

# Confessions

Augustine of Hippo



# Book II

- ◆ Chp. 1 — Purpose of Writing
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# Book II Chp. 1 Purpose of Writing

“Augustine tells us more about his sex life than we care to know, but since it is important to him, we need to follow his lead in analyzing it. What matters most is not what Augustine did physically but how he regards it spiritually. He never gives us details about his lust, and it seems likely that he simply had the normal urges of a young man who had reached sexual maturity. In his own mind, however, he was guilty of excessive and misdirected sexuality.”



# Book II Chp. 1 Purpose of Writing

Why does Augustine say that he is expressing his thoughts and intents in the Confessions?

“I want to be mindful of the ugliness I engaged in back then, and the dissolution my body wreaked on my soul—not because I’m in love with any of that, but rather, my God, for the purpose of loving you...”



# Book II Chp. 1 Purpose of Writing

...I do this out of love for the love I have for you; I recollect the paths of my depravity in the bitterness of my inspection of myself, so that you grow sweet to me, with a sweetness, a charm that's not deceitful but blessed and safe, binding me together against the scattering force that ripped me to pieces as long as I turned my back on your singularity and disappeared into multiplicity."



# Book II Chp. 1 Purpose of Writing

“To whom am I telling this story? It isn’t of course to you, my God, but in your presence I’m telling it to my race, the human race, however minute a snippet out of that might stumble on my writing, such as it is. And what’s the story’s purpose? Obviously, it’s so that I and whoever reads this can contemplate from what depths we must cry out to you.”



# Book II Chps. 2-4 Lunatic Lust

- How old is Augustine (roughly) in Book II?
- How does he describe his condition at this time?
- How does his language convey the intensity of his sinful desires at this time?



# Book II Chps. 2-4 Lunatic Lust

“No, mine were the putrid fumes rising from scummy bodily lust and the diseased eruption of puberty, befouling and befuddling my heart with their smoke...”

“...a whirlpool of depravity.” “The screeching chain of my deathly nature...”

“I was storm-tossed, gushing out, running every which way, frothing into thin air in my filthy affairs...”

“I boiled over in my torment, following my own flowing momentum...”



# Book II Chps. 2-4 Lunatic Lust

- Do hormones excuse sinful behavior?
- Chemical imbalances?
- What does Augustine, reflecting back, wish he had done during this time?



# Book II Chps. 2-4 Lunatic Lust

- What seems to be Augustine's view of marriage?
- What was the primary concern of Augustine's parents at this time?

"My family was not concerned to scoop me up into marriage as I slid into ruin; their sole preoccupation was for me to learn the most estimable style of speech making possible, and persuasion through the arrangement of words."



# Book II Chps. 2-4 Lunatic Lust

- Considering the impact that “coming of age” can have, how ought we pray for our congregation's children?



# Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

- Why did Augustine take a “holiday from school”?
- How does Augustine describe his Father, Patricius, at this time?

“The money to pay for a sojourn farther away, in Carthage, was being arranged—more through the sheer enthusiasm of my father than his actual means...”



# Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

“But whose praises, at the time, didn’t raise on high a mere human being, my father, because he taxed the family property beyond its strength, spending whatever it took for his son to study, even when that meant living quite far from home? Many citizens, far wealthier than he was, went to no such trouble for their children’s sake; but at the same time, the father who was showing them up made no fuss about how I was growing up in your judgment, and how pure I was, as long as my oratorical skill developed, even if I was a devastated land and nothing was developed in me by you, God, who are the one true and good owner, or master, of your field, my heart.”



# Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

“...whereas he was still a convert under instruction before baptism [catechumen], and a recent convert besides.”

- Why was Patricius so delighted by what he observed at the bath house?



# Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

- How does he describe his mother, Monnica?

“But in my mother’s breast you’d already started to build your temple, laying the foundations of your holy dwelling-place...”

“At that period she didn’t want me—and I remember how she took me aside and warned me with huge agitation—to engage in sexual immorality, and absolutely not to debauch anyone’s wife.”



## Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

“The mother of my life in the body—who had by this time fled from Babylon’s downtown but was still strolling in other districts—didn’t follow through on her warning in favor of chastity; she didn’t take steps to confine within the boundary markers of married attachment (if she couldn’t cut it to the bone) what she’d heard about from her husband concerning me and understood to be already a ravaging disease, one that could prove quite dangerous for the days to come.”



# Book II Chps. 5-8 Holiday from School

- Why did Monnica not try to arrange a marriage for her son at this time?

“She didn’t take these steps for fear of shackling my otherwise hopeful future with a wife. I don’t mean the hope my mother had in you for the life to come, but the hope of an education, which both parents were overly eager for me to obtain, he because his thinking about you was practically nonexistent, while about me it was frivolous; whereas for her part she considered that the traditional curriculum would mean not only no impediment but actually a certain advancement on my way toward you.”



# Book II Chps. 9-18 Forbidden Fruit

- Augustine spends more time on this single incident (stealing of the pears) than any single incident in his Confessions.
- Why do most people commit the sins they do?

“Because of all these things, and other worldly things as well, sin is committed when an unchecked leaning toward these, given that they are the lowest order of good things, causes a desertion of the better and the highest, namely you, God our Master, and your truth and your law.”



# Book II Chps. 9-18 Forbidden Fruit

- What was the occasion of this theft?
- Why did Augustine steal the pears?
- Why does this theft show the sinfulness of Augustine's heart in a greater sense than if he had disclosed a particular sexual sin?
- How does this theft differ from our first parents eating the forbidden fruit in the garden?



# Book II Chps. 9-18 Forbidden Fruit

- What role did his peers play in the theft of the pears?
- What does Augustine mean when he speaks of "...friendship that couldn't be more unfriendly!"?



# Book II Chps. 9-18 Forbidden Fruit

- Considering the influence that can be wielded by peers, how ought we to pray for one another, particularly for the children in our midst?
- How can we seek to be the kind of friends that spur others to holiness and away from sin?



# Book II Chp. 18 A Wandering Wretch

“Who can disentangle that wretched immensity of distortions and contortions and knottedness? It’s a grotesque creature. I don’t want to pay any attention to her, don’t want to look at her. You’re the one I want, justice and innocence so beautiful and graceful; I want to enjoy you with honorable eyes and a satisfaction I can’t get enough of. Rest is with you, lavishly, and a life without distress. The one who enters into you enters into the joy of his Master, and he won’t fear, and he’ll do unsurpassably well in the one who’s unsurpassed. I flowed abruptly downward from you and wandered off, my God; in my young manhood I went on an awfully erratic course away from your steadfastness, and I turned myself into a famished land I had to live in.”



# Book II Juxtapositions

- What the world praises <=> What God praises
- The infant of Chp. 1 <=> The burgeoning man of Chp. 2
- Autonomy <=> Fitting in with the crowd



Questions?