Thou reasonest these things with us, our All-wise God, in Your Book, Your firmament, that we may discern all things in an admirable contemplation, although as yet in signs, and in times, and in days, and in years.

Chapter 19. All Men Should Become Lights in the Firmament of Heaven.

But first, Wash you, make you clean; put away iniquity from your souls, and from before my eyes, that the dry land may appear. Learn to do well; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow, that the earth may bring forth the green herb for meat, and the tree bearing fruit; and come let us reason together, says the Lord, Isaiah 1:18 that there may be lights in the firmament of heaven, and that they may shine upon the earth. Genesis 1:15 That rich man asked of the good Master what he should do to attain eternal life. Matthew 19:16 Let the good Master, whom he thought a man, and nothing more, tell him (but He is good because He is God) — let Him tell him, that if he would enter into life he must keep the commandments; let him banish from himself the bitterness of malice and wickedness; 1 Corinthians 5:8 let him not kill, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness; that the dry land may appear, and bud forth the honouring of father and mother, and the love of our neighbour. Matthew 19:16-19 All these, says he, have I kept. Whence, then, are there so many thorns, if the earth be fruitful? Go, root up the woody thicket of avarice; sell that you have, and be filled with fruit by giving to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and follow the Lord if you will be perfect, coupled with those among whom He speaks wisdom, Who knows what to distribute to the day and to the night, that you also may know it, that for you also there may be lights in the firmament of heaven, which will not be unless your heart be there; Matthew 6:21 which likewise also will not be unless your treasure be there, as you have heard from the good Master. But the barren earth was grieved, Matthew 19:22 and the thorns choked the word. Matthew 13:7, 22

But you, chosen generation, 1 Peter 2:9 you weak things of the world, who have forsaken all things that you might follow the Lord, go after Him, and confound the things which are mighty; 1 Corinthians 1:27 go after Him, you beautiful feet, Isaiah 52:7 and shine in the firmament, Daniel 12:3 that the heavens may declare His glory, dividing between the light of the perfect, though not as of the angels, and the darkness of the little, though not despised ones. Shine over all the earth, and let the day, lightened by the sun, utter unto day the word of wisdom; and let night, shining by the moon, announce unto night the word of knowledge. The moon and the stars shine for the night, but the night obscures them not, since they illumine it in its degree. For behold God (as it were) saying, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven. There came suddenly a sound from heaven, as it had been the rushing of a mighty wind, and there appeared cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. Acts 2:3 And there were made lights in the firmament of heaven, having the word of life. 1 John 1:1 Run to and fro everywhere, you holy fires, you beautiful fires; for you are the light of the world, nor are you put under a bushel. Matthew 5:14 He to whom you cleave is exalted, and has exalted you. Run to and fro, and be known unto all nations.

Chapter 20. Concerning Reptiles and Flying Creatures (Ver. 20) — The Sacrament of Baptism Being Regarded.

Let the sea also conceive and bring forth your works, and let the waters bring forth the moving creatures that have life. Genesis 1:20 For you, who take forth the precious from the vile, Jeremiah 15:19 have been made the mouth of God, through which He says, Let the waters bring forth, not the living creature which the earth brings forth, but the moving creature having life, and the fowls that fly above the earth. For Your sacraments, O God, by the ministry of Your holy ones, have made their way amid the billows

of the temptations of the world, to instruct the Gentiles in Your Name, in Your Baptism. And among these things, many great works of wonder have been wrought, like as great whales; and the voices of Your messengers flying above the earth, near to the firmament of Your Book; that being set over them as an authority, under which they were to fly wherever they were to go. For there is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard; seeing their sound has gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world, because Thou, O Lord, hast multiplied these things by blessing. Genesis 1:4

Whether do I lie, or do I mingle and confound, and not distinguish between the clear knowledge of these things that are in the firmament of heaven, and the corporeal works in the undulating sea and under the firmament of heaven? For of those things whereof the knowledge is solid and defined, without increase by generation, as it were lights of wisdom and knowledge, yet of these self-same things the material operations are many and varied; and one thing in growing from another is multiplied by Your blessing, O God, who hast refreshed the fastidiousness of mortal senses; so that in the knowledge of our mind, one thing may, through the motions of the body, be in many ways set out and expressed. These sacraments have the waters brought forth; but in Your Word. The wants of the people estranged from the eternity of Your truth have produced them, but in Your Gospel; because the waters themselves have cast them forth, the bitter weakness of which was the cause of these things being sent forth in Your Word.

Now all things are fair that You have made, but behold, You are inexpressibly fairer who hast made all things; from whom had not Adam fallen, the saltiness of the sea would never have flowed from him — the human race so profoundly curious, and boisterously swelling, and restlessly moving; and thus there would be no need that Your dispensers should work in many waters, in a corporeal and sensible manner, mysterious doings and sayings. For so these creeping and flying creatures now present themselves to my mind, whereby men, instructed, initiated, and subjected by corporeal sacraments, should not further profit, unless their soul had a higher spiritual life, and unless, after the word of admission, it looked forwards to perfection.

Chapter 21. Concerning the Living Soul, Birds, and Fishes (Ver. 24)— The Sacrament of the Eucharist Being Regarded.

And hereby, in Your Word, not the depth of the sea, but the earth parted from the bitterness of the waters, brings forth not the creeping and flying creature that has life, Genesis 1:20 but the living soul itself. Genesis 2:7 For now has it no longer need of baptism, as the heathen have, and as itself had when it was covered with the waters — for no other entrance is there into the kingdom of heaven, John 3:5 since You have appointed that this should be the entrance — nor does it seek great works of miracles by which to cause faith; for it is not such that, unless it shall have seen signs and wonders, it will not believe, John 4:48 when now the faithful earth is separated from the waters of the sea, rendered bitter by infidelity; and tongues are for a sign, not to those that believe, but to those that believe not. 1 Corinthians 14:22 Nor then does the earth, which You have founded above the waters, stand in need of that flying kind which at Your word the waters brought forth. Send Your word forth into it by Your messengers. For we relate their works, but it is Thou who work in them, that in it they may work out

a living soul. The earth brings it forth, because the earth is the cause that they work these things in the soul; as the sea has been the cause that they wrought upon the moving creatures that have life, and the fowls that fly under the firmament of heaven, of which the earth has now no need; although it feeds on the fish which was taken out of the deep, upon that table which You have prepared in the presence of those that believe. For therefore He was raised from the deep, that He might feed the dry land; and the fowl, though bred in the sea, is yet multiplied upon the earth. For of the first preachings of the Evangelists, the infidelity of men was the prominent cause; but the faithful also are exhorted, and are manifoldly blessed by them day by day. But the living soul takes its origin from the earth, for it is not profitable, unless to those already among the faithful, to restrain themselves from the love of this world, that so their soul may live unto You, which was dead while living in pleasures, 1 Timothy 5:6 — in death-bearing pleasures, O Lord, for You are the vital delight of the pure heart.

Now, therefore, let Your ministers work upon the earth — not as in the waters of infidelity, by announcing and speaking by miracles, and sacraments, and mystic words; in which ignorance, the mother of admiration, may be intent upon them, in fear of those hidden signs. For such is the entrance unto the faith for the sons of Adam forgetful of You, while they hide themselves from Your face, Genesis 3:8 and become a darksome deep. But let Your ministers work even as on the dry land, separated from the whirlpools of the great deep; and let them be an example unto the faithful, by living before them, and by stimulating them to imitation. For thus do men hear not with an intent to hear merely, but to act also. Seek the Lord, and your soul shall live, that the earth may bring forth the living soul. Be not conformed to this world. Romans 12:2 Restrain yourselves from it; the soul lives by avoiding those things which it dies by affecting. Restrain yourselves from the unbridled wildness of pride, from the indolent voluptuousness of luxury, and from the false name of knowledge; so that wild beasts may be tamed, the cattle subdued, and serpents harmless. For these are the motions of the mind in allegory; that is to say, the haughtiness of pride, the delight of lust, and the poison of curiosity are the motions of the dead soul; for the soul dies not so as to lose all motion, because it dies by forsaking the fountain of life, and so is received by this transitory world, and is conformed unto it.

But Your Word, O God, is the fountain of eternal life, and passes not away; therefore this departure is kept in check by Your word when it is said to us, Be not conformed unto this world, Romans 12:2 so that the earth may bring forth a living soul in the fountain of life — a soul restrained in Your Word, by Your Evangelists, by imitating the followers of Your Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1 For this is after his kind; because a man is stimulated to emulation by his friend. Be, says he, as I am, for I am as you are. Galatians 4:12 Thus in the living soul shall there be good beasts, in gentleness of action. For You have commanded, saying, Go on with your business in meekness, and you shall be beloved by all men; Sirach 3:17etc and good cattle, which neither if they eat, shall they over-abound, nor if they do not eat, have they any want; 1 Corinthians 8:8 and good serpents, not destructive to do hurt, but wise Matthew 10:16 to take heed; and exploring only so much of this temporal nature as is sufficient that eternity may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are. Romans 1:20 For these animals are subservient to reason, when, being kept in check from a deadly advance, they live, and are good.

Chapter 22. He Explains the Divine Image (Ver. 26) of the Renewal of the Mind.

For behold, O Lord our God, our Creator, when our affections have been restrained from the love of the world, by which we died by living ill, and began to be a living soul by living well; and Your word which Thou spoke by Your apostle is made good in us, Be not conformed to this world; next also follows that which You presently subjoined, saying, But be transformed by the renewing of your mind, Romans 12:2 — not now after your kind, as if following your neighbour who went before you, nor as if living after the example of a better man (for You have not said, Let man be made after his kind, but, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness), Genesis 1:26 that we may prove what Your will is. For to this purpose said that dispenser of Yours — begetting children by the gospel, 1 Corinthians 4:15 — that he might not always have them babes, whom he would feed on milk, and cherish as a nurse; 1 Thessalonians 2:7 be transformed, says He, by the renewing of your mind, that he may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2 Therefore You say not, Let man be made, but, Let us make man. Nor sayest Thou, after his kind, but, after our image and likeness. Because, being renewed in his mind, and beholding and apprehending Your truth, man needs not man as his director Jeremiah 31:34 that he may imitate his kind; but by Your direction proves what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of Yours. And Thou teachest him, now made capable, to perceive the Trinity of the Unity, and the Unity of the Trinity. And therefore this being said in the plural, Let us make man, it is yet subjoined in the singular, and God made man; and this being said in the plural, after our likeness, is subjoined in the singular, after the image of God. Genesis 1:27 Thus is man renewed in the knowledge of God, after the image of Him that created him; Colossians 3:10 and being made spiritual, he judges all things — all things that are to be judged, — yet he himself is judged of no man. 1 Corinthians 2:15

Chapter 23. That to Have Power Over All Things (Ver. 26) is to Judge Spiritually of All.

But that he judges all things answers to his having dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over all cattle and wild beasts, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. For this he does by the discernment of his mind, whereby he perceives the things of the Spirit of God; 1 Corinthians 2:14 whereas, otherwise, man being placed in honour, had no understanding, and is compared unto the brute beasts, and has become like them. In Your Church, therefore, O our God, according to Your grace which You have accorded unto it, since we are Your workmanship created in good works, Ephesians 2:10 there are not only those who are spiritually set over, but those also who are spiritually subjected to those placed over them; for in this manner have You made man, male and female, Genesis 1:27 in Your grace spiritual, where, according to the sex of body, there is not male and female, because neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond nor free. Galatians 3:28 Spiritual persons, therefore, whether those that are set over, or those who obey, judge spiritually; not of that spiritual knowledge which shines in the firmament, for they ought not to judge as to an authority so sublime, nor does it behoove them to judge of Your Book itself, although there be something that is not clear therein; because we submit our understanding unto it, and esteem as certain that even that which is shut up from our sight is rightly and truly spoken. For thus man, although now spiritual and renewed in the knowledge of God after His image that created him, ought yet to be the doer of the law, not the judge. James 4:11 Neither does he judge of that distinction of spiritual and carnal men, who are

known to Your eyes, O our God, and have not as yet made themselves manifest unto us by works, that by their fruits we may know them; Matthew 8:20 but Thou, O Lord, dost already know them, and You have divided and hast called them in secret, before the firmament was made. Nor does that man, though spiritual, judge the restless people of this world; for what has he to do to judge them that are without, 1 Corinthians 5:12 knowing not which of them may afterwards come into the sweetness of Your grace, and which continue in the perpetual bitterness of impiety?

Man, therefore, whom You have made after Your own image, received not dominion over the lights of heaven, nor over the hidden heaven itself, nor over the day and the night, which You called before the foundation of the heaven, nor over the gathering together of the waters, which is the sea; but he received dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and over all cattle, and over all the earth, and over all creeping things which creep upon the earth. For He judges and approves what He finds right, but disapproves what He finds amiss, whether in the celebration of those sacraments by which are initiated those whom Your mercy searches out in many waters; or in that in which the Fish Itself is exhibited, which, being raised from the deep, the devout earth feeds upon; or in the signs and expressions of words, subject to the authority of Your Book — such signs as burst forth and sound from the mouth, as it were flying under the firmament, by interpreting, expounding, discoursing, disputing, blessing, calling upon You, so that the people may answer, *“Amen.”* The vocal pronunciation of all which words is caused by the deep of this world, and the blindness of the flesh, by which thoughts cannot be seen, so that it is necessary to speak aloud in the ears; thus, although flying fowls be multiplied upon the earth, yet they derive their beginning from the waters. The spiritual man judges also by approving what is right and reproving what he finds amiss in the works and morals of the faithful, in their alms, as if in the earth bringing forth fruit; and he judges of the living soul, rendered living by softened affections, in chastity, in fastings, in pious thoughts; and of those things which are perceived through the senses of the body. For it is now said, that he should judge concerning those things in which he has also the power of correction.

Chapter 24. Why God Has Blessed Men, Fishes, Flying Creatures, and Not Herbs and the Other Animals (Ver. 28).

But what is this, and what kind of mystery is it? Behold, Thou blessest men, O Lord, that they may be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth; Genesis 1:28 in this dost Thou not make a sign unto us that we may understand something? Why have You not also blessed the light, which You called day, nor the firmament of heaven, nor the lights, nor the stars, nor the earth, nor the sea? I might say, O our God, that Thou, who hast created us after Your Image — I might say, that You have willed to bestow this gift of blessing especially upon man, had Thou not in like manner blessed the fishes and the whales, that they should be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the waters of the sea, and that the fowls should be multiplied upon the earth. Likewise might I say, that this blessing belonged properly unto such creatures as are propagated from their own kind, if I had found it in the shrubs, and the fruit trees, and beasts of the earth. But now is it not said either unto the herbs, or trees, or beasts, or serpents, Be fruitful and multiply; since all these also, as well as fishes, and fowls, and men, do by propagation increase and preserve their kind.

What, then, shall I say, O Thou Truth, my Light —that it was idly and vainly said? Not so, O Father of piety; far be it from a minister of Your word to say this. But if I understand not what Thou meanest by that phrase, let my betters — that is, those more intelligent than I— use it better, in proportion as Thou, O my God, hast given to each to understand. But let my confession be also pleasing before Your eyes, in which I confess to You that I believe, O Lord, that You have not thus spoken in vain; nor will I be silent as to what this lesson suggests to me. For it is true, nor do I see what should prevent me from thus understanding the figurative sayings of Your books. For I know a thing may be manifoldly signified by bodily expression which is understood in one manner by the mind; and that that may be manifoldly understood in the mind which is in one manner signified by bodily expression. Behold, the single love of God and of our neighbour, by what manifold sacraments and innumerable languages, and in each several language in how innumerable modes of speaking, it is bodily expressed. Thus do the young of the waters increase and multiply. Observe again, whosoever you are who readest; behold what Scripture delivers, and the voice pronounces in one only way, In the beginning God created heaven and earth; is it not manifoldly understood, not by any deceit of error, but by various kinds of true senses? Thus are the offspring of men fruitful and do multiply.

If, therefore, we conceive of the natures of things, not allegorically, but properly, then does the phrase, be fruitful and multiply, correspond to all things which are begotten of seed. But if we treat those words as taken figuratively (the which I rather suppose the Scripture intended, which does not, verily, superfluously attribute this benediction to the offspring of marine animals and man only), then do we find that multitude belongs also to creatures both spiritual and corporeal, as in heaven and in earth; and to souls both righteous and unrighteous, as in light and darkness; and to holy authors, through whom the law has been furnished unto us, as in the firmament which has been firmly placed between waters and waters; and to the society of people yet endued with bitterness, as in the sea; and to the desire of holy souls, as in the dry land; and to works of mercy pertaining to this present life, as in the seed-bearing herbs and fruit-bearing trees; and to spiritual gifts shining forth for edification, as in the lights of heaven; and to affections formed unto temperance, as in the living soul. In all these cases we meet with multitudes, abundance, and increase; but what shall thus be fruitful and multiply, that one thing may be expressed in many ways, and one expression understood in many ways, we discover not, unless in signs corporeally expressed, and in things mentally conceived. We understand the signs corporeally pronounced as the generations of the waters, necessarily occasioned by carnal depth; but things mentally conceived we understand as human generations, on account of the fruitfulness of reason. And therefore do we believe that to each kind of these it has been said by You, O Lord, Be fruitful and multiply. For in this blessing I acknowledge that power and faculty has been granted unto us, by You, both to express in many ways what we understand but in one, and to understand in many ways what we read as obscurely delivered but in one. Thus are the waters of the sea replenished, which are not moved but by various significations; thus even with the human offspring is the earth also replenished, the dryness whereof appears in its desire, and reason rules over it.

Chapter 25. He Explains the Fruits of the Earth (Ver. 29) of Works of Mercy.

I would also say, O Lord my God, what the following Scripture reminds me of; yea, I will say it without fear. For I will speak the truth, Thou inspiring me as to what You will that I should say out of these words. For by none other than Your inspiration do I believe that I can speak the truth, since You are the Truth, but every man a liar. And therefore he that speaks a lie, he speaks of his own; John 8:44 therefore that I may speak the truth, I will speak of Yours. Behold, You have given unto us for food every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed. Genesis 1:29 Nor to us only, but to all the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the earth, and to all creeping things; but unto the fishes, and great whales, You have not given these things. Now we were saying, that by these fruits of the earth works of mercy were signified and figured in an allegory, the which are provided for the necessities of this life out of the fruitful earth. Such an earth was the godly Onesiphorus, unto whose house You gave mercy, because he frequently refreshed Your Paul, and was not ashamed of his chain. 2 Timothy 1:16 This did also the brethren, and such fruit did they bear, who out of Macedonia supplied what was wanting unto him. 2 Corinthians 11:9 But how does he grieve for certain trees, which did not afford him the fruit due unto him, when he says, At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. 2 Timothy 4:16 For these fruits are due to those who minister spiritual doctrine, through their understanding of the divine mysteries; and they are due to them as men. They are due to them, too, as to the living soul, supplying itself as an example in all continency; and due unto them likewise as flying creatures, for their blessings which are multiplied upon the earth, since their sound went out into all lands.

Chapter 26. In the Confessing of Benefits, Computation is Made Not as to The Gift, But as to the Fruit,— That Is, the Good and Right Will of the Giver.

But they who are delighted with them are fed by those fruits; nor are they delighted with them whose god is their belly. Philippians 3:19 For neither in those that yield them are the things given the fruit, but in what spirit they give them. Therefore he who serves God and not his own belly, Romans 16:18 I plainly see why he may rejoice; I see it, and I rejoice with him exceedingly. For he has received from the Philippians those things which they had sent from Epaphroditus; Philippians 4:18 but yet I see why he rejoiced. For whereat he rejoices, upon that he feeds; for speaking in truth, I rejoiced, says he, in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again, wherein you were also careful, but it had become wearisome unto you. These Philippians, then, by protracted wearisomeness, had become enfeebled, and as it were dried up, as to bringing forth this fruit of a good work; and he rejoices for them, because they flourished again, not for himself, because they ministered to his wants. Therefore, adds he, not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Whereat, then, do you rejoice in all things, O great Paul? Whereat do you rejoice? Whereon do you feed, O man, renewed in the knowledge of God, after the image of Him that created you, you living soul

of so great continency, and you tongue like flying fowls, speaking mysteries — for to such creatures is this food due — what is that which feeds you? Joy. Let us hear what follows. Notwithstanding, says he, you have well done that you did communicate with My affliction. Philippians 4:14 Hereat does he rejoice, hereon does he feed; because they have well done, not because his strait was relieved, who says unto you, You have enlarged me when I was in distress; because he knew both to abound and to suffer need, in You Who strengthenest him. For, says he, you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no Church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Philippians 4:15-16 Unto these good works he now rejoices that they have returned; and is made glad that they flourished again, as when a fruitful field recovers its greenness.

Was it on account of his own necessities that he said, You have sent unto my necessity? Rejoices he for that? Verily not for that. But whence know we this? Because he himself continues, Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit. From You, O my God, have I learned to distinguish between a gift and fruit. A gift is the thing itself which he gives who bestows these necessities, as money, food, drink, clothing, shelter, aid; but the fruit is the good and right will of the giver. For the good Master says not only, He that receives a prophet, but adds, in the name of a prophet. Nor says He only, He that receives a righteous man, but adds, in the name of a righteous man. So, verily, the former shall receive the reward of a prophet, the latter that of a righteous man. Nor says He only, Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water, but adds, in the name of a disciple and so concludes, Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. Matthew 10:41-42 The gift is to receive a prophet, to receive a righteous man, to hand a cup of cold water to a disciple; but the fruit is to do this in the name of a prophet, in the name of a righteous man, in the name of a disciple. With fruit was Elijah fed by the widow, who knew that she fed a man of God, and on this account fed him; but by the raven was he fed with a gift. Nor was the inner man of Elijah fed, but the outer only, which might also from want of such food have perished.

Chapter 27. Many are Ignorant as to This, and Ask for Miracles, Which are Signified Under the Names Of Fishes And Whales.

Therefore will I speak before You, O Lord, what is true, when ignorant men and infidels (for the initiating and gaining of whom the sacraments of initiation and great works of miracles are necessary, which we believe to be signified under the name of fishes and whales) undertake that Your servants should be bodily refreshed, or should be otherwise succoured for this present life, although they may be ignorant wherefore this is to be done, and to what end; neither do the former feed the latter, nor the latter the former; for neither do the one perform these things through a holy and right intent, nor do the other rejoice in the gifts of those who behold not as yet the fruit. For on that is the mind fed wherein it is gladdened. And, therefore, fishes and whales are not fed on such food as the earth brings not forth until it had been separated and divided from the bitterness of the waters of the sea.

Chapter 28. He Proceeds to the Last Verse, All Things are Very Good,—That Is, the Work Being Altogether Good.

And You, O God, saw everything that You had made, and behold it was very good. Genesis 1:31 So we also see the same, and behold all are very good. In each particular kind of Your works, when You had said, Let them be made, and they were made, Thou saw that it was good. Seven times have I counted it written that Thou saw that that which You made was good; and this is the eighth, that Thou saw all things that You had made, and behold they are not only good, but also very good, as being now taken together. For individually they were only good, but all taken together they were both good and very good. All beautiful bodies also express this; for a body which consists of members, all of which are beautiful, is by far more beautiful than the several members individually are by whose well-ordered union the whole is completed, though these members also be severally beautiful.

Chapter 29. Although It is Said Eight Times that God Saw that It Was Good, Yet Time Has No Relation to God and His Word.

And I looked attentively to find whether seven or eight times Thou saw that Your works were good, when they were pleasing unto You; but in Your seeing I found no times, by which I might understand that you saw so often what You made. And I said, O Lord,! Is not this Your Scripture true, since You are true, and being Truth hast set it forth? Why, then, dost Thou say unto me that in your seeing there are no times, while this Your Scripture tells me that what You made each day, Thou saw to be good; and when I counted them I found how often? Unto these things Thou repliest unto me, for You are my God, and with strong voice tellest unto Your servant in his inner ear, bursting through my deafness, and crying, O man, that which My Scripture says, I say; and yet does that speak in time; but time has no reference to My Word, because My Word exists in equal eternity with Myself. Thus those things which you see through My Spirit, I see, just as those things which you speak through My Spirit, I speak. And so when you see those things in time, I see them not in time; as when you speak them in time, I speak them not in time.

Chapter 30. He Refutes the Opinions of the Manichæans and the Gnostics Concerning the Origin of the World.

And I heard, O Lord my God, and drank up a drop of sweetness from Your truth, and understood that there are certain men to whom Your works are displeasing, who say that many of them You made being compelled by necessity;— such as the fabric of the heavens and the courses of the stars, and that You made them not of what was Yours, but, that they were elsewhere and from other sources created; that You might bring together and compact and interweave, when from Your conquered enemies You raised up the walls of the universe, that they, bound down by this structure, might not be able a second time to rebel against You. But, as to other things, they say You neither made them nor compacted them — such as all flesh and all very minute creatures, and whatsoever holds the earth by its roots; but that a mind hostile unto You and another nature not created by You, and in everywise contrary unto You, did,

in these lower places of the world, beget and frame these things. Infatuated are they who speak thus, since they see not Your works through Your Spirit, nor recognise You in them.

Chapter 31. We Do Not See That It Was Good But Through the Spirit of God Which is in Us.

But as for those who through Your Spirit see these things, You see in them. When therefore, they see that these things are good, You see that they are good; and whatsoever things for Your sake are pleasing, You are pleased in them; and those things which through Your Spirit are pleasing unto us, are pleasing unto You in us. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we, says he, have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12 And I am reminded to say, Truly, 'the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God;' how, then, do we also know 'what things are given us by God?'" It is answered unto me, Because the things which we know by His Spirit, even these 'knows no man, but the Spirit of God.' For, as it is rightly said to those who were to speak by the Spirit of God, 'It is not you that speak,' Matthew 10:20 so is it rightly said to them who know by the Spirit of God, 'It is not you that know.' None the less, then, is it rightly said to those that see by the Spirit of God, 'It is not you that see;' so whatever they see by the Spirit of God that it is good, it is not they, but God who 'sees that it is good.' It is one thing, then, for a man to suppose that to be bad which is good, as the fore-named do; another, that what is good a man should see to be good (as Your creatures are pleasing unto many, because they are good, whom, however, Thou pleasest not in them when they wish to enjoy them rather than enjoy You); and another, that when a man sees a thing to be good, God should in him see that it is good — that in truth He may be loved in that which He made, who cannot be loved unless by the Holy Ghost, which He has given. Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us; Romans 5:5 by whom we see that whatsoever in any degree is, is good. Because it is from Him who Is not in any degree, but He Is that He Is.

Chapter 32. Of the Particular Works of God, More Especially of Man.

Thanks to You, O Lord. We behold the heaven and the earth, whether the corporeal part, superior and inferior, or the spiritual and corporeal creature; and in the embellishment of these parts, whereof the universal mass of the world or the universal creation consists, we see light made, and divided from the darkness. We see the firmament of heaven, whether the primary body of the world between the spiritual upper waters and the corporeal lower waters, or — because this also is called heaven — this expanse of air, through which wander the fowls of heaven, between the waters which are in vapours borne above them, and which in clear nights drop down in dew, and those which being heavy flow along the earth. We behold the waters gathered together through the plains of the sea; and the dry land both void and formed, so as to be visible and compact, and the matter of herbs and trees. We behold the lights shining from above — the sun to serve the day, the moon and the stars to cheer the night; and that by all these, times should be marked and noted. We behold on every side a humid element, fruitful with fishes, beasts, and birds; because the density of the air, which bears up the flights of birds, is increased by the exhalation of the waters. We behold the face of the earth furnished with terrestrial creatures, and man, created after Your image and likeness, in that very image and likeness of You (that is, the power of reason and understanding) on account of which he was set over all irrational creatures. And as in his soul there is one power which rules by directing, another made subject that it might obey, so also for the man was corporeally made a woman, who, in the mind of her rational understanding should also have a like nature, in the sex, however, of her body should be in like manner subject to the

sex of her husband, as the appetite of action is subjected by reason of the mind, to conceive the skill of acting rightly. These things we behold, and they are severally good, and all very good.

Chapter 33. The World Was Created by God Out of Nothing.

Let Your works praise You, that we may love You; and let us love You, that Your works may praise You, the which have beginning and end from time — rising and setting, growth and decay, form and privation. They have therefore their successions of morning and evening, partly hidden, partly apparent; for they were made from nothing by You, not of You, nor of any matter not Yours, or which was created before, but of concreated matter (that is, matter at the same time created by You), because without any interval of time You formed its formlessness. For since the matter of heaven and earth is one thing, and the form of heaven and earth another, You have made the matter indeed of almost nothing, but the form of the world You have formed of formless matter; both, however, at the same time, so that the form should follow the matter with no interval of delay.

Chapter 34. He Briefly Repeats the Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis (Ch. I.), and Confesses that We See It by the Divine Spirit.

We have also examined what You willed to be shadowed forth, whether by the creation, or the description of things in such an order. And we have seen that things severally are good, and all things very good, Genesis 1:31 in Your Word, in Your Only-Begotten, both heaven and earth, the Head and the body of the Church, in Your predestination before all times, without morning and evening. But when Thou began to execute in time the things predestinated, that You might make manifest things hidden, and adjust our disorders (for our sins were over us, and we had sunk into profound darkness away from you, and Your good Spirit was borne over us to help us in due season), Thou both justified the ungodly, Romans 4:5 and divided them from the wicked; and made firm the authority of Your Book between those above, who would be docile unto You, and those under, who would be subject unto them; and You collected the society of unbelievers into one conspiracy, in order that the zeal of the faithful might appear, and that they might bring forth works of mercy unto You, even distributing unto the poor earthly riches, to obtain heavenly. And after this You kindled certain lights in the firmament, Your holy ones, having the word of life, and shining with an eminent authority preferred by spiritual gifts; and then again, for the instruction of the unbelieving Gentiles, did You out of corporeal matter produce the sacraments and visible miracles, and sounds of words according to the firmament of Your Book, by which the faithful should be blessed. Next You formed the living soul of the faithful, through affections ordered by the vigour of continency; and afterwards, the mind subjected to You alone, and needing to imitate no human authority, You renewed after Your image and likeness; and subjected its rational action to the excellency of the understanding, as the woman to the man; and to all Your ministries, necessary for the perfecting of the faithful in this life, Thou willed that, for their temporal uses, good things, fruitful in the future time, should be given by the same faithful. We behold all these things, and they are very good, because Thou dost see them in us — You who has given unto us Your Spirit, whereby we might see them, and in them love You.

Chapter 35. He Prays God for that Peace of Rest Which Hath No Evening.

O Lord God, grant Your peace unto us, for You have supplied us with all things — the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which has no evening. For all this most beautiful order of things, very good (all their courses being finished), is to pass away, for in them there was morning and evening.

Chapter 36. The Seventh Day, Without Evening and Setting, the Image of Eternal Life and Rest in God.

But the seventh day is without any evening, nor has it any setting, because You have sanctified it to an everlasting continuance that that which Thou did after Your works, which were very good, resting on the seventh day, although in unbroken rest You made them that the voice of Your Book may speak beforehand unto us, that we also after our works (therefore very good, because You have given them unto us) may repose in You also in the Sabbath of eternal life.

Chapter 37. Of Rest in God Who Ever Works, and Yet is Ever at Rest.

For even then shall You so rest in us, as now You work in us; and thus shall that be Your rest through us, as these are Your works through us. But You, O Lord, always work, and are always at rest. Nor do You see in time, nor do You move in time, nor do You in time; and yet You make the scenes of time, and the times themselves, and the rest which results from time.

Chapter 38. Of the Difference Between the Knowledge of God and of Men, and of the Repose Which is to Be Sought from God Only.

We therefore see those things which You made, because they are; but they are because You see them. And we see without that they are, and within that they are good, but You saw them there, when made, where You saw them to be made. And we were at another time moved to do well, after our hearts had conceived of Your Spirit; but in the former time, forsaking You, we were moved to do evil; but You, the One, the Good God, hast never ceased to do good. And we also have certain good works, of Your gift, but not eternal; after these we hope to rest in Your great hallowing. But You, being the Good, needing no good, art ever at rest, because You Yourself art Your rest. And what man will teach man to understand this? Or what angel, an angel? Or what angel, a man? Let it be asked of You, sought in You, knocked for at You; so, even so shall it be received, so shall it be found, so shall it be opened. Matthew 7:7 _Amen_.

Source: Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.

Text sourced from New Advent (newadvent.org). Original translation public domain (pre-1900). Accessed April 2026.

Translation: J.G. Pilkington translation, 1887. J.G. Pilkington (1821–1870) — translation public domain. No separate translation copyright applies.

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/the-confessions-book-xiii>