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Abstract

The Meditation of Augustine is a collection of works attributed to Augustine of Hippo but which were in fact a collection of writings from many men. Chapter 7 has recently been attributed to John of Fecamp. It is a meditation on the sufferings and death of Christ on the cross not because of any sin which He had commited; but because of our sins. This text was the inspiration for the German Hymn Herzliebster Jesu written by Johann Heermann in 1630 which was later translated into English and is translated variously as Ah Holy Jesus, or Oh dearest Jesus among others.

Latin Text of Chapter 7 of Meditations of St. Augustine

Including Notes and English Translation

Sources

Latin

## English

1. “Meditations of St. Augustine, His Treatise of the love of God, soliloquies, and manual. With Select contemplations from St. Anselm and St. Bernard” Translation by George Stanhope, Dean of Canterbury. Dedication dated April 12, 1701.

Latin Text[[1]](#footnote-1)

CAPUT VII.

*Dei in passion Christi mira disposition. Unde hinc homo. Gratiam rependere queat.*

Quid commisisti, dulcissime puer, ut sic judicareris? Quid commisisti, amantissime juvenis, ut adeo[[2]](#footnote-2) tractareris? Quod scelus tuum, quæ noxa tua; quæ causa mortis, quæ occasion tuæ damnationis? Ego enim sum tui plaga doloris, tuæ culpa occisionis. Ego tuæ pasritum, tuæ vindictæ flagitium. O mirabilis censuræ condition, et ineffabilis mysterii disposition! Peccat iniquus, et panitur Justus; delinquit reus, et vapulat innocens; offendit impius, et damuatur pius : quod meretur maius, patitur bonus; quod perpetrat servus, exsolvit dominus; quod committit homo, sustinet Deus. Quo, Nate Dei, quo tua descendit humilitas? quo tua flagravit charitas? quo processit pietas? quo excrevit benignitas? quo tuus attigit amor? quo pervenit compassion? Ego inique egi, tu pœna multaris; ego facinus admisi, tu ultione plecteris; ego crimen edidi, tu torturæ subjiceris : ego superbivi, tu humiliaris; ego tumui, tu attenuaris; ego inobediens exstiti, tu obediens scelus inobedientiæ luis; ego gulæparui, tu inedia afficeris; me ad illicita rapuit concupiscentia arboris[[3]](#footnote-3), te perfecta charitas ducit ad crucem; ego præsumpsi vetitum, tu subisti equuleum; ego delector cibo, tu laboras patibulo; ego furor deliciis, tu laniaris clavis; ego pomi dulcedinem, tufellis gustas amaritudinem; mibi ridens congaudet Eva, tibi plorans compatitur Maria. Ecce, Rex gloriæ, ecce mea impietas, et tua claret pictas. En mea injustitia et tua liquet justitia.

Quis, Rex meus et Deus meus, quid retribuam tibi pro omnibus quæ tribuisti mihi? Non enim inveniri in corde potest hominis, quod condigne talibus referatur præmiis. Numquid sagacitas machinari potest humana, cui comparetur miseratio divina? Nec est creaturæ moliri officium, quo juste Creatoris recompenset præsidium. Est autem, Nate Dei, in hac tua admirabili disposition, est cui fragilitas mea in aliquot suppeditet, si tua visitation compuncia mens carnem suam crucifigat cum vitiis et concupiscentiis (Galat. V; 24) : et si hoc a te conceditur, quasi jam tibi incipit compati, quia et tu pro peccato dignatus es mori. Sicque per interiorem victoriam[[4]](#footnote-4) te duce armabitur ad exteriorem palmam: quatenus devicia persecution spirituali, non vereatur pro amore tuo subjici gladio materiali. Ita exiguitas conditionis, si tuæ complacet pietati, magnitudini valebit pro viribus respondere Conditoris. Et hæc cœlestis medicina, bone Jesu, hoc tui[[5]](#footnote-5) antidotum amoris. Oro te per antiquas misericordias tuas, infunde vulneribus[[6]](#footnote-6) meis, quod rejecta vipereæ contagionis bile, redintegret me incolumitati pristinæ: quo gustatum tuæ nectar suavitatis faciat me illecebrosa mundi prospera toto affect despicere, et nulla ejus pro te adversa formidare; memorque perpetuæ nubilitatis, semper fastidiam ventos hujus transitorii tumoris. Nibil, quæso, sine te mihi dulcescat, nibil complaceat, nil pretiosum, nil præter te mihi arrideat speciosum: vileseant, obsecro abste, mihi Omnia, sordeant universa. Quod tibi adversum, sit mihi molestum; sic et beneplacitum, indeficiens desiderium. Tædeat me gaudere sine te, et delectet tristari pro te. Sit mihi nomen tuum refocillatio, et memoria tua consolation; fiant mihi lacrymæ meæ panes (Psal. XII, 4), tuas die ac nocte investigando ustificationes; sit mihi bomum lex oris tui super millia auri et argenti (Psal. CXVIII, 72). Sit obedire tibi amabile; et resistere, exsecrabile. Rogo te, spes mea, per omnes potestates tuas, ut propitieris impietalibus meis. Adaperi aures meas mandatis tuis, et ne declines, flagito per nomen sanctum tuum, in verba malitiæ core meum, ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis. Peto etiam per admirabilem humilitatem tuam, ne veniat mihi pes superbiæ, et manus peccatoris non moveat me.

# English

# George Stanhope Translation

*An Acknowledgment that sinful Man was the Cause of Christ’s Sufferings.*

What hadst thou done, O charming innocence, to bring thee as a criminal before thy enemies bar? Or how hadst thou deserved to be treated with such rude and insolent, such unrelenting and triumphant barbarity? What passage of thy whole life could they fix an accusation upon, what crime allege to countenance so rigorous a sentence? If none, (as none they could) whence then thy shameful bitter death, or how camest thou to be condemned as a vile miscreant? It was I, alas! It was wretched I, that gave thee all those pains: it was I deserved the death that thou enduredst; and my offences gave those scourges, those nails, that spear, the power of slaying and wounding, and killing thee. O wonderful process! Mystery of justice! That the wicked should offend, and the righteous be punished for it! That the guilt and the condemnation should thus be separated! That the servant should contract a debt, and the Lord, to whom it was due, make satisfaction! That man should provoke the Divine vengeance, and God should feel the smart of it! How low, O Son of God, did thy humility stoop! How fervent was thy love! How boundless they compassion!

For I have done wickedly, and thou art called to account for it: I armed an angry justice against myself, and it is discharged upon thy head: mine is the crime, and thine the torture: I have been proud, and thou art humbled; I am puffed up, and thou hast emptied thyself: I have been rebellious, and thy obedience hath expiated for it. I have been intemperate, and thou hast hungred and thirsted for it: my ungoverned appetite sinned in the forbidden, and thy immense love submitted to hang on the accursed, tee: I eat the fruit, and thou feelest the pains: I wallow in pleasures, and thou art torn with nails: the honey in my mouth is turned to gall in thy stomach: the tempting Eve rejoices with me, the sorrowful Mary suffers and laments with thee. Thus is my wickedness and want of love to God, thus is thy righteousness and inexpressible love to man, manifested in this marvelous dispensation.

And now, my God and King, what reward shall I give, what return can I make for all the benefits thou hast done unto me? (Ps. Cxvi. 12.) Surely it is not in the power of man to find out any requital answerable to such bounty: for how should the narrowness of a finite mind, extend to anything fit to be compared with infinite compassion? How should a poor creature be capable of any recompense suitable to the mercy of an almighty Creator? And yet, my dearest Saviour, so wonderfully is this matter ordered, that even man, even I, weak and worthless though I be, may find something which thou art pleased to accept in return; if by thy grace my soul be broken and humbled, and I crucify this flesh with its affections and lusts. (Gal. v 24.) When wrought up to this holy disposition, I then begin to suffer for, and live to, thee; and in some sort to pay back what thou hast endured when dying for me. Thus by gaining a conquest upon the inward man, I am by thee enabled to win the crown by my outward; and, by triumphing over the flesh in spiritual trials, that very flesh hath the courage to submit gladly for thy sake to bodily persecutions and death. This is the utmost my condition will admit; and this, though but little in itself, yet when proceeding from the same principle of holy love, thou art graciously pleased to accept, as the utmost poor mortals can do in acknowledgment of their great Maker. This is the cure of sinful souls; this, blessed Jesus, the sovereign antidote thy mercy hath provided for us!

I beseech thee, therefore, by thy tender mercies, which have ever been of old, pour such balm into my wounds, as may dispel the venom of my diseases, and restore me to spiritual health and soundness. (Ps. Xxv. 6.) Let me drink of thy heavenly sweetness, and be so ravished with the taste, as ever after to disrelish the sensual delights of the world, to despise its pleasures, and cheerfully encounter the afflictions of this present life; and so to fix my heart on true noble joys, as always to disdain the empty and transitory shadows, which flesh and blood is so foolishly fond of, and so fearful of parting with.

Let me not, I beseech thee, esteem or delight in any thing but thee: let all this whole world can give, without thee, be counted no better than dross and dung: let me hate most irreconcileably whatever displeases thee; and what thou lovest let me most eagerly desire, and incessantly pursue: let me feel no satisfaction in any joys without thee; nor any reluctancy in the greatest sufferings for thee. Let the mention of thy name, be always a refreshment, and the remembrance of thy goodness an inexhaustible spring of comfort to my soul. Let tears be my meat day and night, so I may attain to thy righteousness; and the law of thy mouth always dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver. (Ps cxix. 72) Let me aim at nothing so much as to do thee service; nor detest and avoid any thing in comparison of sinning against thee. And, for what I have unhappily done of that kind already, I entreat thee, my only refuge and hope, to pardon for thy own mercies sake. Let my ears be ever open to the voice of thy law, and suffer not my heart to incline to any evil thing, that I never comply with them that practice wickedness, nor take shelter in trifling pretences to excuse or indulge myself in doing what I ought not. (Ps. Cxli. 4.) And once more, I beg thee, by thy own unparalleled humility, that the foot of pride may not come against me, nor the hand of the ungodly cast me down. (Ps.xxxvi.11.)

1. Source 0354-0430\_Augustinus\_Meditationum\_Incertus\_MLT.pdf, page 3 and 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Apud Anselmum additur, dure. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sic Ms. Mett. Aud Anselmum, *ad illicitam concupiscentia rapuit arborem;* vel, *ad illicitum rapuit concupiscentia ardorem.* At editi, *ad illicitam concupiscentiam ravuit arbor.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sic Ms. Mett. At editi, *per interioris hominis.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Abest, *tui*, a Ms. Mett. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Alias, *visceribus.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)