

Confessing with St Augustine

Approaching Augustine

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Who was St Augustine?

- Born in Northern Africa in 354 AD. He became a Professor of Rhetoric in Carthage, Rome and Milan, eventually serving the Emperor Valentinian II (384-386).
- Converted to Christianity 386 AD, and eventually became Bishop of the Church in Hippo Regius.
- Author of *The City of God* and *The Confessions*, and one of the most influential thinkers in Western history.
- Patron Saint of Brewers, Printers, and Theologians.
- What is his legacy, and how is he remembered?



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Author & Rhetorician

- One of the most prolific figures of the Ancient world w/ 5 million words extant.
- Transformed the reception of Latin and Greek texts of the Ancient world.
- Pioneer of new literary forms including, many argue, the “autobiography”.
- Massive literary influences throughout the world.



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Philosopher & Theologian

- The “Doctor of Doctors”, he was among the first establishing *philosophia Christiana* as an intellectual ideal.
- Develops a sophisticated theory of time and reality as a divine creation.
- His writings massively shaped Western conceptions of human nature and morals, particularly around the concepts of freedom, love, and self.
- *City of God* definitively shaped the relation between Church & State. It would become the framework for the politics of Christendom.



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A Religious Institution

- Bishop and Reformer of the Church in Africa
- Champion of the Christian Doctrines of Sin and Grace against the Donatists and Pelagians.
- His biography and writings became the inspiration for a contemplative ideal enshrined in the practice of monastic orders adopting the “Rule of St Augustine”.



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Great Sinner-Turned-Saint

- Augustine has often been the exemplary sinner who is transformed and turned from his wicked ways.
- His life in the *Confessions* has often been styled as a literary archetype of conversion, redemption, and self-discovery.
- In Puritan England, Augustine was often invoked as the pattern of an authentic religious conversion.
- In Enlightenment Europe, it was the pattern for all authentic self-understanding.

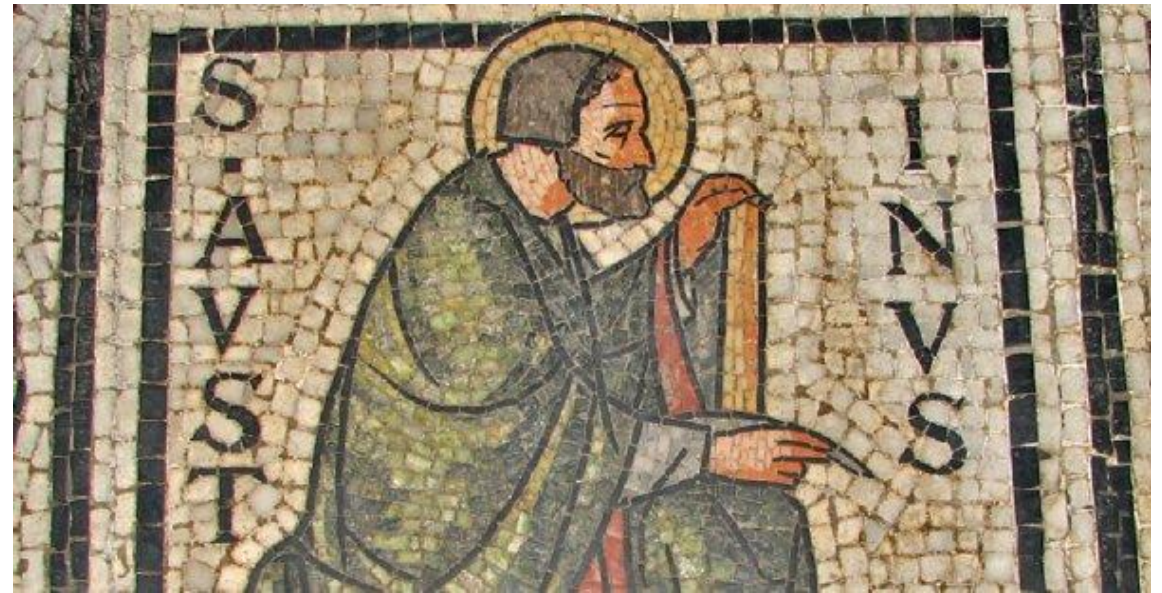


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Reasons to Study St Augustine

- Probably the ancient person we know the *most* about (Fox, xi).
- Lived at a crucial time in Western history.
- Writing is defining for Medieval and early Modern literary cultures.
- His thought was of monumental significance:
 - The nature of God
 - Human moral action
 - The Church & its relation to the human government



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