

Meditations of the Heart - Reflections on the Scriptures

Psalm 19:14 *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

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Advent: Week 3

“What a wonder to think upon! The first link between my soul and Christ is, not my goodness, but my badness; not my merit, but my misery; not my standing, but my falling; not my riches, but my need. He comes to visit his people, yet not to admire their beauties, but to remove their deformities; not to reward their virtues, but to forgive their sins.”

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, preacher, controversialist, and teacher, has been called the most influential of all the Latin Church Fathers. In the following letter, he answers the questions of a priest.

“First, I want you to understand that Christian doctrine does not hold that God was infused into the human flesh in which he was born of the Virgin in such a way that he abandoned or lost the government of the universe. Nor did he transfer it to that tiny body as some kind of reduced and contracted substance. This opinion is held by people who are incapable of thinking anything other than of physical substances... The soul’s natural constitution is very different from the body – and how much more different is that of God, who is the Creator of both soul and body!... This is a wonder to human intelligence – which does not believe, perhaps, what it does not comprehend.”

“Second, you must understand the Word of God through whom everything was made, without thinking that any part of it can pass away or change from future to past. It continues as it is, and is everywhere entire... And so we have no reason to be afraid of the child’s tiny body, lest God should seem to suffer a great diminishment in it. God’s greatness is in his power, not in his bulk... This great power, which has no difficulty in accomplishing difficult things, made the virgin’s womb fruitful, from within, not from without. This power joined a reasonable soul to itself, and through it a human body too, bettering a whole human nature, and itself suffering no diminishment. It graciously took from it the title “human being” while generously giving it the title ‘divine being’...”

“But there was thirdly a most important thing that he taught us, for our own good. For the pagans assumed they had to solicit the gods’ friendship through magical or heavenly powers... For most human beings have a longing for the Divine Being. From pride not holiness, they used to suppose, and through various rituals that were not sacred but profane that they could partake of divinity... But now that Christ has come in the flesh, people can know that God is so close to the longing they have for him – this God they were soliciting through mediating powers as if he were far from them – that he has condescended to take on human nature.”

“Look upon us, O Lord, and let all the darkness of our souls vanish before the beams of thy brightness. Fill us with thy holy love, and open us to the treasures of thy wisdom. All our desire is known unto thee, and therefore perfect what thou hast begun, and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.”

- A prayer of Augustine of Hippo

Source: Houston, James M, Letters of Faith Through The Seasons, Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2006, p. 47-48. Reprinted by permission.