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Confessions by Saint Augustine of Hippo
Confessions (Latin: Confessiones) is an autobiographical work by Saint Augustine of Hippo, consisting of 13 books written in Latin between 397 and 400 e.Kr. [1] The work outlines St. Augustine's sinful youth and his conversion to Christianity. Modern English translations of it are sometimes published under the title The Confessions of Saint Augustine to distinguish the book from other books with similar titles. The original title was Confessions in Thirteen Books, and it was composed to be read aloud with each book as a complete unit. [2] Confessions are generally considered one of Augustine's most important texts. It is widely seen as the first Western Christian autobiography ever written (Ovid had invented the genre at the beginning of the first century e.Kr. with his *Tristia*), and was an influential model for Christian writers throughout the Middle Ages. Professor Henry Chadwick wrote that Confessions will always rank among the great masterpieces of Western literature. [3] Summary
The work is not a complete autobiography, as it was written during St. Augustine's early 40s, and he lived long afterwards, producing another important work, the city of God. Nevertheless, it provides an unbroken overview of his thought development and is the most complete overview of a single person from the 4th and 5th centuries. It is a significant theological work, with spiritual meditations and insights. In his work, Augustine writes about how much he regrets leading a sinful and immoral life. He discusses his remorse for following the manichaic religion and faith in astrology. He writes about his friend Nebridius' role in helping to persuade him that astrology was not only wrong, but evil, and Saint Ambrose's role in his conversion to Christianity. The first nine books are autobiographical and the last four are comments and considerably more philosophical. He shows intense sorrow for his sexual sins and writes about the importance of sexual morality. The books were written as prayers to God, hence the title, based on the Psalms of David; And it begins with for you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. [4] The work is believed to be divisible in books symbolizing various aspects of the Trinity and trinitarian beliefs. Outline (after book) Part of a series aboutAustin of HippoAugustine in the Four Doctors of the Western Church of Augustinianism Divine Command Amillennialism Original Sin Invisible Church Predestination in se Augustinian hypothesis Only war augustinsk theodicy Works The City of God Confessions On Christian Doctrine Soliloquies Enchiridion On the Trinity Influences and followers Plotinus Saint Monica Ambrose Possidius Anselm Aquinas Bona luther calvin jansen newman related topics augustinerne neoplatonism pelagianism skolastism jansenism order of Saint Augustine great schism of 1054 Related categories ► Augustine of Hippo Catholicism portal Christianity portal Philosophy portal This box : viewtalkeditvte His childhood, and boyhood up to 14 years. Starting with his childhood, Saint Augustine reflects on his personal childhood to draw universal conclusions about the nature of childhood: the child is inherently violent if left to his own devices because of Original Sin. Later, he reflects on choosing joy and reading worldly literature on studying scripture, choices that he later comes to understand as those that he deserved the punishment of his teachers, even if he does not recognize it during his childhood. Augustine continues to reflect on his upbringing in which he recounts two examples of his serious sins that he committed as a sixteen-year-old: the development of his God-less lust and the theft of a pear from his neighbor's orchard, despite never wanting for food. In this book, he explores the question of why he and his friends stole bulbs when he had many better bulbs of his own. He explains the feelings he experienced when eating the pears and threw the rest away to the pigs. Augustine claims that he most likely would not have stolen anything if he had not been in the company of others who could share in his sin. He begins the study of rhetoric in Carthage, where he develops a love of wisdom through his exposure to Cicero's Hortensius. He blames his pride for lacking faith in scripture, so he finds a way to seek truth about good and evil through manichaeism. At the end of this book, his mother, Monica, dreams of her son's conversion to Catholic doctrine. Between the ages of 19 and 28, Augustine forms a relationship with an unnamed woman who, although faithful, is not his legally married wife, with whom he has a son, Adeodatus. At the same time as he returned to Tagaste, his hometown, to teach, a friend fell ill, was baptized in the Catholic Church, restored a little, and then died. His friend's death oppresses Augustine, who then reflects on the importance of love to a friend in the earthly sense versus love for a friend in God; He concludes that his friend's death affected him greatly because of his lack of love in God. Things he used to love become hateful to him because everything reminds him of what was lost. Augustine then suggests that he began to love his life of grief more than his fallen friend. He concludes this book with his reflection that he had tried to find the truth through Manichean's astrology, yet devoted members of the Church, who he claims are far less intellectual and proud, have found truth through greater faith in God. While St. Augustine is 29 years old, he begins to lose faith in Manichean doctrine, a process that starts when the Manichean bishop Faustus visits Carthage. Augustine is not impressed with the substance of manichaeism, but he has yet to find anything to replace it. He feels a sense of resigned acceptance to these fables that he has not yet formed a spiritual core to prove their falsehood. He moves to teach in Rome where the education system is more disciplined. He does not stay long in Rome because his teaching is requested in Milan, where he meets the bishop Ambrose (Saint Ambrose). He appreciates Ambrose's style and attitude, and Ambrose exposes him to a more spiritual, figurative perspective on God, leading him into a position as the Caspian. The sermons of Saint Ambrose draw Augustine closer to Catholicism, which he begins to favor over other philosophical alternatives. In this section, his personal problems, including ambition, continue at which point he compares a beggar, whose drunkenness is temporally happiness, with his hitherto unsuccessful ability to discover happiness. [5] Augustine highlights the contribution of his friends Alypius and Nebridius in his discovery of religious truth. Monica returns at the end of this book and arranges a marriage for Augustine, who divorces his former wife, finds a new mistress, and considers herself to be a slave of lust. [6] In his mission to discover the truth behind good and evil, Augustine is subjected to the neoplatonic vision of God. However, he finds fault with this thought because he believes that they understand the nature of God without accepting Christ as the mediator between man and God. He reinforces his opinion of the neoplatonists through the resemblance to a mountaintop: It is one thing to see, from a wooded mountain top, the land of peace, and not to find its way to the [...] It is quite another to keep on the road leading there, which is done safely by the care of the heavenly commander, where those who have left the heavenly army may not commit their robberies, for they avoid it as a punishment. [7] From this point, he picks up the apostle Paul's works that grabbed [him] with wonder. [8] He further describes his inner turmoil about converting to Christianity. Two of his friends, Simplicianus and Ponticianus, tell Augustinian stories about the conversions of Marius Victorinus and Saint Anthony. Reflecting in a garden, Augustine hears a child's voice shouting up and reading. [9] Augustine picks up a book of St. Paul's writings (codex apostoli, 8.12.29) and reads the passage it opens, Romans 13:13–14: Not in festivities and drunkenness, not in defiance and willfulness, not in contention and jealousy; but touch the Lord Christ, and as for the flesh, do not take any thought into its lusts. [10] This action confirms his conversion to Catholicism. His friend Alypius follows his example. In preparation for baptism, Augustine concludes his doctrine of rhetoric. Saint Ambrose baptizes Augustine with Adeodatus and Alypius. Augustine then tells how the church in Milan, with its mother in a leading role, defends Ambrose against the persecution of Justina. When he returns with his mother to Africa, they share in a religious view in Ostia. Soon after, Saint Monica dies, followed shortly after by his friends Nebridius and Verecundus. At the end of this book, Augustine remembers these deaths through the prayer of his newly adopted faith: May they remember with holy feeling my parents in this transient light, and my brethren under you, O Father, in our Catholic mother [the Church], and my fellow citizens of Eternal Jerusalem, as the pilgrimage of your people sighs from the beginning to the return. In this way, her last request of me will be more abundant given to her in many prayers through these my confessions than through my own prayers. [11] Augustine shifts from personal memories to introverted evaluation of the memories themselves and of himself, while continuing to reflect on the values of confessions, the importance of prayer, and the means through which individuals can reach God. It is through both this last point and his reflection on the body and soul that he comes to a justification for Christ's existence. Augustine analyzes the nature and time of creation, as well as its relationship with God. He explores questions around presentism. He believes that there are three types of time in the mind: the present in terms of things that are past, which is the memory; the present with regard to things that are present, which is contemplation; and the present in terms of things that are in the future, which is anticipation. He relies on Genesis, especially the texts about the creation of heaven and earth, throughout this book to support his thinking. Through his discussion of creation, Augustin relates the nature of the divine and the earthly as part of a thorough analysis of both the rhetoric of Genesis and the majority of interpretations that one can use to analyze Genesis. By comparing the scriptures to a source of water flows spreading across an enormous landscape, he considers that there may be more than one true interpretation, and each person can draw the true conclusions from the texts. He ends the text by exploring an allegorical interpretation of Genesis, in which he discovers the Trinity and the importance of God's creation of man. Based on his interpretation, he espouses the meaning of rest as well as divinity creation: For, then you shall rest in us, in the same way as workest in us now [...] So we see these things that you've done, because they exist, but they exist because you see them. We see, externally, that they exist, but internally, that they are good; You've seen them done, in the same place where you saw them yet to be done. [12] Confessions of purpose were not only intended to encourage repentance, but provided guidelines on how to convert. Saint Augustine extrapolates from his own experiences to suit other people's journeys. Augustine acknowledges that God has always protected and guided Him. This is reflected in the structure of the work. Augustine begins each book in Confessions with a prayer to God. For example, both the books VIII and IX begin with you have broken the chains that bound me; I will sacrifice in your honor. [13] Because Augustine begins each book with a prayer, Albert C. Outler, professor of theology at Southern Methodist University, argues that Confessions is a pilgrimage of grace [...] [a] retrac [ing] [of] the decisive turns of the way [Augustine] had come. And since he was sure that it was God's grace that had been his foremost mover in that way, it was a spontaneous expression of his heart that cast his self-remembrance in the form of a sustained prayer to God. [14] Not only do confessions glorify God, but it also suggests God's help in Augustine's path to redemption. Written after the legalization of Christianity, Confessions dated from a time when martyrdom was no longer a threat to most Christians as was the case two centuries earlier. Instead, a Christian's struggles were usually internal. Augustine clearly presents her struggle with world-lying desires as lust. Augustine's conversion was quickly followed by his ordination as a priest in 391 CE and then appointed bishop in 395 e.Kr. Such a quick ascent certainly raised criticism of Augustine. Confessions were written between 397-398 e.Kr., suggesting self-correction as a possible motivation for the work. In the words I want to act in truth, and make my confession both in my heart before you and in this book before the many who will read it in book X chapter 1,[15] Augustine confesses both his sins and glorifies God through humility in His grace, the two meanings that define confessions,[16] to unite his imperfections, not just to his critics. , but also to God. Hermeneutics St. Augustine suggested a method to improve the biblical exegesis in the presence of particularly difficult passages. Readers should think that the whole scripture is inspired by God, and that each author did not write anything in which he did not believe personally, or that he thought was false. Readers must separate philologically, and remain separate, their own interpretations, the written message and the originally intended meaning of the messenger and the author (in Latin: intentio). [17] Disagreements may arise either truth of the message itself or the importance of the messenger (XII.23). The truth of the message itself is given by God who inspired it to extensor and who made possible the transfer and spread of the content over centuries and among believers. [17] In principle, the reader is unable to determine what the author had in mind when he wrote a biblical book, but he has a duty to do his best to approach the original meaning and intention without opposing the letter in the written text. The interpretation must remain within the truth (XII.25) and not outside it. [17] The audience Much of the information about Augustine comes directly from his own writing. Augustine's confessions provide considerable insight into the first thirty-three years of his life. Augustine paints himself not as a holy man, but as a sinner. The sins that Augustine confesses are of many different severity and of many different natures, such as lust/infidelity, stealing and lies. For example, in the second chapter of Book IX Augustine refers his choice to wait three weeks until the fall break to leave his position teaching without causing disruption. He wrote that someone might say that it was sinful of me to allow me to occupy a lying chair even for an hour. [18] In the introduction to the 1961 translation of R.S. Pine-Coffin, he suggests that this harsh interpretation of Augustine's own past is intentional so that his audience sees him as a sinner blessed with God's mercy rather than as a holy figurehead. [19] Considering that the sins Augustine describes are of quite a common character (e.g. theft of bulbs when a young boy), these examples can also enable the reader to identify with the author and thus make it easier to follow in Augustine's footsteps on his personal path to conversion. This identification is an element of the protratic and parenetic nature of the confession. [20] Due to the nature of the confession, it is clear that Augustine not only wrote for himself, but that the work was intended for public consumption. Augustine's potential audience included baptized Christians, catheters and other faiths. Peter Brown writes in his book *The Body and Society* that Confessions targeted those with similar experience as Augustine's own. [22] In addition, with his background in Manichean practice, Augustine had a unique connection to those of manichean faith. Confessions thus constitute an appeal to encourage repentance. Editions St. Augustine (1960). 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