

CAPUT II – AMBROSIUS AURELIUM BAPTIZET

*totam miseriam meam in conspectu cordis mei
All my misery before my heart*

Aurelius completes his studies in Carthage. During his student days, he writes a short book that outlines own merits and a career path. (The book is known anecdotally.) He is restless and ambitious; he leaves North Africa at age 28

He travels to Rome. The career opportunity is not Rome but Milan. The emperor resides in Milan. It is the *de facto* capital of the Western Roman Empire. The appointment is prestigious and involves teaching rhetoric. Aurelius, at the end of his second-year lecturing, for reasons not known, resigns his appointment. His dissolute years commence

Monica, his mother; visits sometime during his Milanese years. She travels from the family home of Tagaste, North Africa

Monica, driven by her Christian faith; insists Aurelius be baptized. The issue is not the rite of baptism, but *when* the rite is administered. Christian doctrine accents: on baptism, the human soul is purified, it is in a state of blamelessness allowing entry into heaven. Baptism for an adult, looking to continued long earthly life, the issue is to live remaining days unblemished

Patricius, husband to Monica and father to Aurelius; is baptised on his deathbed, therefore, with a blameless soul, he is granted immediate entry into heaven. Aurelius, not knowing the span-of-life, wrestles with himself

Aurelius, now Augustine; lives in accordance with Christian virtue. He returns to Tagaste. His parents are deceased and Adeodatus, his son by a servant, dies in his adolescence

Augustine sells the family estate and accepts a position as a junior clergyman in the coastal town of Hippo, north of Tagaste. He remains in Hippo till life-end

*...ferens ingentem imbrem lacrimarum...et ecce audio vocem...“tolle lege, tolle lege”
...a mighty torrent of tears...I hear a voice...“Take up and read, take up and read”*

Augustine baptized; is a changed man. When his Milanese career collapses, his life intersects with intense religiosity. His writings are orthodox. He observes the *approved* dogma of the emperors. The cited passage is Augustine's personal crisis of conversion and confession. Out of trial comes: *tolle lege...*

*vbi vero a fundo alta consideratio traxit et
congressit totam miseriam meam in conspectu cordis
mei, oborta est procella ingens, ferens ingentem
imbrem lacrimarum. et ut totum effunderem cum
vocibus suis, surrexi ab Alypio – solitudo mihi ad
negotium flendi aptior suggerebatur – et secessi
remotius, quam ut posset mihi onerosa esse etiam eius
praesentia. sic tunc eram, et ille sensit: nescio quid
enim, puto, dixeram, in quo apparebat sonus vocis
meae iam fletu gravidus, et sic surrexeram. mansit ergo
ille ubi sedebamus nimie stupens. ego sub quadam fici
arbore stravi me nescio quomodo, et dimisi habenas
lacrimis, et proruperunt flumina oculorum meorum,
acceptabile sacrificium tuum, et non quidem his verbis,
sed in hac sententia multa dixi tibi: “et tu, domine,
usquequo? usquequo, domine, irasceris in finem? ne
memor fueris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum.” sen-
tiebam enim eis me teneri. iactabam voces miserales:
“quamdiu, quamdiu ‘cras et cras’? quare non modo?
quare non hac hora finis turpitudinis meae?”*

*dicebam haec, et flebam, amarissima con-
tritione cordis mei. et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo
cum cantu dicentis, et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an-*

*puellae, nescio: “tolle lege, tolle lege.” statimque
mutato vultu intentissimus cogitare coepi, utrumnam
solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi cantitare tale
aliquid, nec occurrebat omnino audisse me uspiam:
repressoque impetus lacrimarum surrexi, nihil aliud
interpretans divinitus mihi iuberi, nisi ut aperirem
codicem et legerem quod primum caput invenissem.
audieram enim de Antonio, quod ex evangelica
lectione, cui forte supervenerat, admonitus fuerit,
tamquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: vade, vende
omnia, quae habes, da pauperibus et habebis
thesaurum in caelis; et veni, sequere me: et tali oraculo
confestim ad te esse conversum. itaque concitus redii
in eum locum, ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posueram
codicem apostoli, cum inde surrexeram. arripui, aperui
et legi in silentio capitulum, quo primum coniecti sunt
oculi mei: non in comissionibus et ebrietatibus, non
in cubilibus et in pudiciis, non in contentione et
aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum, et
carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis. nec
ultra volui legere, nec opus erat. statim quippe cum fine
huius sententiae, quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi
meo, omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt*