Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Book XI

pp. 253-280

translated with an introd. by R. S. Pine-Coffin., (1961) Confessions / Saint Augustine, null Penguin Books

Atgoffir staff a myfyrwyr Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant bod hawlfraint ar y darn hwn ac ar y gwaith y cafodd ei gymryd ohono. Gwnaed y Copi Digidol hwn o dan delerau trwydded CLA sy'n caniatáu i chi:

- fynd at gopi a'i lwytho i lawr;
- argraffu copi;

Sylwch bod y deunydd hwn yn UNIG at ddefnydd myfyrwyr sydd wedi cofrestru ar y cwrs astudio fel y nodir yn yr adran isod. Caniateir i holl staff a myfyrwyr eraill ddarllen y deunydd yn unig ac ni ddylent ei lwytho i lawr ac/neu argraffu copi

Mae'r Copi Digidol hwn ac unrhyw gopi digidol neu brintiedig a ddarparwyd i chi, neu a wnaed gennych, o dan delerau'r Drwydded hon, i'w ddefnyddio gyda'r Cwrs Astudio hwn. Gellwch gadw copïau o'r fath ar ôl i'r cwrs ddod i ben, ond at eich defnydd personol eich hun yn unig. Bydd pob copi (yn cynnwys copïau electronig) yn cynnwys y Rhybudd Hawlfraint hwn a bydd yn rhaid eu dinistrio ac/neu eu dileu pan fydd Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant yn galw am hynny.

Ac eithrio'r hyn a ganiateir gan gyfraith hawlfraint, ni chaniateir copïo, cadw neu ddosbarthu pellach (yn cynnwys drwy e-bost) heb ganiatâd deiliad yr hawlfraint.

Mae gan yr awdur (ac mae'r term hwnnw'n cynnwys arlunwyr a chrewyr gweledol eraill) hawliau moesol dros y gwaith ac ni all staff na myfyrwyr achosi, na chaniatáu, i'r gwaith gael ei aflunio, ei lurgunio neu ei addasu mewn unrhyw ffordd arall, neu ei drin yn ddiraddiol mewn unrhyw ffordd, a fyddai'n niweidiol i anrhydedd neu enw da'r awdur.

Mae hon yn fersiwn ddigidol o ddeunydd hawlfraint a wnaed dan drwydded gan ddeiliad yr hawl, ac ni ellir sicrhau ei chywirdeb. Cyfeiriwch at yr argraffiad cyhoeddedig gwreiddiol os gwelwch yn dda.

Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs HPPH5013 HPPH6013 - Issues in Metaphysics

Teitl: Confessions / Saint Augustine

Enw'r Awdur: translated with an introd. by R. S. Pine-Coffin.

Enw'r Cyhoeddwr: Penguin Books

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Course of Study: HPPH5013 HPPH6013 - Issues in Metaphysics

Title: Confessions / Saint Augustine

Name of Author: translated with an introd. by R. S. Pine-Coffin.

Name of Publisher: Penguin Books

BOOK XI

1

O LORD, since you are outside time in eternity, are you unaware of the things that I tell you? Or do you see in time the things that occur in it? If you see them, why do I lay this lengthy record before you? Certainly it is not through me that you first hear of these things. But by setting them down I fire my own heart and the hearts of my readers with love of you, so that we all may ask: *Can any praise be worthy of the Lord's majesty?*[1] I have said before, and I shall say again, that I write this book for love of your love.

When we pray we ask for what we need, yet the Truth himself has told us: *Your heavenly Father knows well what your needs are before you ask him.*[2] So by confessing our own miserable state and acknowledging your mercy towards us we open our hearts to you, so that you may free us wholly, as you have already begun to do. Then we shall no longer be miserable in ourselves, but will find our true happiness in you. For you have called us to be poor in spirit, to be patient and to mourn, to hunger and thirst for holiness, to be merciful and clean of heart, and to be peacemakers.

To the best of my power and the best of my will I have laid this long account before you, because you first willed that I should confess to you, O Lord my God. *For you are gracious, your mercy endures for ever.*[3]

2

But if my pen is my spokesman, when shall I be able to tell of all the means you used to make of me a preacher of your word and a minister of your sacrament to your people? When shall I be able to tell how you urged me, how you filled me with fear, how you consoled and guided me? Every particle of sand in the glass of time is precious to me, even if I were able to set my facts in order and give an

[1] Ps. 144: 3 (145: 3). [2] Matt. 6: 8. [3] Ps. 117: 1 (118: 2).

account of them. I have long been burning with desire to *contemplate your law*[1] and to confess to you both what I know of it and where my knowledge fails; how far the first gleams of your light have illumined me and how dense my darkness still remains and must remain, until my weakness is swallowed up in your strength. And I do not wish to allow my time to slip away by undertaking any other task when I am free from the necessity of caring for my bodily needs, of studying, and of giving to others the service which I render them, whether it is my duty to give it or not.

O Lord my God, listen to my prayer. In your mercy grant what I desire, for it is not for myself alone that I so ardently desire it: I wish also that it may serve the love I bear to others. You see in my heart that this is true. Let me offer you in sacrifice the service of my thoughts and my tongue, but first give me what I may offer to you. For *I am needy and poor*, but you who care for us, yet are free from care for yourself, *have enough and to spare for all those who call upon you*.[2] Circumcise the lips of my mind and my mouth. Purify them of all rash speech and falsehood. Let your Scriptures be my chaste delight. Let me not deceive myself in them nor deceive others about them. Hear me, O Lord. Have mercy on me, O Lord my God, Light of the blind and Strength of the weak, Light, too, of those who see and Strength of the strong. Listen to my soul as it cries from the depths. For if you are not there to hear us even in our deepest plight, what is to become of us? To whom shall we cry?

Yours is the day, yours the night.[3] No moment of time passes except by your will. Grant me some part of it for my meditations on the secrets of your law. Do not close your door to those who knock: do not close the book of your law to me. For it was not to no purpose that you willed that the hidden mysteries of all its many pages should be written down, nor is this forest without its deer, which repair to it and there refresh themselves, roaming at will and browsing upon its pastures, and lying there to chew the cud.[4] O Lord, perfect your work in me. Open to me the pages of your book. Your voice is my joy, a greater joy than any profusion of worldly pleasures. Give me what I love, for truly I love it and this love, too, was your gift. Do

[1] Ps. 118: 18 (119: 18). [2] Rom. 10: 12. [3] Ps. 73: 16 (74: 16).

[4] The allusion is to Ps. 28: 9 (29: 9). The deer penetrating the forest are to be taken figuratively as those who are gifted to understand the Scriptures.

not abandon what you have given me. Do not scorn what you have planted when it is parched with thirst for you. Let me acknowledge as yours whatever I find in your books. *Let me listen to the sound of your praises.*[1] Let me drink you in and *contemplate the wonders of your law*[2] from the very beginning, when you made heaven and earth, to the coming of your kingdom, when we shall be for ever with you in your holy city.

O Lord, have mercy on me and grant what I desire. For, as I believe, this longing of mine does not come from a desire for earthly things, for gold and silver, precious stones and fine garments, worldly honours and power, sensual pleasures or the things which are needed for my body and for my pilgrimage through life. If we *make it our first care to find the kingdom of God, and his approval, all these things shall be ours without the asking.*[3]

Listen, my God, as I tell you the cause of my longing. The wicked have told me of things that delight them, but not such things as your law has to tell.[4] This is the reason for my longing. Take heed of it, Father. Examine it. Let it find approval in your eyes. And may it be pleasing to you, as I stand before your mercy, that I should find grace in your sight, so that the hidden meaning of your words may be revealed to me. Open your door to my knocking. This I beg of you through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, the Man of your right hand, the Son of Man, whom you have established for yourself[5] as mediator between yourself and us. He was the one whom you sent to find us when we were not looking for you, and you sent him to find us so that we should look for you. He is your Word, by which you have made all things, myself among them. He is your only Son, through whom you have called your faithful people, and myself among them, to make them your sons by adoption. Through him I beseech you, for *he sits at your right hand and pleads for us.*[6] In him *the whole treasury of wisdom and knowledge is stored up,*[7] and these are the treasures that I seek in your books. He told us himself – and he is the Truth – that he is the one *of whom Moses wrote.*[8]

[1] Ps. 25: 7 (26: 7). [2] Ps. 118: 18 (119: 18). [3] Matt. 6: 33.
[4] See Ps. 118: 85 (119: 85). [5] See Ps. 79: 18 (80: 17). [6] Rom. 8: 34.
[7] Col. 2:3. [8] John 5: 46.

3

Let me hear and understand the meaning of the words: In the Beginning you made heaven and earth.[1] Moses wrote these words. He wrote them and passed on into your presence, leaving this world where you spoke to him. He is no longer here and I cannot see him face to face. But if he were here, I would lay hold of him and in your name I would beg and beseech him to explain those words to me. I would be all ears to catch the sounds that fell from his lips. If he spoke in Hebrew, his words would strike my ear in vain and none of their meaning would reach my mind. If he spoke in Latin, I should know what he said. But how should I know whether what he said was true? If I knew this too, it could not be from him that I got such knowledge. But deep inside me, in my most intimate thought, Truth, which is neither Hebrew nor Greek nor Latin nor any foreign speech, would speak to me, though not in syllables formed by lips and tongue. It would whisper, 'He speaks the truth.' And at once I should be assured. In all confidence I would say to this man, your servant, 'What you tell me is true.'

Since, then, I cannot question Moses, whose words were true because you, the Truth, filled him with yourself, I beseech you, my God, to forgive my sins and grant me the grace to understand those words, as you granted him, your servant, the grace to speak them.

4

Earth and the heavens are before our eyes. The very fact that they are there proclaims that they were created, for they are subject to change and variation; whereas if anything exists that was not created, there is nothing in it that was not there before; and the meaning of change and variation is that something is there which was not there before. Earth and the heavens also proclaim that they did not create themselves. 'We exist', they tell us, 'because we were made. And this is proof that we did not make ourselves. For to make ourselves, we should have had to exist before our existence began.' And the fact that they plainly do exist is the voice which proclaims this truth.

It was you, then, O Lord, who made them, you who are beautiful,

[1] See Gen. 1: 1. '*God, at the beginning of time, created heaven and earth*' (Knox).

for they too are beautiful; you who are good, for they too are good; you who ARE, for they too are. But they are not beautiful and good as you are beautiful and good, nor do they have their being as you, their Creator, have your being. In comparison with you they have neither beauty nor goodness nor being at all. This we know, and thanks be to you for this knowledge. But our knowledge, compared with yours, is ignorance.

5

But by what means did you make heaven and earth? What tool did you use for this vast work? You did not work as a human craftsman does, making one thing out of something else as his mind directs. His mind can impose upon his material whatever form it perceives within itself by its inner eye. But how could his mind do this unless it was because you had made it? It imposes this form upon a substance which already exists and already has being, such as clay or stone, wood or gold, or any other material of this sort. But how could these materials have come to be unless you had given them their being? It was you who made the craftsman's body and the mind which controls his limbs. It was you who made the material from which he makes his goods. It was you who made the intelligence by which he masters his craft and visualizes whatever he is to make. It was you who made his physical senses, which are the channels through which his mental picture of the thing he is making is transmitted to the material. They then relay the finished product to his mind, so that by referring it to the truth, which presides there as arbiter, it may decide whether it is well or badly made.

All these things proclaim your glory as their Creator, O God. But how do you create them? How did you make heaven and earth? Clearly it was not in heaven or on earth that you made them. Nor was it in the air or beneath the sea, because these are part of the domain of heaven and earth. Nor was it in the universe that you made the universe, because until the universe was made there was no place where it could be made. Nor did you have in your hand any matter from which you could make heaven and earth, for where could you have obtained matter which you had not yet created, in order to use it as material for making something else? Does anything exist by any other cause than that you exist?

It must therefore be that *you spoke and they were made.*[1] In your Word alone you created them.

6

But how did you speak? Did you speak as you did when your voice was heard in the clouds saying: *This is my beloved Son?*[2] At that time your voice sounded and then ceased. It was speech with a beginning and an end. Each syllable could be heard and then died away, the second following after the first and the third after the second, and so on in sequence until the last syllable followed all the rest and then gave place to silence. From this it is abundantly clear that your speech was expressed through the motion of some created thing, because it was motion subject to the laws of time, although it served your eternal will. These words, which you had caused to sound in time, were reported by the bodily ear of the hearer to the mind, which has intelligence and inward hearing responsive to your eternal Word. The mind compared these words, which it heard sounding in time, with your Word, which is silent and eternal, and said, 'God's eternal Word is far, far different from these words which sound in time. They are far beneath me; in fact, they are not at all, because they die away and are lost. But the Word of my God is above me and endures for ever.'

If, therefore, in order that heaven and earth should come into being, you spoke in words which sounded and then died away, and if this was the way in which you created heaven and earth, then there must have been some material thing created before heaven and earth, something which, by its motion in time, could lend itself as a mouthpiece through which those words could be spoken in time. But there was no material thing before heaven and earth; or, if there was, you must certainly have created it by an utterance outside time, so that you could use it as the mouthpiece for your decree, uttered in time, that heaven and earth should be made. For whatever you might have used to produce the voice by which the decree was uttered, it would not have existed at all unless it had been made by you. But to create a material thing which could be used to give voice to the decree, what Word did you speak?

[1] Ps. 32: 9 (33: 9). [2] Matt. 3: 17.

7

It is in this way, then, that you mean us to understand your Word, who is God with you, God with God, your Word uttered eternally in whom all things are uttered eternally. For your Word is not speech in which each part comes to an end when it has been spoken, giving place to the next, so that finally the whole may be uttered. In your Word all is uttered at one and the same time, yet eternally. If it were not so, your Word would be subject to time and change, and therefore would be neither truly eternal nor truly immortal.

This I know, my God, and I thank you for the knowledge. I know it, O Lord my God. I confess it to you. And whoever is not ungrateful for the certainty of your truth knows it and praises you for it as I do. For we know, O Lord, that the extent to which something once was, but no longer is, is the measure of its death; and the extent to which something once was not, but now is, is the measure of its beginning. Your Word, then, in no degree either gives place to anything or takes the place of anything, because it is truly immortal and eternal. Therefore it is by a Word co-eternal with yourself that you say all that you say; you say all at one and the same time, yet you say all eternally; and it is by this Word that all things are made which you say are to be made. You create them by your Word alone and in no other way. Yet the things which you create by your Word do not all come into being at one and the same time, nor are they eternal.

8

Why is this so, O Lord my God? In some degree I see why it is, but I do not know how to put it into words except by saying that whatever begins to be, or ceases to be, does so at the moment when the eternal reason knows that it should begin to be or cease to be, although in the eternal reason there is no beginning and no ending. The eternal reason is your Word, who is also the Beginning, because he also speaks to us.[1] So he tells us in the Gospel by word of mouth. Your Word, the Beginning, made himself audible to the bodily ears of men, so that they should believe in him and, by looking for him within themselves, should find him in the eternal Truth, where the

[1] See John 8: 25.

one good Master teaches all who listen to him. It is there that I hear your voice, O Lord, telling me that only a master who really teaches us really speaks to us: if he does not teach us, even though he may be speaking, it is not to us that he speaks. But who is our teacher except the Truth which never changes? Even when we learn from created things, which are subject to change, we are led to the Truth which does not change. And there we truly learn, as *we stand by and listen to him and rejoice at hearing the bridegroom's voice,*[1] restoring ourselves to him who gave us our being. He is therefore the Beginning, the abiding Principle, for unless he remained when we wandered in error, there would be none to whom we could return and restore ourselves. But when we return from error, we return by knowing the Truth; and in order that we may know the Truth, he teaches us, because he is the Beginning and he also speaks to us.[2]

9

He is the Beginning, O God, in which you made heaven and earth. In this wonderful way you spoke and created them in your Word, in your Son, who is your Strength, your Wisdom, and your Truth.

Who can understand this mystery or explain it to others? What is that light whose gentle beams now and again strike through to my heart, causing me to shudder in awe yet firing me with their warmth? I shudder to feel how different I am from it: yet in so far as I am like it, I am aglow with its fire. It is the light of Wisdom, Wisdom itself, which at times shines upon me, parting my clouds. But when I weakly fall away from its light, those clouds envelop me again in the dense mantle of darkness which I bear for my punishment. For *my strength ebbs away for very misery,*[3] so that I cannot sustain my blessings. And so I shall remain until you, O Lord, who *have pardoned all my sins,* also *heal all my mortal ills.* For you will *rescue my life from deadly peril, crown me with the blessings of your mercy, content all my desire for good, restore my youth as the eagle's plumage is restored.*[4] *Our salvation is founded upon the hope of something,*[5] and in endurance we await the fulfilment of your promises. Let those who are able listen to your voice speaking to their hearts. Trusting in your inspired words, I shall

[1] John 3: 29. [2] See John 8: 25. [3] Ps. 30: 11 (31: 10).
[4] Ps. 102: 3–5 (103: 3–5). [5] Rom. 8: 24.

cry out: *What diversity, Lord, in your creatures! What wisdom has designed them all!*[1] The Beginning is Wisdom and Wisdom is the Beginning in which you made heaven and earth.

10

Those who ask 'What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?' are still steeped in error which they should have discarded. 'If he was at rest', they say, 'and doing nothing, why did he not continue to do nothing for ever more, just as he had always done in the past? If the will to create something which he had never created before was new in him – if it was some new motion stirring in him – how can we say that his is true eternity, when a new will, which had never been there before, could arise in it? For the will of God is not a created thing. It is there before any creation takes place, because nothing could be created unless the will of its Creator preceded its creation. The will of God, then, is part of his substance. Yet if something began to be in God's substance, something which had not existed beforehand, we could not rightly say that his substance was eternal. But if God's will that there should be a creation was there from all eternity, why is it that what he has created is not also eternal?'

11

People who speak in this way have not learnt to understand you, Wisdom of God, Light of our minds. They do not yet understand how the things are made which come to be in you and through you. Try as they may to savour the taste of eternity, their thoughts still twist and turn upon the ebb and flow of things in past and future time. But if only their minds could be seized and held steady, they would be still for a while and, for that short moment, they would glimpse the splendour of eternity which is for ever still. They would contrast it with time, which is never still, and see that it is not comparable. They would see that time derives its length only from a great number of movements constantly following one another into the past, because they cannot all continue at once. But in eternity nothing moves into the past: all is present. Time, on the other hand, is

[1] Ps. 103: 24 (104: 24).

never all present at once. The past is always driven on by the future, the future always follows on the heels of the past, and both the past and the future have their beginning and their end in the eternal present. If only men's minds could be seized and held still! They would see how eternity, in which there is neither past nor future, determines both past and future time. Could mine be the hand strong enough to seize the minds of men? Could any words of mine have power to achieve so great a task?

12

My answer to those who ask 'What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?' is not 'He was preparing Hell for people who pry into mysteries'. This frivolous retort has been made before now, so we are told, in order to evade the point of the question. But it is one thing to make fun of the questioner and another to find the answer. So I shall refrain from giving this reply. For in matters of which I am ignorant I would rather admit the fact than gain credit by giving the wrong answer and making a laughing-stock of a man who asks a serious question.

Instead of this I will say that you, my God, are the Creator of all creation, and if we mean the whole of creation when we speak of heaven and earth, I unreservedly say that before he made heaven and earth, God made nothing. For if he did make anything, could it have been anything but a creature of his own creation? I only wish I knew everything that I could profit by knowing with as much certainty as I know that no creature was made before any creation took place.

13

A fickle-minded man, whose thoughts were all astray because of his conception of time past, might wonder why you, who are God almighty, Creator of all, Sustainer of all, and Maker of heaven and earth, should have been idle and allowed countless ages to elapse before you finally undertook the vast work of creation. My advice to such people is to shake off their dreams and think carefully, because their wonder is based on a misconception.

How could those countless ages have elapsed when you, the

Creator, in whom all ages have their origin, had not yet created them? What time could there have been that was not created by you? How could time elapse if it never was?

You are the Maker of all time. If, then, there was any time before you made heaven and earth, how can anyone say that you were idle? You must have made that time, for time could not elapse before you made it.

But if there was no time before heaven and earth were created, how can anyone ask what you were doing 'then'? If there was no time, there was no 'then'.

Furthermore, although you are before time, it is not in time that you precede it. If this were so, you would not be before all time. It is in eternity, which is supreme over time because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time. For what is now the future, once it comes, will become the past, whereas *you are unchanging, your years can never fail.*[1] Your years neither go nor come, but our years pass and others come after them, so that they all may come in their turn. Your years are completely present to you all at once, because they are at a permanent standstill. They do not move on, forced to give way before the advance of others, because they never pass at all. But our years will all be complete only when they have all moved into the past. Your years are one day, yet your day does not come daily but is always today, because your today does not give place to any tomorrow nor does it take the place of any yesterday. Your today is eternity. And this is how the Son, to whom you said *I have begotten you this day*,[2] was begotten co-eternal with yourself. You made all time; you are before all time; and the 'time', if such we may call it, when there was no time was not time at all.

14

It is therefore true to say that when you had not made anything, there was no time, because time itself was of your making. And no time is co-eternal with you, because you never change; whereas, if time never changed, it would not be time.

What, then, is time? There can be no quick and easy answer, for it is no simple matter even to understand what it is, let alone find words

[1] Ps. 101: 28 (102: 27). [2] Ps. 2: 7.

to explain it. Yet, in our conversation, no word is more familiarly used or more easily recognized than 'time'. We certainly understand what is meant by the word both when we use it ourselves and when we hear it used by others.

What, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled. All the same I can confidently say that I know that if nothing passed, there would be no past time; if nothing were going to happen, there would be no future time; and if nothing *were*, there would be no present time.

Of these three divisions of time, then, how can two, the past and the future, *be*, when the past no longer is and the future is not yet? As for the present, if it were always present and never moved on to become the past, it would not be time but eternity. If, therefore, the present is time only by reason of the fact that it moves on to become the past, how can we say that even the present *is*, when the reason why it *is* is that it is *not to be*? In other words, we cannot rightly say that time *is*, except by reason of its impending state of *not being*.

15

Yet we speak of a 'long time' and a 'short time', though only when we mean the past or the future. For example, we say that a hundred years is a long time ago or a long time ahead. A short time ago or a short time ahead we might put at ten days. But how can anything which does not exist be either long or short? For the past is no more and the future is not yet. Surely, then, instead of saying 'It is a long time' we ought to say of the past 'It was a long time' and of the future 'It will be a long time'.

My Lord, my Light, does not your truth make us look foolish in this case too? For if we speak of a long time in the past, do we mean that it was long when it was already past or before it became the past and was still the present? It could only be long when it was there to be long: once it was past it no longer was, and if it no longer was, it could not be long.

So we must not say that the past was long, because we shall not be able to find anything in it that could be long, for the simple reason that once it becomes the past it ceases to be. Instead we must say that

the time of which we are speaking was long when it was the present, because it could have been long only while it was the present. It had not yet become the past – which would have meant that it no longer existed – and therefore something existed which could be long. But as soon as it became the past it ceased to be long, because it ceased to be at all.

Now let us see if our human wits can tell us whether present time can be long, for we are gifted with the ability to feel and measure intervals of time. What is the answer to be?

Is the present century a long time? Before we answer this we must see whether a hundred years can possibly be present. If we are in the first year of the hundred, that year is present but the other ninety-nine are future. Therefore they are not yet. If we are in the second year, one year has already passed, one is present, and the rest are future. In the same way, whichever of the hundred years that go to make the century we choose to regard as present, those which went before it will be past and those which come after it will be future. This proves that a hundred years cannot be present.

Let us see, then, whether at least the one year in which we are is present. If we are in the first month, the other eleven are future. If we are in the second month, the first has passed and the rest are still to come. So we cannot even say that the whole of the current year is present, and if the whole of it is not present, the year is not present. For a year is made up of twelve months. Any one of them, the current one, is present, but the others are either past or future. It is not even true that the current month is present, but only one of its days. If it is the first day, the remainder are future. If it is the last day, the rest are past. If it is any day in the middle of the month, it falls between past and future days.

Now we can see that the present, which we found was the only one of the three divisions of time that could possibly be said to be long, has been whittled down to the space of scarcely one day. But here again we must look into the matter more closely, because not even the whole of one day is present. It is made up of hours of darkness and hours of daylight, twenty-four of them. In relation to the first hour the others are future; in relation to the last the others are past; and any intermediate hour comes between the hours which precede it and those which follow it. Even that one hour consists of minutes which

are continually passing. The minutes which have gone by are past, and any part of the hour which remains is future. In fact the only time that can be called present is an instant, if we can conceive of such, that cannot be divided even into the most minute fractions, and a point of time as small as this passes so rapidly from the future to the past that its duration is without length. For if its duration were prolonged, it could be divided into past and future. When it is present it has no duration.

This being so, when does a time come which we can call long? Not the future, surely; for we do not say of the future that it *is* long, because it does not yet exist in order to be long. We say that it *will* be long. But when will it be long? Not while it is still future, because it does not yet exist and therefore cannot be long. If it is to be long when it passes out of the future, which is not yet in being, and comes into being by becoming the present, this would satisfy the condition that something must exist to be capable of being long. But, as we have already seen quite clearly, the present cannot possibly have duration.

16

Nevertheless, O Lord, we are aware of periods of time. We compare them one with another and say that some are longer and others shorter. We even calculate how much longer or shorter one period is than another, and the result of our calculations tells us that it is twice or three times the length of the one which we take as the unit of measurement, or that the two are of equal duration. If we measure them by our own awareness of time, we must do so while it is passing, for no one can measure it either when it is past and no longer exists, or when it is future and does not yet exist – that is, unless he is bold enough to claim that what does not exist can be measured. The conclusion is that we can be aware of time and measure it only while it is passing. Once it has passed it no longer is, and therefore cannot be measured.

17

These are tentative theories, Father, not downright assertions. O God, be my Judge and my Guide.

As a boy I learned that there were three divisions of time, past,

present, and future, and later on I taught the same lesson to other boys. But there might be people who would maintain that there are not three divisions of time but only one, the present, because the other two do not exist. Another view might be that past and future do exist, but that time emerges from some secret refuge when it passes from the future to the present, and goes back into hiding when it moves from the present to the past. Otherwise, how do prophets see the future, if there is not yet a future to be seen? It is impossible to see what does not exist. In the same way people who describe the past could not describe it correctly unless they saw it in their minds, and if the past did not exist it would be impossible for them to see it at all. Therefore both the past and the future do exist.

18

O Lord, my Hope, allow me to explore further. Do not let me grow confused and lose track of my purpose.

If the future and the past do exist, I want to know where they are. I may not yet be capable of such knowledge, but at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. For if, wherever they are, they are future, they do not yet exist; if past, they no longer exist. So wherever they are and whatever they are, it is only by being present that they *are*.

When we describe the past correctly, it is not past facts which are drawn out of our memories but only words based on our memory-pictures of those facts, because when they happened they left an impression on our minds, by means of our sense-perception. My own childhood, which no longer exists, is in past time, which also no longer exists. But when I remember those days and describe them, it is in the present that I picture them to myself, because their picture is still present in my memory.

Whether some similar process enables the future to be seen, some process by which events which have not yet occurred become present to us by means of already existing images of them, I confess, my God, that I do not know. But at least I know that we generally think about what we are going to do before we do it, and this preliminary thought is in the present, whereas the action which we premeditate does not yet exist because it is future. Once we have set to work and started to

put our plans into action, that action exists, because it is now not future but present.

By whatever mysterious means it may be that the future is foreseen, it is only possible to see something which exists; and whatever exists is not future but present. So when we speak of foreseeing the future, we do not see things which are not yet in being, that is, things which are future, but it may be that we see their causes or signs, which are already in being. In this way they are not future but present to the eye of the beholder, and by means of them the mind can form a concept of things which are still future and thus is able to predict them. These concepts already exist, and by seeing them present in their minds people are able to foretell the actual facts which they represent.

Let me give one example of the many from which I could choose. Suppose that I am watching the break of day. I predict that the sun is about to rise. What I see is present, but what I foretell is future. I do not mean that the sun is future, for it already exists, but that its rise is future, because it has not yet happened. But I could not foretell the sunrise unless I had a picture of it in my mind, just as I have at this moment while I am speaking about it. Yet the dawn, which I see in the sky, is not the sunrise, although it precedes it; nor is the picture which I have in my mind the sunrise. But both the dawn and my mental picture are seen in the present, and it is from them that I am able to predict the sunrise, which is future. The future, then, is not yet; it is not at all; and if it is not at all, it cannot possibly be seen. But it can be foretold from things which are present, because they exist now and can therefore be seen.

19

In what way, then, do you, Ruler of all that you have created, reveal the future to the souls of men? You have revealed it to your prophets. But how do you reveal the future to us when, for us, the future does not exist? Is it that you only reveal present signs of things that are to come? For it is utterly impossible that things which do not exist should be revealed. The means by which you do this is far beyond our understanding. I have not the strength to comprehend this mystery, and by my own power I never shall. But in your strength I shall understand it, when you grant me the grace to see, sweet Light of the eyes of my soul.

20

From what we have said it is abundantly clear that neither the future nor the past exist, and therefore it is not strictly correct to say that there are three times, past, present, and future. It might be correct to say that there are three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things. Some such different times do exist in the mind, but nowhere else that I can see. The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation. If we may speak in these terms, I can see three times and I admit that they do exist.

By all means, then, let us speak of three times, past, present, and future. Incorrect though it is, let us comply with usage. I shall not object or argue, nor shall I rebuke anyone who speaks in these terms, provided that he understands what he is saying and does not imagine that the future or the past exists now. Our use of words is generally inaccurate and seldom completely correct, but our meaning is recognized none the less.

21

I said just now that we measure time as it passes. This enables us to say that a given space of time is twice as long as whatever period we take as the unit of measurement, or that the two are of equal duration, and we apply the same principle to any other space of time that we are able to measure.

As I said, we measure time while it is passing. If I am asked how I know this, my answer is that I know it because we do measure time. We could not measure a thing which did not exist, and time does not exist when it is past or future. How, then, do we measure present time, when present time has no duration? It must be measured while it is in process of passing. It cannot be measured after it has passed, because nothing then exists to be measured.

But while we are measuring it, where is it coming from, what is it passing through, and where is it going? It can only be coming from the future, passing through the present, and going into the past. In other words, it is coming out of what does not yet exist, passing through what has no duration, and moving into what no longer exists.

But how can we measure time except in relation to some measureable period? We cannot use the terms 'as long', 'twice as long', 'three times as long', and so on, when we speak of time, except in relation to a given period. But to what period do we relate time when we measure it as it is passing? To the future, from which it comes? No: because we cannot measure what does not exist. To the present, through which it is passing? No: because we cannot measure what has no duration. To the past, then, towards which it is going? No again: because we cannot measure what no longer exists.

22

My mind is burning to solve this intricate puzzle. O Lord my God, good Father, it is a problem at once so familiar and so mysterious. I long to find the answer. Through Christ I beseech you, do not keep it hidden away but make it clear to me. Let your mercy give me light. To whom am I to put my questions? To whom can I confess my ignorance with greater profit than to you? For my burning desire to study your Scriptures is not displeasing to you. Grant me what I love, for it was your gift that I should love it. Grant me this, Father, for *you know well enough how to give your children what is good for them.*[1] Grant me this, for *I have set myself to read the riddle, but it will prove a hard search*[2] until you reveal it to me. Through Christ I beseech you, in the name of him who is the Holy of Holies, let no man stand in my way. *I trust, and trusting find words to utter.*[3] This is my hope and for this I live, that I may *gaze at the beauty of the Lord.*[4] *You have measured my years with a brief span*;[5] they pass away; but how they pass, I do not know.

'Time' and 'times' are words forever on our lips. 'How long did he speak?' we ask. 'How long did he take to do that?' 'How long it is since I have seen it!' 'This syllable is twice the length of that.' We use these words and hear others using them. They understand what we mean and we understand them. No words could be plainer or more commonly used. Yet their true meaning is concealed from us. We have still to find it out.

[1] Matt. 7: 11. [2] Ps. 72: 16 (73: 16). [3] Ps. 115: 10 (116: 10).
[4] Ps. 26: 4 (27: 4). [5] Ps. 38: 6 (39: 5).

23

I once heard a learned man say that time is nothing but the movement of the sun and the moon and the stars, but I did not agree. Would it not be more likely that time was the movement, not only of heavenly bodies, but of all other bodies as well? If all the lights of the sky ceased to move but the potter's wheel continued to turn, would there not still be time by which we could measure its rotations? Should we no longer be able to say that it turned with a regular rhythm, or that its speed varied, or that some turns took more and others less time? When we said this, should we not be speaking in time? And would not our words consist of syllables of unequal length, simply because more time is required for the pronunciation of some than of others?

O God, grant that men should recognize in some small thing like this potter's wheel the principles which are common to all things, great and small alike. There are stars and other lights in the sky, set there to be *portents, and be the measures of time, to mark out the day and the year.*[1] This much is plain. But if I cannot claim that a turn of that little wooden wheel is one day, neither can the learned assert that it is not time at all.

My problem is to discover the fundamental nature of time and what power it has. It is by time that we measure the movement of bodies. For example, we say that one movement takes twice the time that another takes. By the word 'day' we mean not only the length of time that the sun remains in the sky above the earth, which determines the difference between night and day, but also the time of its complete circuit from sunrise to sunrise. It is this period that we mean when we say that a given number of days has gone by, because the nights are not counted separately but are reckoned as included in the days. Since, then, a day is completed by the movement of the sun through its total orbit, from the time when it rises in the east until it again reaches the east, my question is whether a day is that movement itself, the time needed for its completion, or a combination of both.

If a day were the movement of the sun through a whole circuit, there would still be a day even if the sun completed its course in a space of time as short as one hour. If, on the other hand, a day were the length of time which the sun actually takes to complete its

[1] Gen. 1: 14.

circuit, it would not be a day if the period between one sunrise and the next were as short as one hour. In this case the sun would have to circle the earth twenty-four times to make one day. If, according to the third hypothesis, the movement of the sun and the time it takes to complete its circuit together constituted a day, there would be a day neither if the sun travelled through its complete orbit in the space of one hour, not if it stood still while as much time passed as the sun regularly takes to circle the earth between one morning and the next.

But for the present I shall not inquire what it is that we call a day. I shall confine myself to asking what time is, for it is by time that we measure the course of the sun. If it travelled around the earth in a space of time equal to twelve hours, we should say that it had completed its course in half the usual time. By comparing the two times we should say that, if twelve hours were taken as a single period, twenty-four hours was a double period, and this calculation would hold good whether the sun completed its circuit from the east round to the east again in the single or the double period on different occasions.

I cannot therefore accept the suggestion that time is constituted by the movement of heavenly bodies, because although the sun once stood still in answer to a man's prayer,[1] so that he could fight on until victory was his, the sun indeed stood still but time continued to pass. The battle went on for as long as was necessary and was then over. I see time, therefore, as an extension of some sort. But do I really see this or only seem to see it? You will make it clear to me, my Light and my Truth.

24

It is not your will that I should agree to the proposition that time is constituted by the movement of a material body. For no body moves except in time. I hear your voice which tells me this. But it is not your voice which tells me that the movement of a body itself constitutes time. For when a body moves, it is by time that I measure how long its motion lasts, from the time when it begins to move until its movement ceases. If I do not see when its movement begins, and if its movement continues after I have ceased to watch, so that I do not

[1] See Jos. 10: 13.

see when it ends, I am not able to measure it, except perhaps from the time when I begin to watch until the time when I cease watching. If I watch it for any length of time, I can only say that its movement lasts a long time. I cannot say how long that time is, because we can only say how long time is when we compare it with a given standard. For example, we say that one period is as long, or twice as long, as another, and so on. But if we can mark the points in space between which a moving body travels or, in the case of a body rotating upon its own axis, the distance through which its parts are moving, we can say how much time is needed for the body to complete its movement between the two points or for its parts to complete their revolution.

It is clear, then, that the movement of a body is not the same as the means by which we measure the duration of its movement. This being so, it must be obvious which of the two ought more properly to be called time. The same body may move at different speeds, and sometimes it is at rest, and we measure not only its motion but also its rest by means of time. We say that it was at rest for the same length of time as it was in motion, or that it stood still for twice or three times as long as it moved, and so on, whether we make an exact calculation or a rough estimate – 'more or less', as the saying goes.

Time, therefore, is not the movement of a body.

25

I confess to you, Lord, that I still do not know what time is. Yet I confess too that I do know that I am saying this in time, that I have been talking about time for a long time, and that this long time would not be a long time if it were not for the fact that time has been passing all the while. How can I know this, when I do not know what time is? Is it that I do know what time is, but do not know how to put what I know into words? I am in a sorry state, for I do not even know what I do not know!

My God, I am in your presence. You see that I do not lie, for I say only what is in my heart. *It is you, Lord, that keep the lamp of my hopes still burning; shine on the darkness about me.*[1]

[1] Ps. 17: 29 (18: 28).

26

Does my soul speak the truth to you when I say that I can measure time? I do indeed measure it, but I do not know what I measure. By means of time I measure the movement of bodies. Does this not mean that I measure time itself? Could I measure the movement of a body, that is, measure how long the movement lasted and how long the body took to move between two points, unless I measured the time in which it moved?

If this is so, what means do I use to measure time? Do we measure longer periods of time by means of shorter ones, as we measure yards by means of feet? This is how we measure the duration of a long syllable, for we compare it with a short one and conclude that it is twice as long. We use the same method when we measure the length of a poem by the lengths of the lines, the lengths of the lines by the lengths of the feet, the lengths of the feet by the lengths of the syllables, and the lengths of the long syllables by the lengths of the short ones. We do not measure them by pages – that would give us a measurement in terms of space, not time – but by the pronunciation as they are read. This enables us to say, 'This is a long poem, because it consists of so many lines. The lines are long, because they each consist of so many feet. The feet are long, because they each contain so many syllables. This or that syllable is long, because it is the double of a short one.'

Even so, this is not an accurate means of measuring time, because it can happen that a short line spoken slowly may take longer to recite than a long one spoken hurriedly. The same applies to a whole poem, a foot, or even a single syllable.

It seems to me, then, that time is merely an extension, though of what it is an extension I do not know. I begin to wonder whether it is an extension of the mind itself.

Tell me, my God, I beseech you, what is it that I am measuring when I say either, by a rough computation, that one period of time is longer than another, or, with more precision, that it is twice as long? I know that I am measuring time. But I am not measuring the future, because it does not yet exist; nor the present, because it has no extent; nor the past, because it no longer exists. Am I measuring time which is in process of passing, but has not yet passed? This was the suggestion which I put forward before.

27

Be resolute, my soul. Onward with all your endeavour. *God is our defence,*[1] for *his we are, he it was that made us.*[2] Onward, where truth begins to dawn!

Suppose that we hear a noise emitted by some material body. The sound begins and we continue to hear it. It goes on until finally it ceases. Then there is silence. The sound has passed and is no longer sound. Before it began it was future and could not be measured, because it did not yet exist. Now that it has ceased it cannot be measured, because it no longer exists. It could only be measured while it lasted, because then it existed and could be measured. But even then it was not static, because it was transient, moving continually towards the point when it would no longer exist. Was it all the more measurable because of this fact? While it was transient it was gaining some extent in time by which it could be measured, but not in present time, for the present has no extent.

Let us assume, then, that it could be measured at this stage. Now let us imagine another noise. The sound begins and goes on continuously and evenly without variation. If we are to measure it, we must do so while it lasts, because once the sound has ceased it will be a thing of the past, and if it no longer exists it cannot be measured. So let us try to measure it and give an accurate estimate of its duration. But the noise is still to be heard, and it can only be measured from the point when the sound begins to its final point, when it ceases. In fact, what we measure is the interval between a beginning and an end. For this reason a sound which has not yet come to an end cannot be measured in such a way as to enable us to say how long or short it is, or to say that it is equal in duration to any other noise, or to make any statement of comparison such as that it is half as long or twice as long as another. But when it comes to an end it will no longer exist. How, then, shall we be able to measure it?

Nevertheless we do measure time. We cannot measure it if it is not yet in being, or if it is no longer in being, or if it has no duration, or if it has no beginning and no end. Therefore we measure neither the future nor the past nor the present nor time that is passing. Yet we do measure time.

Take the line *Deus Creator omnium,* which consists of eight syllables,

[1] Ps. 61: 9 (62: 8). [2] Ps. 99: 3 (100: 3).

alternately short and long. The four short syllables, the first, third, fifth, and seventh, are single in quantity compared with the four long ones, that is, the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth. Each of the long syllables is a double quantity compared with each of the short ones. I can tell this because, by pronouncing them, I find it to be the case, in so far as I can rely upon the plain evidence of my own hearing. As far as my ear enables me to do so, I judge the length of a long syllable by comparing it with a short one, and my ear tells me that it is twice as long. But I hear the two syllables one after the other, and if the short one comes first and the long one second, how is my ear to retain the sound of the short one in order that I may compare the two for the purpose of measurement? I must do this if I am to find out that the long one is double the quantity of the short one, but how can I do it if the long sound does not begin until the short one has ceased? Nor can I even measure the long one while it is still present, because I cannot measure it until it is completed, and once it is completed it is no longer there to be measured.

What, then, is it that I measure? What has become of the short syllable, which I use as the standard of measurement? What has become of the long one, which I measure? The sound of both is finished and has been wafted away into the past. They no longer exist. All the same I measure them and, in so far as I can trust my practised ear, I say confidently that one is a single and the other a double quantity – and by quantity, of course, I mean their duration in time. I can only do this because they are both completed and are now things of the past. So it cannot be the syllables themselves that I measure, since they no longer exist. I must be measuring something which remains fixed in my memory.

It is in my own mind, then, that I measure time. I must not allow my mind to insist that time is something objective. I must not let it thwart me because of all the different notions and impressions that are lodged in it. I say that I measure time in my mind. For everything which happens leaves an impression on it, and this impression remains after the thing itself has ceased to be. It is the impression that I measure, since it is still present, not the thing itself, which makes the impression as it passes and then moves into the past. When I measure time it is this impression that I measure. Either, then, this is what time is, or else I do not measure time at all.

When we measure silences and say that a given period of silence has lasted as long as a given period of sound, we measure the sound mentally, as though we could actually hear it, and this enables us to estimate the duration of the periods of silence. Even without opening our mouths or speaking at all we can go over poems and verses and speech of any sort in our minds, and we can do the same with measurable movement of any kind. We can estimate that one poem takes proportionately more, or less, time than another, just as if we were reciting them both aloud. If a man wishes to utter a prolonged sound and decides beforehand how long he wants it to be, he allows this space of time to elapse in silence, commits it to memory, and then begins to utter the sound. It sounds until it reaches the limit set for it, or rather, I should not use the present tense and say that it sounds, but the past and the future, saying that it both has sounded and will sound. For as much of it as has been completed at any given moment has sounded, and the rest will sound. In this way the process continues to the end. All the while the man's attentive mind, which is present, is relegating the future to the past. The past increases in proportion as the future diminishes, until the future is entirely absorbed and the whole becomes past.

28

But how can the future be diminished or absorbed when it does not yet exist? And how can the past increase when it no longer exists? It can only be that the mind, which regulates this process, performs three functions, those of expectation, attention, and memory. The future, which it expects, passes through the present, to which it attends, into the past, which it remembers. No one would deny that the future does not yet exist or that the past no longer exists. Yet in the mind there is both expectation of the future and remembrance of the past. Again, no one would deny that the present has no duration, since it exists only for the instant of its passage. Yet the mind's attention persists, and through it that which is to be passes towards the state in which it is to be no more. So it is not future time that is long, but a long future is a long expectation of the future; and past time is not long, because it does not exist, but a long past is a long remembrance of the past.

Suppose that I am going to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my faculty of expectation is engaged by the whole of it. But once I have begun, as much of the psalm as I have removed from the province of expectation and relegated to the past now engages my memory, and the scope of the action which I am performing is divided between the two faculties of memory and expectation, the one looking back to the part which I have already recited, the other looking forward to the part which I have still to recite. But my faculty of attention is present all the while, and through it passes what was the future in the process of becoming the past. As the process continues, the province of memory is extended in proportion as that of expectation is reduced, until the whole of my expectation is absorbed. This happens when I have finished my recitation and it has all passed into the province of memory.

What is true of the whole psalm is also true of all its parts and of each syllable. It is true of any longer action in which I may be engaged and of which the recitation of the psalm may only be a small part. It is true of a man's whole life, of which all his actions are parts. It is true of the whole history of mankind, of which each man's life is a part.

29

But *to win your favour is dearer than life itself.*[1] I see now that my life has been wasted in distractions, but *your right hand has supported me*[2] in the person of Christ my Lord, the Son of man, who is the Mediator between you, who are one, and men, who are many. He has upheld me in many ways and through many trials, in order that through him *I may win the mastery, as he has won the mastery over me*;[3] in order that I may be rid of my old temptations and devote myself only to God's single purpose, *forgetting what I have left behind.*[3] I look forward, not to what lies ahead of me in this life and will surely pass away, but to my eternal goal. I am intent upon this one purpose, not distracted by other aims, and *with this goal in view I press on, eager for the prize, God's heavenly summons.*[3] Then I shall *listen to the sound of your praises*[4] and *gaze at your beauty*[5] ever present, never future, never past.

But now *my years are but sighs.*[6] You, O Lord, are my only solace.

[1] Ps. 62: 4 (63: 3). [2] Ps. 17: 36 (18: 35). [3] Philipp. 3: 12–14.
[4] Ps. 25: 7 (26: 7). [5] Ps. 26: 4 (27: 4). [6] Ps. 30: 11 (31: 10).

You, my Father, are eternal. But I am divided between time gone by and time to come, and its course is a mystery to me. My thoughts, the intimate life of my soul, are torn this way and that in the havoc of change. And so it will be until I am purified and melted by the fire of your love and fused into one with you.

30

Then I shall be cast and set firm in the mould of your truth. I shall no longer suffer the questions of men who, for their punishment, are sick of a disease which makes them thirst for more than they can drink, so that they ask 'What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?' or 'How did it occur to God to create something, when he had never created anything before?'

Grant them, O Lord, to think well what they say and to recognize that 'never' has no meaning when there is no time. If a man is said never to have made anything, it can only mean that he made nothing at any time. Let them see, then, that there cannot possibly be time without creation. Let them have done with this nonsense. Let them instead *be intent on what lies before them.*[1] Let them understand that before all time began you are the eternal Creator of all time, and that no time and no created thing is co-eternal with you, even if any created thing is outside time.

31

O Lord my God, how deep are your mysteries! How far from your safe haven have I been cast away by the consequences of my sins! Heal my eyes and let me rejoice in your light. If there were a mind endowed with such great power of knowing and foreknowing that all the past and all the future were known to it as clearly as I know a familiar psalm, that mind would be wonderful beyond belief. We should hold back from it in awe at the thought that nothing in all the history of the past and nothing in all the ages yet to come was hidden from it. It would know all this as surely as, when I sing the psalm, I know what I have already sung and what I have still to sing, how far I am from the beginning and how far from the end. But it is unthinkable that you, Creator of the universe, Creator of souls and bodies,

[1] Philipp. 3: 13.

should know all the past and all the future merely in this way. Your knowledge is far more wonderful, far more mysterious than this. It is not like the knowledge of a man who sings words well known to him or listens to another singing a familiar psalm. While he does this, his feelings vary and his senses are divided, because he is partly anticipating words still to come and partly remembering words already sung. It is far otherwise with you, for you are eternally without change, the truly eternal Creator of minds. In the Beginning you knew heaven and earth, and there was no change in your knowledge. In just the same way, in the Beginning you created heaven and earth, and there was no change in your action. Some understand this and some do not: let all alike praise you. You are supreme above all, yet your dwelling is in the humble of heart. For *you comfort the burdened*,[1] and none fall who lift their eyes to your high place.

[1] Ps. 145: 8 (146: 8).