

IV Augustine

I Brief bio

354, born at Thagaste (modern Algeria)
360-70, Educated in Thagaste, then in Madaura, then at Carthage in Rhetoric
371 Goes to study in Carthage
372, takes a concubine
373, birth of Adeodatus by his concubine
375, returns to teach in Thagaste
376, death of his closest friend and return to Carthage
383, departs to make his fortune in Rome
384, Goes to teach Rhetoric at Milan, the de facto capital of the empire
385, Monica arrives in Milan
387, baptism
390, death of Adeodatus and Nebridius
391, arrives in Hippo, starts a monastery, made a presbyter
395, becomes bishop
430, death

II Augustine's Amazing Opera

Homilies: at least 900 have at least partially survived
Letters: about 300 survive
100 compositions of various kinds, many devoted to some controversy
Isidore of Seville: Anyone who claims to have read all of Augustine must be a liar.
Had he had the benefit of modern technology, who knows what he might have done?

Some of his important works:

The Confessions

"Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou 'resistest the proud,' -yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." *City of God* I.1

The City of God

"Since, then, the supreme good of the city of God is perfect and eternal peace, not such as mortals pass into and out of by birth and death, but the peace of freedom from all evil, in which the immortals ever abide; who can deny that that future life is most blessed, or that, in comparison with it, this life which now we live is most wretched, be it filled with all blessings of body and soul and external things? And yet, if any man uses this life with a reference to that other which he ardently loves and confidently hopes for, he may well be called even now blessed, though not in reality so much as in hope. But the actual possession of the happiness of this life, without the hope of what is beyond, is but a false happiness and profound misery. For the true blessings of the soul are not now enjoyed; for that is no true wisdom which does not direct all its prudent observations, manly actions, virtuous self-restraint, and just arrangements, to that end in which God shall be all and all in a secure eternity and perfect peace." *City of God*, XX.20

On The Trinity

A profound meditation on the deepest of Christian mysteries.
In man the image of God, reflected in the three faculties of intellect, memory and will. Yet this most profound analogy falls short of the reality of God's being.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are *subsistent relations*.
The Holy Spirit proceeds principally (as his origin) from the Father, but also proceed in return from the Son, as the bond of love between Father and Son.

The Literal Meaning of Genesis

'How could these words [of the devil] persuade the woman that it was a good and useful thing that had been forbidden by God if there was not *already* in her heart a *love of her own independence and a proud presumption on self* which through that temptation was destined to be found out and cast down?' *Litt. Comm. Gen.* XI, 30, 39

On Christian Doctrine

A philosophical account of language; the rule of evaluation of scriptural interpretation the fruit of the exegesis in love of neighbor and God (who is Himself Truth).

Expositions on The Psalms

Comments on all 150 psalms, as truly about Christ and understood in light of Christ.

"If the psalm prays, you pray; if it laments, you lament; if it exults, you rejoice; if it hopes, you hope; if it fears, you fear." Ps 30.3.1

Tractates on The Gospel of John

Pastoral, composed for those to whom he was preaching, and dedicated, in large part, to show the divinity of the Word made flesh. The humility of the Son of God become the central model for our way of discipleship.

The Retractations

Revisits and corrects earlier writings where he thinks he was mistaken.

"Augustine often listened to cases all morning up until his midday meal. On fasting days, his "court" remained in session all day. Seated in a large room (*secretarium*) adjoining the basilica, he was assisted by members of his clergy – at times neighboring bishops – who functioned as notaries and assessors.... Large numbers of plaintiffs poured into the 'bishop's court,' seeking solutions for all types of problems: family problems, quarrels with neighbors, property boundary disputes, wills, debts, thefts, and a host of other legal issues raised by those in the city and countryside alike. As is typically the case, verdicts were often contested by those viewing themselves as victims, and there was no lack of complaints, especially from the rich. Augustine commented: 'They have endless quarrels, they oppress the righteous, they laugh at our judgments, and they waste our time that could be devoted to divine things.' "Augustine regarded this role of hearing cases as *angaria* ('forced labor'), which only resulted in pastors being distracted from their service to the church." (*Early Christianity in North Africa*, Francois Decret)

The landscape of his writings

Some key controversies

Manichaeism

1. Evil is not an existing entity. Everything that exists is good, and evil is a corruption, or defect of good. Man's sin is the misdirection of the created good of free will.
2. Scripture has to be viewed in terms of various senses, and some things in the OT are intended only to prefigure or to prepare for what is fulfilled in the NT.
3. The doctrinal authority of the Church is an aid to the individual reason because it speaks to faith. "Entering into the sanctuary of God, you enter by believing, you learn by understanding." Faith involves reason because one must decide whom to trust.

Donatism

'[I]t is one thing to baptize in the capacity of a servant, another thing to baptize with power. For baptism derives its character from Him through whose power it is given; not from him through whose ministry it is given.' (Tr. on John 5, 6)

'[T]he baptism of Christ, consecrated by the words of the gospel, is necessarily holy, however polluted and unclean its ministers may be; because its inherent sanctity cannot be polluted, and the divine excellence abides in its sacrament, whether to the salvation of those who use it aright, or to the destruction of those who use it wrong. Would you indeed maintain that, while the light of the sun or of a candle, diffused through unclean places, contracts no foulness in itself therefrom, yet the baptism of Christ can be defiled by the sins of any man, whatsoever he may be?' (On baptism against the donatists III, 10, 13)

"What will it then profit a man that he has sound faith, or perhaps only soundness in the sacrament of faith, when the soundness of his charity is done away with by the fatal wound of schism, so that by the overthrow of it the other points, which were in themselves sound, are brought into the infection of death? To prevent which, the mercy of God, through the unity of His holy Church, does not cease striving that they may come and be healed by the medicine of reconciliation, through the bond of peace." (On baptism against the donatists, I, 8, 11)

Pelagianism

Pelagius British monk; grace took four forms: creation with a rational free will; teaching of the law of God; the offer of forgiveness of past sins in baptism; the example of Christ.

Augustine: something internal is required: a new heart and a new spirit, and the Holy Spirit must act *within us* in order for us to be converted and changed.

III Augustine and Our Times

The need for a new heart, not just a new idea

In our day, the gospel of social change by purely human effort, grounded in hopes for the City of Man is a new kind of Pelagianism. We need to correct this among ourselves, and offer a better word to those outside the Church.

In rewarding our merits God crowns his own gifts

Need to hold together goodness of creation, fallenness of man, hope of the city to come.

Christ the gracious High Priest

In keeping with the Pelagian tendency a tendency to think the sacraments just something we do.

Accompaniment in Truth

Truth & authority, truth & pastoral care, truth & righteous living, must accompany one another.

The only path of accompaniment that we can walk in love is the path of truth.