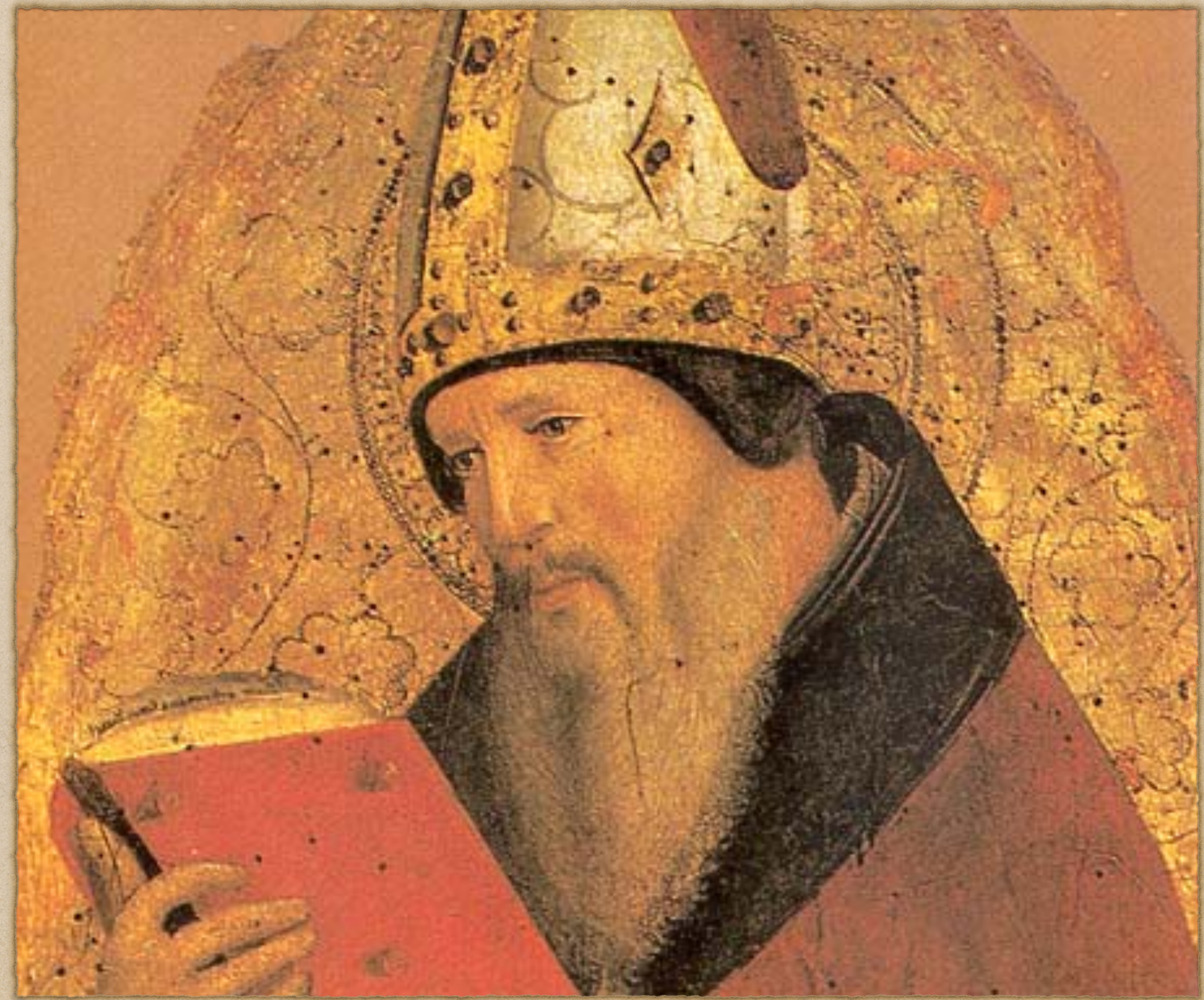


Aurelius Agustine

Bishop of Hippo

Why Augustine?

- ◆ The Fifth Commandment
- ◆ Influential theologian
- ◆ Influential philosopher
- ◆ Prolific Author



- ◆ Lived and ministered during a period of great theological controversy
- ◆ Lived and ministered during a time of great political chaos and unrest
- ◆ Lived through the fall of the "Eternal City"

“During his life he wrote some 232 volumes including exegetical commentary on the Scriptures, theological expositions, polemical and apologetical treatises, and philosophical and ethical writings. He usually preached five days each week, sometimes twice a day, during his 40 years as leader of the church in North Africa.”

— Michael S. Beates, *Tabletalk Magazine*, June 1996

“Saint Augustine is, arguably, the second most important interpreter of the Christian faith after St. Paul. His literary contribution so affected the church in the West that we scarcely recognize his fingerprints on our lives anymore. No one in the western world can even think in such crucial fields as the nature of God, the soul, the church, the state, or even “religion” as such without (now usually unacknowledged) reference to Augustine. If his intellectual stature is indeed this great, then we can say that his Confessions is the most important Christian text outside the Bible itself.”

— Jason Byassee, *Reading Augustine: A Guide to the Confessions*

“It was through his voluminous writings, by which his wider influence was exerted, that he entered both the Church and the world as a revolutionary force, and not merely created an epoch in the history of the Church, but has determined the course of its history in the West up to the present day.”

— Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*

“In point of fact the whole development of Western life, in all its phases, was powerfully affected by his teaching.”

— Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*

“It is no wonder, therefore, that the Western Church has felt the force of his influence in all the main lines of its development, and in no one of its prominent characteristics could it have been without him what it has become. In him are found at once the seed out of which the tree that we know as the Roman Catholic Church has grown; the spring or strength of all the leading anti-hierarchical and mystical movements which succeeded one another through the Middle Ages; at least the promise and pre-formation of the great types of Western philosophical thought; and, above all, the potent leaven of vital religion...

...Beginning in the first force of its fresh promulgation by overcoming the ingrained rationalism of the popular Christianity expressed in Pelagianism and its daughter movements, it refused to be bound by the compromises of the Council of Orange, compacted though they were into a system by the genius of a Thomas, and given irrefragable authority in the Church of Rome by the decrees of Trent, but manifested its power by outbreak after outbreak, from Gottschalk in the ninth to Jansen in the seventeenth century; and then burst all bonds and issued in the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.”

— Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*

“...it is Augustine who gave us the Reformation. For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the Church. This doctrine of grace came from Augustine’s hands in its positive outline completely formulated: sinful man depends, for his recovery to good and to God, entirely on the free grace of God; this grace is therefore indispensable, prevenient, irresistible, indefectible; and, being thus the free grace of God, must have lain, in all the details of its conference and working, in the intention of God from all eternity.”

— Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*

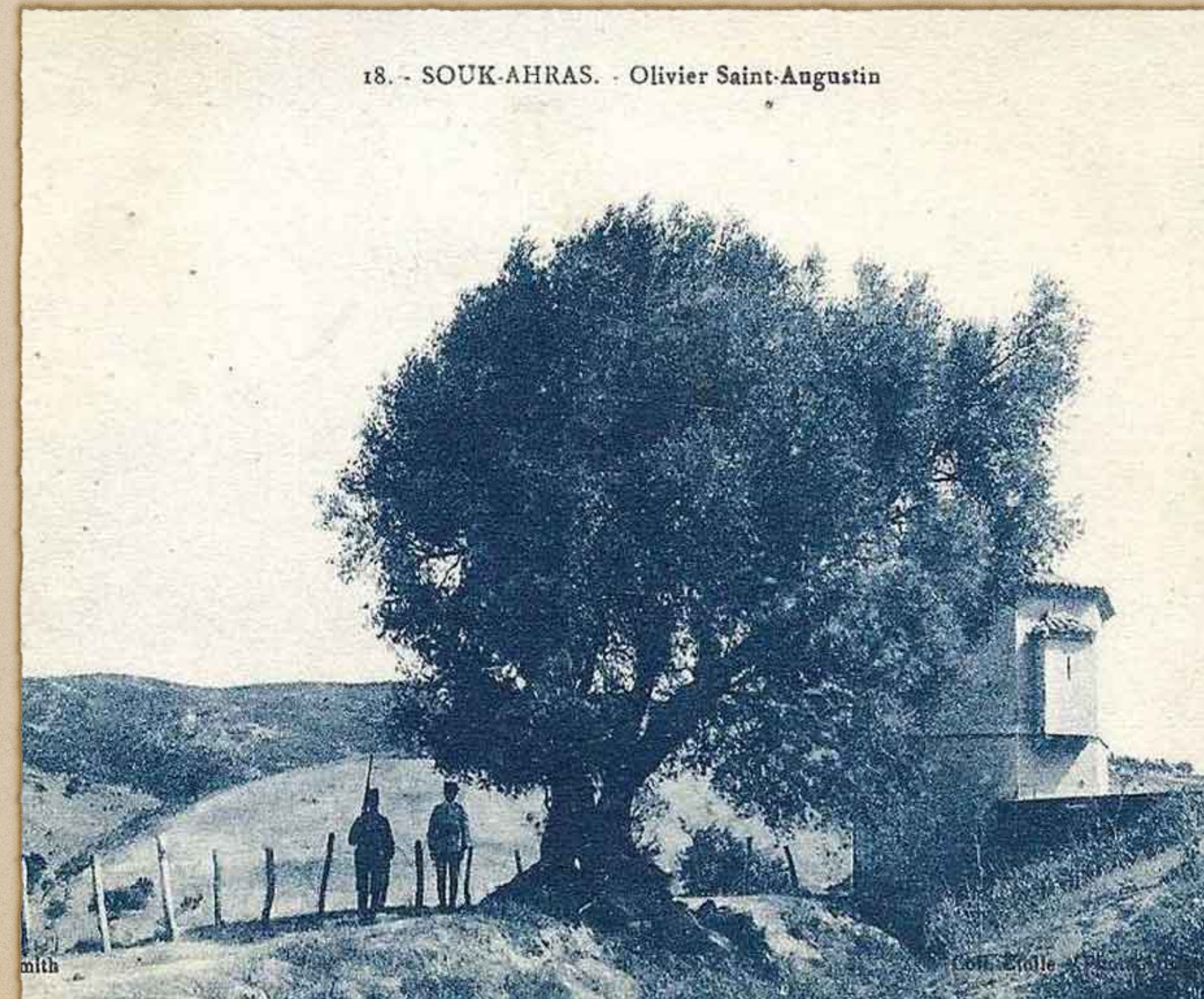
The Life and times of Augustine

- ◆ 313 - Edict of Milan
- ◆ 325 - Council of Nicea
- ◆ 354 November 13 - Birth
- ◆ 372 - Birth of Adeodatus
- ◆ 380 - Published first work



The Life and times of Augustine

- ◆ 386/7 - Conversion
- ◆ 387 Easter Sunday - Baptism
- ◆ 388 - Civil war between Theodosius and Maximus
- ◆ 388 - Finds a monastery in Thagaste



The Life and times of Augustine

- ◆ 389/90 - Death of Adeodatus
- ◆ 391 - Travels to Hippo, made presbyter
- ◆ 395 - Made co-bishop with Bishop Velarius
- ◆ 410 - Rome sacked



Major Writings of Augustine

- ◆ 395-420 - On the Trinity
- ◆ 397-400 - Confessions in Thirteen Books
- ◆ 397-426 - On Christian Doctrine
- ◆ 413-426 - The City of God
- ◆ 421 - Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, & Love



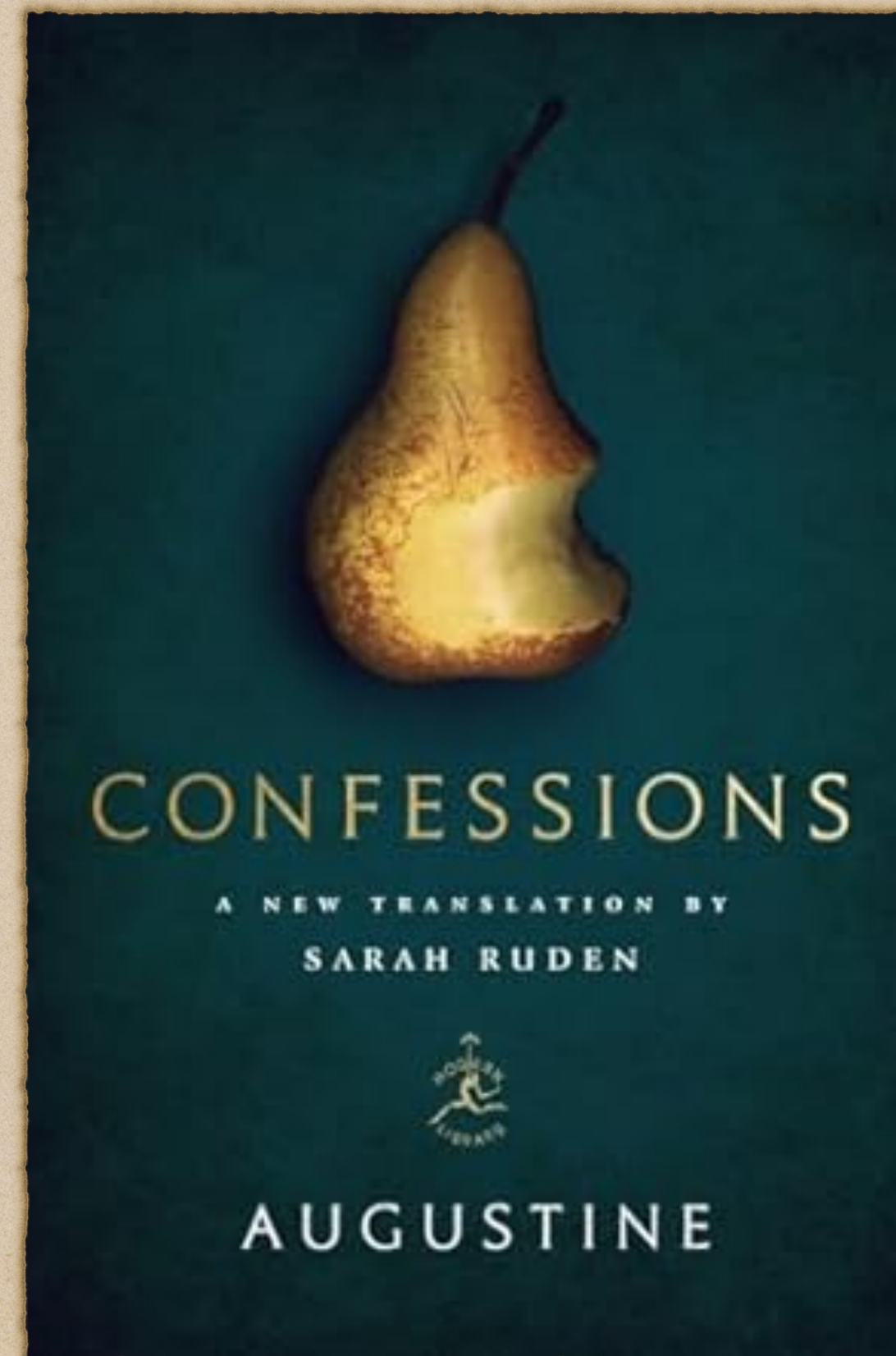
Final Days of Augustine

- ◆ 426/7-428 - Retractions
- ◆ 430 June - Siege of Hippo begins
- ◆ 430 August 28 - Death
- ◆ 431 August - Siege of Hippo ends



Why the Confessions?

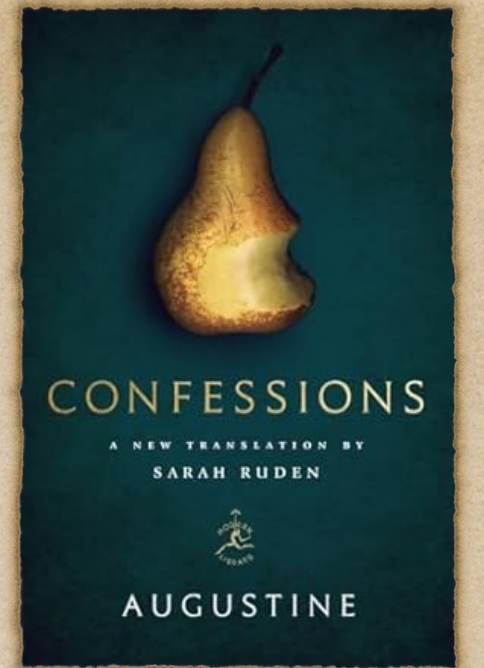
- ◆ Classic
- ◆ Devotional
- ◆ Accessible



“The thirteen books of my Confessions praise the just and good God for my evil and good acts, and lift up the understanding and affection of men to Him. At least, as far as I am concerned, they had this effect on me while I was writing them and they continue to have it when I am reading them. What others think about them is a matter for them to decide. Yet, I know that they have given and continue to give pleasure to many of my brethren. The first ten books were written about myself; the last three about Holy Scripture, from the words: ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth’ as far as the Sabbath rest.”

— Augustine of Hippo, The Retractations

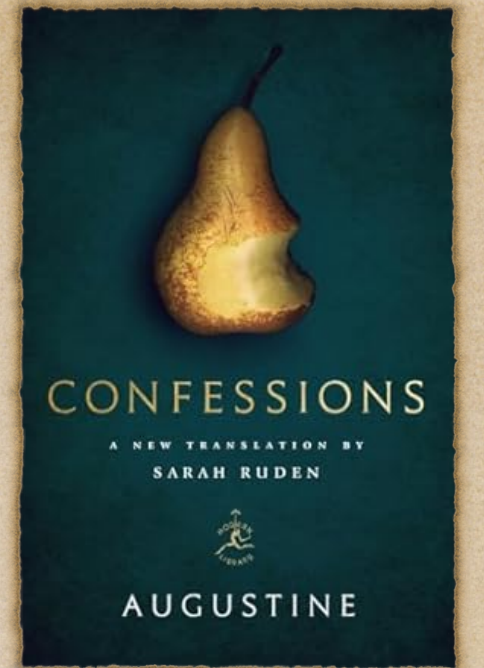
What is the Confessions?



“What is a confession? A second thing that we need to decipher about the title is what Augustine means by the word “confessions.” Two meanings are in view. First, Augustine spends much of the book confessing the sins of the mind and body that he committed throughout his life. Second, in Augustine’s day (and in Christian circles to this day), to confess meant to declare one’s religious beliefs (a profession of faith). Thus we refer to historic creeds of Christendom as confessions (e.g., the Belgic Confession or the Westminster Confession of Faith). We can even find this usage in the Bible, as in 1 Timothy 3:16—“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness” (esv), and then a brief creed in poetic form is quoted.

— Leland Ryken, *Augustine’s Confessions*, *Christian Guides to the Classics*

What is the Confessions?



“Theologian Charles Mathewes goes a step further to argue that Confessions is a sort of anti-autobiography. From his first words Augustine is concerned not with himself, but with God. Augustine narrates his life here as a series of false steps in self-assertion—the desire to make a place for himself in a world that respects only power, self-amusement, wealth, and family status. He makes no mean effort toward accumulation of those things, and precisely so drifts farther away from the God in whose presence life is most fully lived. His is no life at all then—only after the fact of his conversion can he narrate his missteps as false attempts to flee a God he cannot escape.

— Jason Byassee, *Reading Augustine: A Guide to the Confessions*, Cascade Companions

The Structure of the Confessions

- ◆ Books 1-8 are loosely biographical
 - ◆ Book 1 - Infancy and Childhood Education
 - ◆ Book 2 - 16th year / Sins of Youth
 - ◆ Book 3 - College Waywardness
 - ◆ Book 4 - Life after College



The Structure of the Confessions

- ◆ Book 5 - Professional Changes and Religious Quest
- ◆ Book 6 - The Second Year in Milan
- ◆ Book 7 - Theological Progress
- ◆ Book 8 - Augustine's Conversion



The Structure of the Confessions

- ◆ Book 9 - Year following conversion, death of Monnica
- ◆ Book 10 is a prolonged analysis of the topics of memory, the human search for the happy life, and the sins that tempt people.
- ◆ Book 11 is similarly topical, dealing primarily with time.
- ◆ Books 12–13 are collections of meditations on many subjects, primarily focused on the creation in Genesis 1.



Characters of the Confessions

- ◆ Augustíne
- ◆ Monnica
- ◆ Patrícíus
- ◆ Adeodatus
- ◆ Místress
- ◆ Ambrose
- ◆ Faustus
- ◆ God



Warnings

- ◆ Accessible, but not easy
- ◆ A man of his time

“Even though the book is seventeen hundred years old, Augustine emerges from the pages as a thoroughly modern man.”

— Leland Ryken, *Augustine's Confessions*, *Christian Guides to the Classics*

FOCUS

- ◆ Primary

- ◆ Sin

- ◆ Grace

- ◆ Glory

- ◆ Secondary

- ◆ Spiritual Disciplines

Bible Intake

“The Bible is a continuous presence in the Confessions...
Scripture informs the entire book, and paradoxically, Augustine
speaks most authentically about himself when he uses the words
of the biblical authors.”

— Leland Ryken, *Augustine's Confessions*, *Christian Guides to the
Classics*

Prayer

“Interspersed prayers addressed by Augustine to God make a regular appearance in the Confessions. This is an unexpected and unique feature of the book, and the result is that it is impossible not to read the Confessions devotionally. The prayers also lend a universal quality to the book: the events that happened to Augustine are unique to him, but every reader can identify with his prayers addressed to God.”

— Leland Ryken, *Augustine's Confessions*, *Christian Guides to the Classics*

Journaling

“...the Confessions tells three stories at the same time. Most obviously, the story of Augustine’s life until his conversion is a story about running away from God. But at a deeper level it turns out that this flight from God was really a search to find God. Then, to add to the complexity, Augustine imposes yet another overlay on the previous two levels: running from God and searching for God were really God’s pursuit of Augustine. This is known in Christian circles as “the hound of heaven” motif, based on a famous Victorian poem by Francis Thompson titled “The Hound of Heaven” (a work that makes good collateral reading with Augustine’s Confessions, which was obviously in Thompson’s mind as he wrote his poem). Augustine himself orchestrates his work in such a way that we can clearly see all three narrative threads if we look for them.”

— Leland Ryken, *Augustine’s Confessions*, *Christian Guides to the Classics*

Questions?