

~Other Speakers A-F: St. Augustine:

18. But I was ignorant of all this, and so I mocked those holy servants and prophets of thine. Yet what did I gain by mocking them save to be mocked in turn by thee? Insensibly and little by little, I was led on to such follies as to believe that a fig tree wept when it was plucked and that the sap of the mother tree was tears. Notwithstanding this, if a fig was plucked, by not his own but another man's wickedness, some Manichean saint might eat it, digest it in his stomach, and breathe it out again in the form of angels. Indeed, in his prayers he would assuredly groan and sigh forth particles of God, although these particles of the most high and true God would have remained bound in that fig unless they had been set free by the teeth and belly of some "elect saint"[79]! And, wretch that I was, I believed that more mercy was to be shown to the fruits of the earth than unto men, for whom these fruits were created. For, if a hungry man--who was not a Manichean--should beg for any food, the morsel that we gave to him would seem condemned, as it were, to capital punishment.