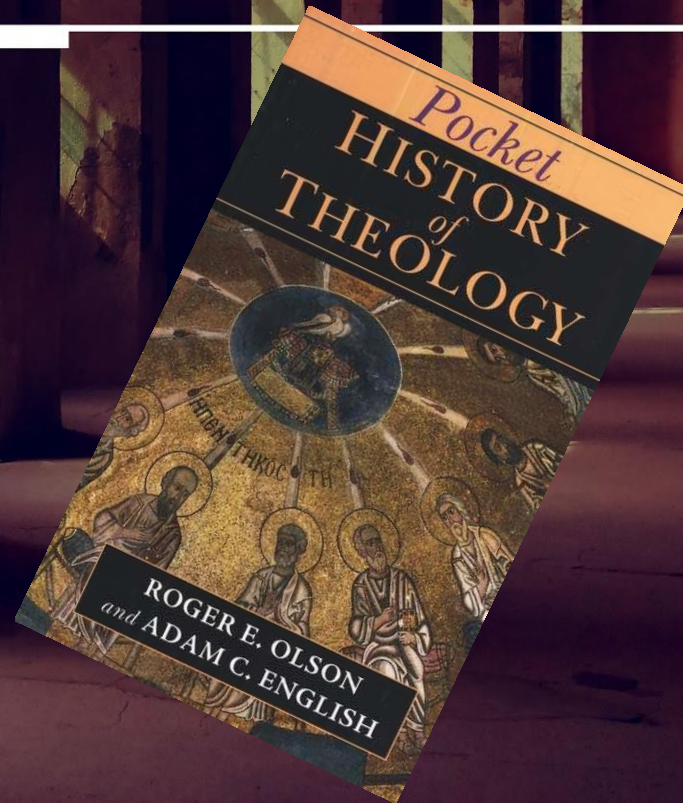


CHURCH HISTORY

7





AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Augustine of Hippo

d. 430

28 August

Bishop and Theologian

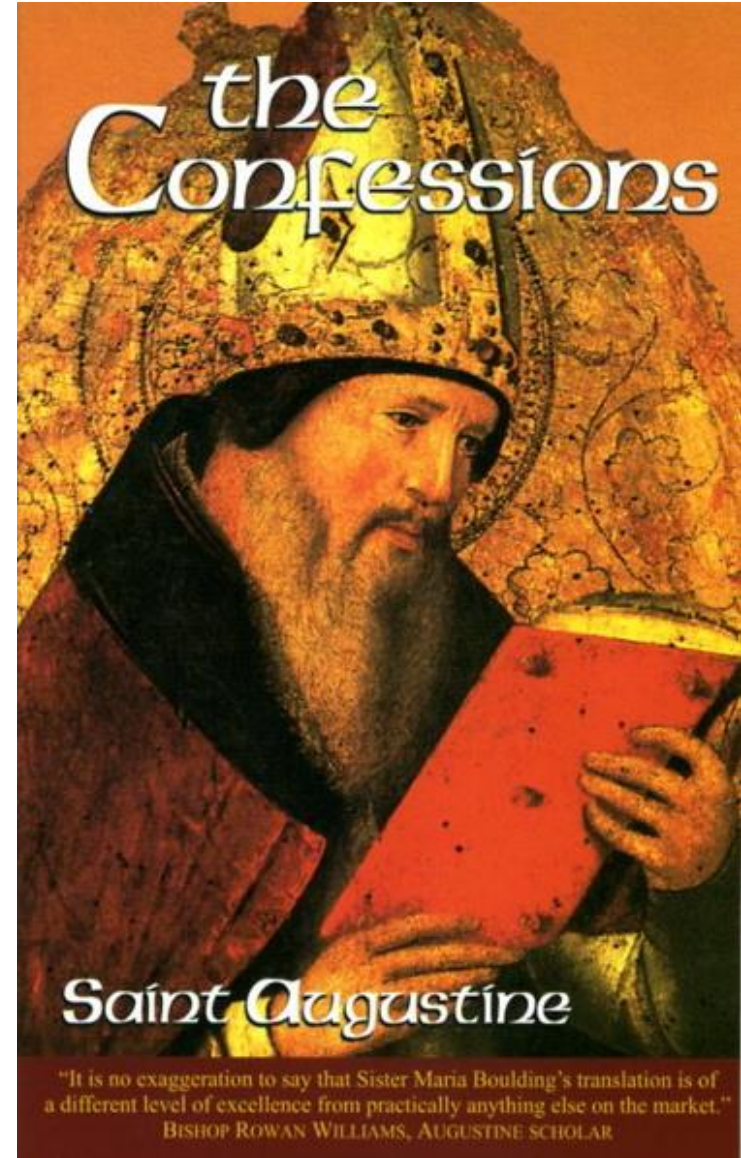
- ✠ Trained as lawyer-rhetorician
- ✠ Was Manichee, then a Neo-Platonist, before his conversion
- ✠ Led struggles against Manichees, Donatists and Pelagians
- ✠ Wrote many books, including, *Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and *The City of God*
- ✠ Doctor of the Western Church

I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighbouring house, chanting, and oft repeating, 'Take up and read; take up and read.' I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell—'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

Confessions, VIII.xiia

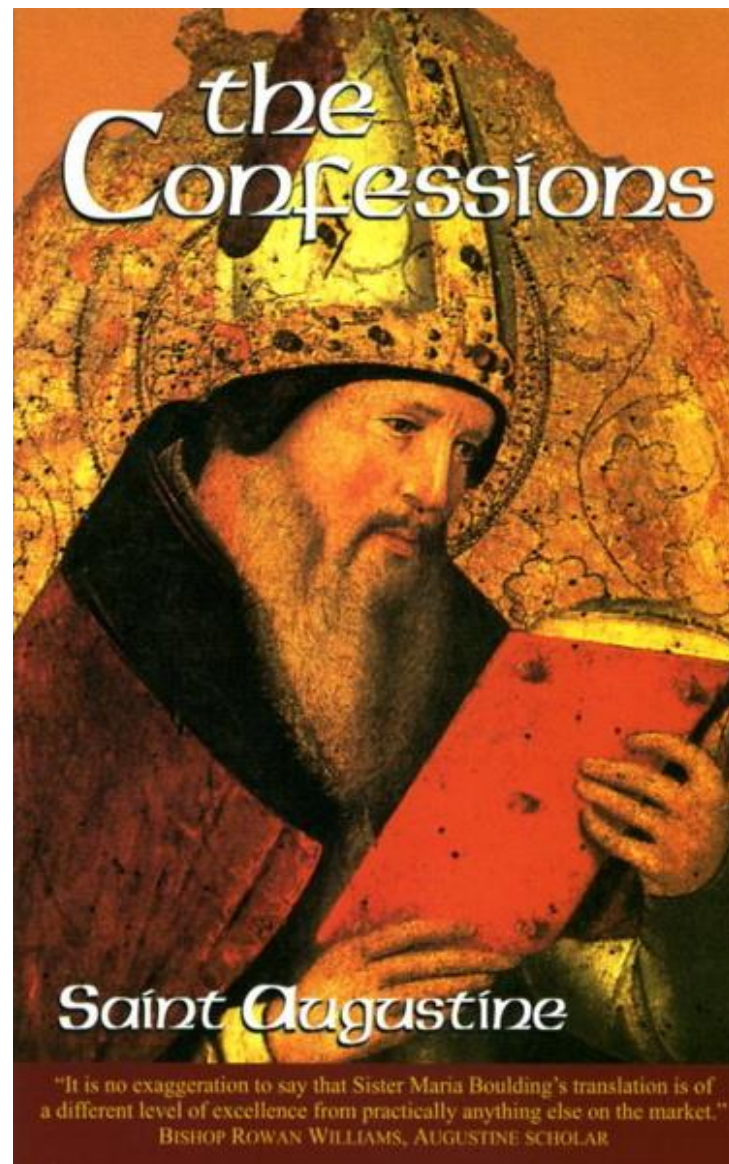
Augustine (354-430)

- Best known of all the early church fathers due to his autobiography *Confessions*.
- In fact, because of this, we know more about Augustine's personal life than almost any other ancient person.



Augustine (354-430)

- Written in the form of a prayer, *Confessions* reveals a great deal about Augustine's childhood, family, youth, struggles, health, conversion, theological development and life as the bishop of Hippo in North Africa.



Free Will vs. Predestination

- **Augustine believed in the absolute supremacy of God and the total helplessness and dependency of humanity on God's grace.**

Free Will vs. Predestination

- Though all the church fathers believed this, Augustine introduced a new idea called monergism.
- That is the idea that the human will is entirely passive and God's will is all-determining in both universal history and individual salvation.
- Also known as the doctrine of predestination.
- God's will and grace are irresistible.
- We do not choose God, God chooses us

The Pelagian Problem

- Pelagius was a British monk who died in 420.
- When he came to Rome in 405 he was horrified by the many Christians living in immorality and indifferent to growing in Christian purity.
- When Pelagius began inquiring about this he came across Augustine's teachings and was sure that this was the cause of the problem.

The Pelagian Problem

- Pelagius condemned Augustine's view in his book *On Nature*.
- If Christians could not do anything other than what God wills, then they could rightly believe that they could not abstain from immorality unless God willed them that gift.

The Pelagian Problem

- Pelagius argued that humans were not born sinful and have the capability to live sinless lives through their “nature endowments”.
- Therefore humans are responsible for what they do and can willingly come to Christ for forgiveness if they do sin.

The Pelagian Problem

- **This set off the debates over original sin, free will and grace that has consumed the church to this very day.**

Augustine Accused Pelagius of 3 Heresies

- 1. Pelagius denied original sin.**
- 2. Pelagius denied that God's grace is essential for salvation by saying that we have freewill to choose God without any assistance from God.**
- 3. Pelagius preached the possibility of sinless perfection apart from God's grace.**

Augustine

- **Augustine believed that all humans, except Christ, are born not only corrupted by sin, so that sin is inevitable, but also guilty of Adam's sin.**
- **Humans are not free not to sin.**
- **We have no free will except the will to freely sin.**
- **Everyone then deserves damnation from birth unless they are baptized for their sins and continue in that grace through faith and love.**

Augustine

- Before Adam's disobedience, Adam had the power not to sin, but this was no longer the case after his disobedience.
- This, however, did not thwart God's plan:
“For the Almighty God sets in motion even in the innermost hearts of people the movement of their will, so that God does through their will whatsoever God wishes to perform through them.”

(Augustine, On Grace and Free Will).

Augustine

- For Augustine, God alone is the all-determining reality so that whatever happens, including human sin, must be rooted in God's power.
 - In order for God to be sovereign every event that happens must be under his control.
- “If we maintain that the will of a human being is not in God's power but is controlled by the person, then it is possible for God to be frustrated. And that is just absurd.**
- (Augustine).**

Augustine

- **Humans are so utterly depraved that unless God gives them the gift of faith by grace, they would never think to do anything good.**
- **Any other view would weaken the depravity of humanity and the sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of God's grace, including Christ's death on the cross.**
- **If anyone could obtain some measure of righteousness by nature, including choosing the right, then Christ died in vain.**

Augustine

- **After Augustine's death, there was much debate in the church over his strict monergism.**
- **The Western church agreed with his criticisms of Pelagius, but many disagreed with Augustine's rigid views on sovereignty, election and free will.**

Synod of Orange

- **In 529 at a Synod in Orange (France), the church condemned Pelagianism (and semi-Pelagianism*) as heresies, but also did not fully endorse Augustinianism.**

***Our salvation involves God doing half the work and us doing half the work. A kind-of “God’s helps those who help themselves” pop-theology.**

Pope Gregory I / Gregory the Great

540-604

- **Gregory was pivotal in the catholic church becoming the *Roman* Catholic church - (in the west).**
- **One of the most important popes and theologians in Roman Catholic history whose views, unwittingly, led to the divisions between Catholic (west) and Orthodox (east) and Protestantism.**
- **Often considered the last of the church fathers and the first of the medieval theologians.**

Gregory the Great Accomplishments

- **Wrote the book *Pastoral Rule* for the instruction of clergy –where the preaching advice to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable” comes from.**
- **Launched missionary efforts to tribes of people in both England and Germany.**
- **Built monastic communities.**
- **Cleaned up corruption in the church.**

Gregory the Great Accomplishments

- **Administered food distribution in Rome during a major plague.**
- **Negotiated with political leaders for Rome's protection.**
- **Created a hybrid of Augustine's monergistic view and the semi-Pelagian synergism position which has influenced the Catholic church to this day.**

Gregory the Great

- **Gregory could sound very Augustinian in his upholding of the sovereignty of God and the depravity of humanity.**
- **And Gregory warned greatly about taking God's grace for granted.**
- **But Gregory also sound very Pelagian in emphasising personal responsibility and self-sacrificing piety and discipleship.**

Gregory the Great

- **Some of his statements on this topic sound like outright contradictions (but I'm sure he would have preferred the word paradox):**
- **Take this example:**

“Even the predestination itself to the eternal kingdom is so arranged by the omnipotent God that the elect attain it by their own effort.”

Gregory the Great

- For Gregory, “prayers, penance, masses, intercession, works – all are forms of human effort mediating with the divine” and yet, “no one could perform any of these things apart from assisting grace.”
- When a person’s will cooperates with that grace, so that the person perseveres to the end and goes to the eternal kingdom, this person may be said to have been “predestined to salvation.”

Gregory the Great

- **To be crucified with Christ means repentance, and works of love, such as self-sacrifice, giving to the poor, being active in church, self-discipline.**
- **For Gregory, the highest form of spiritual living is to become a virginal monk/nun.**