

Chapter 1 : About St. Augustine's Confessions

Augustine's Spiritual Journey: Virgil (Aeneas and Dido) Beginning with adolescence, the story of Aeneas and Dido represents the earliest phase of Augustine's search for meaning.

North Africa was part of the Roman Empire, though it was considered something of a backwater, far from the centers of imperial power. The position was far from glamorous, however, because a decurio was required to act as a patron for his community and to make up any shortfalls in taxes collected from the region. Augustine had at least one brother, Navigius, and at least one sister, but little information is available about his siblings. Patricius was a pagan, an adherent of the Roman civic religion. Augustine showed early promise in school and, consequently, his parents scrimped and saved to buy their son a good Roman education, in the hope of ensuring him a prosperous career. He was sent to the nearby town of Madaura for further studies, but a lack of money forced him back home to Thagaste for a year, while his father tried to save more money for tuition. Augustine describes himself as a dissolute young man, unrestrained by his parents, who were more concerned with his success in school than his personal behavior. When Augustine was about 16, his parents sent him to the university at Carthage, the largest city in the region. There he studied literature and poetry, in preparation for a career as a rhetor, a professional public speaker and teacher of rhetoric. Soon after Augustine came to Carthage, his father died, leaving Augustine as the nominal head of the family. In Carthage, he set up a household with a concubine, the mother of his son, Adeodatus, born about 400. During this period, he read the book that began his spiritual journey: In Carthage, Augustine also encountered Manichaeism, the religion that dominated his life for the following decade. After Augustine finished his studies, he briefly returned to Thagaste to teach, but soon went back to Carthage, where opportunities were more plentiful. Augustine became a successful public speaker and teacher. Encouraged by wealthy Manichee friends, he moved on to Rome in 403, hoping to advance his career. In 408, Augustine moved to Milan, where he heard the preaching of Bishop Ambrose. Augustine read the works of the Neo-Platonists himself, and this reading revolutionized his understanding of Christianity. His mother had followed him to Milan, and she arranged an advantageous marriage to a Christian girl from a good family, requiring Augustine to send his concubine away. In the fall of 408, he had a conversion experience that convinced him to renounce his career and his marriage prospects in order to dedicate his life to God. He spent the winter with a group of like-minded friends, withdrawn from the world, reading and discussing Christianity. At Easter 409, he was finally baptized by Bishop Ambrose. On their way back to Africa, his group of friends and family was delayed at the coastal city of Ostia, where Monica fell ill and died. In 410, Augustine returned to Thagaste, where he lived on his family estate in a small, quasi-monastic community. In 417, he visited the city of Hippo Regius, about 60 miles from Thagaste, in order to start a monastery, but he ended up being drafted into the priesthood by a Christian congregation there. In 418, he became the bishop of Hippo. He spent the next 35 years preaching, celebrating mass, resolving local disputes, and ministering to his congregation. He continued to write, and he became famous throughout the Christian world for his role in several controversies. During this period, the Christian church in north Africa was divided into two opposing factions, the Donatists and the Catholics. In the early 400s, the African church had suffered Imperial persecutions, and some Christians had publicly renounced their beliefs to escape torture and execution, while others accepted martyrdom for their faith. After the persecutions ended, the Catholics re-admitted those Christians who made public repentance for having renounced their faith. But the Donatists insisted that anyone wanting to rejoin the church would have to be rebaptized. Furthermore, they refused to recognize any priests or bishops except their own, believing that the Catholic bishops had been ordained by traitors. By the 400s, the conflict had erupted into violence, with Donatist outlaws attacking Catholic travelers in the countryside. At first, Augustine tried diplomacy with the Donatists, but they refused his overtures, and he came to support the use of force against them. Augustine, the former rhetor, eloquently argued the position of the Catholics, and Marcellinus decided in their favor. Donatism was suppressed by severe legal penalties. While the Donatist controversy was in full swing, a catastrophe struck the Roman world. In the year 410, Rome, the symbolic capitol of an empire that had dominated the known world for hundreds of years, was looted and burned by the armies

of the Visigoths, northern European barbarian tribes. Many people throughout the empire believed that the fall of Rome marked the end of civilization as they knew it. In response, Augustine began writing his greatest masterpiece, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, which he worked on for 15 years. In *The City of God*, Augustine places the heavenly and eternal Jerusalem, the true home of all Christians, against the transitory worldly power represented by Rome, and in doing so, he articulates an entirely new Christian world view. About the time of the fall of Rome, a movement called Pelagianism began in the church, calling for a fundamental renewal of spiritual and physical discipline. Pelagius argued that human beings could choose to achieve moral perfection through sheer force of will "and not only that they could, but that they must. Augustine, on the other hand, argued that no human being could expect to achieve anything like moral perfection; human will was irrevocably tainted by original sin. Christians could and should strive toward goodness, but they must also recognize their fallen state and their dependence upon the grace of God. Once again, Augustine presented the argument that won: Pelagius was officially condemned in and sent into exile. But Pelagianism remained influential, and Augustine spent his final years locked in a long-distance debate with an intelligent and articulate advocate of Pelagianism, Julian of Eclanum. Among other matters, Augustine and Julian clashed on the nature of human sexuality. Julian, however, could not accept the idea of original sin. He insisted that sexual desire was simply another of the bodily senses, and that the justice of God would not inflict punishment on the entire human race for the disobedience of one person. In his debates with the Pelagians, Augustine broached another difficult issue, that of predestination. Because Augustine had argued that only the grace of God could move human beings toward salvation, the issue of how God chose those who would be saved became paramount. Augustine asserted that only a few people were saved, and only God knew who was saved and who was not. This assertion provoked a sort of revolt among several French monastic communities during the 5th century. If one could undertake heroic acts of self-denial and spiritual commitment, as the monks had done, but still not know if one was saved, then what was the point of trying? In response to letters from the monks, Augustine acknowledged that predestination was a difficult issue, but he refused to yield the point. In 429, north Africa was invaded by the Vandals, another barbarian tribe from Europe. The Vandals besieged the city of Hippo during the summer of 429; Augustine fell ill during August. According to his biographer, Possidius, Augustine spent the last days of his life studying the penitential psalms, which he had posted on the walls of his room, and weeping over his sins. He demanded that no one visit him, giving him uninterrupted time to pray. Augustine died on August 28, 430, at the age of 75, so he did not live to see the Vandals overrun Hippo in 430. The world Augustine had known, the old Roman Empire that had educated him even while he deplored it, was genuinely coming to an end. Augustine had an enormously influential role in shaping the world that replaced it, the Christianized civilization of Medieval Europe. Major Works Augustine was a prolific writer, producing more than 100 sermons, letters, and numerous other works on a wide variety of topics. Many of these works have yet to be translated into English, although a massive translation project is currently underway. Conscious that he was leaving behind a large and influential body of work, Augustine set about organizing and revisiting his writings toward the end of his life, in his *Retractiones* Retractions,

Chapter 2 : The Journey toward God in Augustine's Confessions

Augustine: A Journey of Conversion Before submitting himself to God, Augustine lived a life controlled by various sinful tendencies such as theft and lust. Surrounded by strong believers of Catholicism, such as his mother, St. Monica, Augustine grew up questioning Christ and the faith and rather explored other religions.

His steadfast spiritual journey "one identified with penance and dedication" will lead him to a profound understanding of the message of Christ. He attains a refined reverence for the omnipotent will of God. Augustine lived at an age that was far removed from St. The rest of this essay will highlight this connection by citing relevant passages from the Confessions as well as scholarly commentary given upon it. We will write a custom essay sample on St. This peculiar theory appeared so valid to the young Augustine because it relieved him from the moral conundrums upon which he was entangled. Further, by removing God from this obviously ambiguous realm through a series of ontological buffers, it allowed Augustine to see how God is not directly implicated in evil. He could breathe easy again. As a result there was no scope for spiritual development. In his early youth he believed in the Manichaeian religion which was full of superstition. His blind belief in astrology also hampered his intellect. It was not until his conversion to Christianity that Augustine came to realize his true calling. His reverence for life and its divine purpose began to dawn at that moment. One of the turning points in St. The sixth chapter of the Confessions is particularly helpful in understanding St. Here, shedding his adherence to ascetic isolation, Augustine contends that a spiritually fulfilling life is possible both in the presence of God as well as in the company of people. This, in turn, led him back to the presence of God for genuine satisfaction. It is a sign of his inner strength and conviction that despite the failure in Milan, he initiated similar philosophical and spiritual communities at Cassiciacum numerous other towns in the months preceding his baptism in Augustine contemplates Christianity in full measure. That too, it is in the eighth book that he finally converts to the religion. This shows that most of St. The totem that the journey is itself the destination is true in this case, for all the years that was spent wandering in search of religious truth were not wasted. They were the rites of passage toward spiritual salvation. All the early struggles had actually increased St. Understanding the nature and will of the Christian God was a central Augustinian preoccupation. Augustine his entire spiritual quest was cantered on that question. At the end of his questioning, Augustine found a truth that liberated from ignorance. The Way That Leads There: Augustinian Reflections on the Christian Life.

Chapter 3 : St. Augustine Biography

Structurally, the Confessions falls into three segments: Books 1 through 9 recount Augustine's life and his spiritual journey. Book 10 is a discussion of the nature of memory and an examination of the temptations Augustine was still facing.

Menu and widgets St. The Confessions of St. Augustine has a special significance to the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy since we follow his rule of life. On August 10th, Bishop Berenguer de Palou officially and solemnly constituted the Order and gave them the Rule of Saint Augustine as a norm for their life in common. This rule would shape the way that the friars live their life of prayer, penance, and witness for the next years. Augustine was ahead of his time. The Rule of St. Augustine is the shortest of all the major rules, but quite possibly the most profound in its understanding of the human person. He was not afraid to combine Pre-Christian philosophy and his vast experiences to the teachings of Christianity. How did he get so much wisdom? The Confessions reveal a man who gave himself passionately to whatever he did. Before he met the Creator, Augustine fell in love with the creation and the goodness that he found within it. He practiced Manichaeism, or a form of dualism which denied the dignity of the body and personal responsibility for sin. After becoming disillusioned with this, Augustine went to Platonism or the belief that the Ideas alone give true knowledge as they are known by the mind. Augustine surrendered himself without limit to these things, but the restlessness continued. Disinterested in Christianity Despite the promptings and prayers of his mother, St. Monica, he remained disinterested with Christianity, which to him seemed simple and lacking in wisdom. In his characteristic zeal, Augustine left everything to follow Christ. He longed to abandon the world to live in community with like-minded brothers studying Sacred Scripture and Philosophy. In his diocese, were those who had forsaken Orthodox Christianity to follow Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. The greatest of these errors is Modernism. It states that religion is essentially a matter of experience, personal and collective. There is no objective revelation from God to the human race, on which Christianity is finally based, nor any reasonable grounds for credibility in the Christian faith, based on miracles or the testimony of history. Essentially the modernist believes that faith is personal and comes from the emotions and not from doctrine or revelation. Modernism comes from the late 19th Century and has given birth to so many of the destructive thoughts of our time: Ultimately, modernistic thought is based on the individual, not God or His revelation transmitted through the Church. The modernist is skeptical of all things. This thought pattern breeds narcissism and doubt. As Christians, and particularly Mercedarians, we must combat the effects of Modernism in our society, family, and Church. How do we do this? Well, we can look to St. Augustine as a model of tireless defense of the Truth. He used faith, reason, and courage to shepherd his people who were in serious danger of denying their faith. Augustine challenged the Manicheans and Donatists to debates. He embraced philosophy and explained the reasonableness of the faith to the people of his time. All that is true, beautiful, and good can lead us to God. Christianity is profoundly reasonable. Augustine was not afraid to debate and answer the questions of his opponents, because he knew that Christianity is profoundly reasonable. Amazingly, Augustine also used the media to promote the orthodox teaching of the Church. He used propaganda such as songs and pamphlets to catechize the people of his time. Augustine also used his sermons to teach the faith. He lived in a time where people turned to speakers for entertainment. He was at times isolated and threatened. Yet, he courageously stood firm for the sake of those whose faith was in danger. We too can learn from St. Augustine to be clever, reasonable, and courageous in our defense of the faith. Ultimately, Modernism is a system that leads to self-destruction because it leads to individualism, narcissism, and doubt. Those who adhere to these beliefs are basing their belief in themselves and their own emotions or feelings. We are saved with others. God is Trinity; a communion of divine persons. We who are created in His Image are called to that same communion. The human person is not meant to attain salvation alone. We are saved as a communion or Church. This is why St. Augustine wanted to go away with like-minded brothers to grow in the wisdom and understanding of God. We are a part of a much greater Communion of Saints.

Chapter 4 : Augustine's Journey

Augustine is able to give the reader a close experience of his journey through life, just as Dante carries the reader with him through his journey through hell. Both of these works paint a vivid picture of the expeditions of man through his search for a deeper spiritual connection.

The Confessions Summary The Confessions is the first autobiography in Western literature, but Augustine meant it to be far more than simply an account of his life. He wrote it during the first three years of his tenure as bishop of Hippo. The word confessions in the title implies not only that the narrative will reveal intimate facts about the author but also that it will be guided by a spirit of remorse and the praise of God. In book I, Augustine describes his early years, from his childhood to the age of fifteen. He admits that as a teenager he preferred hedonism to studying. In book II he speaks of his early pursuit of sexual pleasure. Around the age of sixteen, he gave up studying, chased women, and even became a thief. He moves through three years in book III, to the age of nineteen, when he lives in Carthage. Over the nine years of book IV, he finishes his studies and becomes a published author; one of his publications is a book on Aristotle. In book V, Augustine is twenty-nine years old. He has given up on the Manicheans and his mistress, and he is in Rome, where he has found friendship with Bishop Ambrose. He also considers the nature of evil. He understands God but does not understand Jesus Christ. By book IX he is thinking about giving up teaching, and tragedy strikes. Two of his close friends die, followed by the death of his mother, Monica. In book X, he meditates on what will lead him to God and bring happiness in his life. In book XI, he begins to study the Bible in earnest, which allows him to talk about the nature of time. Book XII contains a detailed examination of the first chapter of the book of Genesis, through which he outlines his view of matter. Augustine then reads the first chapter of Genesis in an allegorical manner, and he states that God works to bring happiness to those who are holy. Analysis Scholars generally accept that the idea of autobiography begins with the letters of Saint Paul in the New Testament. However, Augustine in his Confessions takes this idea and expands it into an entire genre that critically inquires what it means to be a person. In other words, he explores the idea of the self until he discovers personal subjectivity. As Augustine constructs a view of God that would come to dominate Western thinking, he also creates a new concept of individual identity: This identity is achieved through a twofold process: Augustine creates a literary character out of the self and places it in a narrative text so that it becomes part of the grand allegory of redemption. In The Confessions, Augustine plays the lead role in the story of his own life. He reads his life as an allegory to arrive at a larger truth. This is an interesting, and highly informative, process: Augustine transforms himself into a literary character to present himself to God. By doing so, Augustine juxtaposes eternity with the transient, the all-powerful with the weak, and the Creator with the created. This union may seem unequal, but Augustine presents it to teach a very pertinent lesson: The Confessions is a work of prayer and repentance as well as praise. One of the most important and powerful passages of The Confessions relates the journey of the self toward wholeness. Augustine was in poor health and felt his life was going nowhere. He no longer wanted to teach and wanted to abandon all his worldly ambitions of securing a glorious career. Throughout Confessions, Augustine is torn between two opposing forces, sexual desire and spiritual desire, and he confronts the conflict here one final time. Augustine is writing from a distance of fourteen years, and he clearly casts the struggle in Neoplatonic terms, where to be truly free one must choose the interior world of the soul and abandon the distractions of the senses. In his Milan garden, Augustine came to a decision that would forever end this struggle.

Chapter 5 : At Journey's End Bed and Breakfast in St. Augustine, Florida

Although Augustine of Hippo's early life was disordered and undisciplined, his adult life is marked by maturity and spiritual searching. His steadfast spiritual journey - one identified with penance and dedication - will lead him to a profound understanding of the message of Christ.

And that is perhaps not quite strong enough – it makes for the most compelling of tales. Can you recall any gripping stories of searches for lies or deceptions? It is in fact quite the opposite – from murder mystery novels to lone individuals battling against powerful and deceptive organizations, it is the search for the truth of things that keeps the reader glued to the page. Dorothy Sayers, mystery novelist and Christian apologist contemporary with C. Lewis, was reported to have enjoyed this very aspect of the murder mystery – that there was a truth that inevitably emerged from the fog of circumstance. Consider how Augustine anguished for the truth, the truth of the meaning of his existence: As Bishop of Hippo from A. But the particular genius of Augustine lies with the very personal nature of his spiritual journey. Sayers argued in *The Mind of the Maker* that the Christian Trinity provides the model that infuses art, novels and life in general with its creative and spiritual dynamism. It makes sense to first consider the philosophies with which Augustine wrestled, as many of his devotional statements respond significantly to the incomplete promises they offered. The Manichees provided one such philosophy, as Greek thought on matter and form were adapted by Mani, the 3rd century A. Of this way they know nothing; they think themselves exalted to the stars and brilliant. Even the ecstatic vision that is to bring knowledge of the eternal, ethereal source of the soul, Augustine finds fleeting: With language we can reason, but with image, or the imagination, we actually understand the terms we reason about; and Christ provides both for us. They pour themselves out on things which, being seen, are transient. Consider the following discussion: There is but one soul, thrown into turmoil by divergent impulses – Claimed by truth for the one, to the other clamped by custom, the soul is torn apart in its distress. Augustine here describes the sorrows and angst of modern man as well as Karl Marx or Soren Kierkegaard ever would. There is will find refreshment, there its true strength. The personal desire, and anguish, reach out to the reader throughout *The Confessions*. This is seen perhaps nowhere else so clearly as in the following passage: I feverishly searched for the origin of evil. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited. For instance the teachings of Plato make eminently more sense once one has considered the historical and societal backdrop in, or against, which Plato was writing. Apologetically, we see Augustine showing the truths of the Christian faith able to answer the challenges of alternate philosophies, in some cases fulfilling the philosophical backdrop, in some cases rewriting it. In its exhibition of the devotional journey, *The Confessions* is perhaps unparalleled: Timeless truths of the Christian faith were thus related in a most timely fashion – that of a life embroiled in the questions and answers of its time. The result is similar to the lifetime of memories embedded in *Star Trek: Vintage Books*, , III. *Vintage Books*, , xiii. *The Teaching Company*, , lecture Starr, Defoe and *Spiritual Autobiography* ew York: Gordian Press, , Crossway, ,

Chapter 6 : The Journey " Augustine Of Canterbury

A new interpretation of the first six books of Augustine's Confessions, emphasizing the importance of Christianity rather than Neoplatonism. This detailed discussion of Augustine's journey toward God, as it is described in the first six books of the Confessions, begins with infancy, moves through childhood and adolescence, and culminates in youthful maturity.

The Journey from Platonism to Christianity Published: Reviewed by Thomas Williams, University of South Florida Augustine tells us quite clearly in the Confessions that when, under the influence of Bishop Ambrose and the "books of the Platonists," he began to take Christianity seriously, he did not immediately get his Christology right: I regarded my Lord Christ as a man of surpassing wisdom whom no one else could equal. I did recognize in Christ a complete human being -- not merely a human body, or a soul with a body but no mind -- but I thought that this human being was to be preferred to others, not as the Person of Truth, but because of some great excellence of his human nature and his more complete participation in wisdom. I must admit that it was only some time later that I learned how Catholic truth is distinguished from Photinian falsity: I am not arguing, and I certainly do not believe, that the narrator of the Confessions is lying to us when he describes the particulars of his conversion to Christianity. I emphatically reject the notion that he is trying to pull the wool over our eyes, making it seem as if he had clarified the distinction between the Catholic and Photinian Christologies at the time of his conversion in when in fact he had done no such thing. But this is no indication of duplicity. Dobell presents his evidence for this claim in two parts, taking his cue from the two paths to salvation that Augustine describes in his early writings. In Part I Dobell examines the "way of authority," which involves imitating the example of Christ, understood Dobell argues in terms of Photinian Christology; in Part II he examines the "way of reason," which corresponds to the "Platonic ascents" of Confessions 7. Augustine would not reject either Photinian Christology or the method of ascent until around , Dobell argues, which means that Confessions 7. No one, I take it, would regard it as particularly interesting to point out that the Augustine of to expressed his Christology in terms that fell short of complete Chalcedonian precision, since the Council of Chalcedon did not meet until When Augustine explains the way of authority in his early works, he says that the many need to be called away from sensible things and turned toward the intelligible world. Since the many are incapable of following the way of reason, there must be a wise man who can serve as an intermediary between their foolishness and the divine wisdom. By his virginal conception and miraculous works, this wise man would capture the attention of the many, who would be able to attain salvation by imitating his exceptional virtue and following his "example of spurning temporal things in order to attain immortality" Confessions 7. It is therefore reasonable, Dobell concludes, to see Augustine as a Photinian in his early works. Why is it erroneous to take them in this way? For example, Augustine has Licentius say at De ordine 1. Photinus was an adoptionist: That need not mean, Dobell argues, that Augustine holds that Jesus of Nazareth is God -- for why should we assume that he identifies Christ with Jesus of Nazareth? To which one can only answer: What else is the "sending" of Christ, to which Licentius twice refers, but the Incarnation? Moreover, he says that the divine Intellect "stooped and submitted" declined to a human body, thereby allowing rational souls to be inspired not only by his cujus precepts but also by his deeds. This may not be Chalcedonian Christology 65 years before Chalcedon, but it sounds entirely orthodox by the standards of the time. After all, Augustine is recognizing "this human being " as the Person of Truth," the divine Intellect; and that is how he characterizes the correct, non-Photinian Christology in the passage from Confessions 7. Dobell also acknowledges that the early Augustine frequently uses homo assumptus language in speaking about Christ. Indeed, in a very informative footnote 51 n. Such language is consistent with the way Ambrose, an expressly anti-Photinian writer, spoke about Christ. We cannot assume, he argues, that Augustine understood that language in a fully orthodox way, because "Confessions 7. For one thing, although Augustine in Confessions 7. He does not say that Photinus erred in treating Christ as a man to be imitated -- as Augustine himself will continue to do -- but that he erred in treating Christ as no more than a man however worthy of imitation. And for another, it is far from obvious that even a proto-Chalcedonian Christology requires a "transactional" account of the Atonement, such as a theory

of substitution or the ransom theory, as Dobell seems to think. Translations throughout are my own. I use it in this review merely for the sake of convenience.

Chapter 7 : St. Augustine's Colonial Quarter | Florida's Historic Coast

The Confessions of St Augustine - his journey out and back, To finding God in himself Brian Lowery OSA Fr Brian Lowery, Prior of Convento calendrierdelascience.comno, San Gimignano, Italy, was invited to Clare.

For the second time since then the website has been completely rebuilt technically. This new site can be read on ipads and smart phones, and reshapes itself to their dimensions and to their vertical and horizontal formats. Read more daily bread All my desire is before You, Lord, and not all before human beings. Let your desire be always before God. And your Father Who sees all in secret will repay you. For your constant desire is your prayer; if your desire is constant, so is your prayer constant. Cling to God with love so that your life may grow. Hold fast to the faithful, certain, great and everlasting promises of God, and to the unshakeable and ineffable gift of His forbearance. Let me seek You, O Lord, calling upon you. And let me call upon you, believing in You, for you have been preached to us. My faith calls upon you â€” a faith that you inspired in me through by the coming of your Son through the ministry of Your preacher. Let us correct ourselves! The way has not yet ended; the day is not over. For human and tolerable sins God has established in the Church a time of mercy for distributing daily medicine. We were sick and could not move. And so the heavenly Physician came to the patient; the way was prepared for the wanderer. Let us be saved by Him; let us walk with Him. He Who has given us the gift of being also gives us the gift of being good. He gives it to those who have turned back to Him. He even sought them out before they were converted and when they were far from His ways. Although the lost sheep could lose itself while wandering, it could not find itself. It would not have been found if the mercy of the shepherd had not sought it out. Similarly, the prodigal son was also sought out and raised by the One Who gives life to everyone. Just imagine the incredible kindness and mercy of Christ. He was the only Son, but he did not want to remain alone. So that humans might be born of God, God was born of humans. He is through Whom we are born, and through Whom we are to be re-created. We are your little flock, Lord; we belong to You. Spread your wings that we make take refuge under them. Be our glory, and let us be loved for Your sake, and let your Word be revered in Your midst.

Chapter 8 : SparkNotes: Saint Augustine (A.D. 354): The Confessions

Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, (354 - 430 AD) was one of the most important and influential figures in the history of Christianity, and is often referred to as one of the "Church Fathers.

First, his contemporaries were suspicious of him because of his Classical, pagan-influenced education; his brilliant public career as a rhetor; and his status as an ex-Manichee. One purpose of the Confessions, then, was to defend himself against this kind of criticism, by explaining how he had arrived at his Christian faith and demonstrating that his beliefs were truly Christian. The word "confession" has several senses, all of which operate throughout the work. Finally, confession means a statement of praise, and in the Confessions, Augustine constantly gives praise to the God who mercifully directed his path and brought him out of misery and error. In essence, the Confessions is one long prayer. Structurally, the Confessions falls into three segments: Book 10 is a discussion of the nature of memory and an examination of the temptations Augustine was still facing. Books 11 through 13 are an extended exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis. The sharp differences between these three parts have raised many questions about the unity of the Confessions. Augustine himself commented in his *Retractiones* that the first ten books were about himself, and the other three were about scripture. Some critics argue that, in fact, the Confessions has no unified structure, and Augustine simply proceeded without an overall plan for the work. Others think the final four books were tacked on at a later date. Still others have contended that the Confessions is, in fact, unfinished, and that Augustine intended the autobiographical portion simply as an introduction to a much longer work, either a full analysis of the book of Genesis Augustine produced several of these analyses or a catechism for new members of the church. Other critics have pointed to repeated themes across the three sections – the explorations of memory and time, in particular – in attempting to find unifying elements. Another way of looking at the structure of the Confessions is to view it as a journey in time: Nonetheless, many readers feel that the Confessions should have ended at Book 9, and even today, you can find copies that do not include the final four books. The Confessions is always called a story of conversion. Augustine actually undergoes several conversions: Yet the term "conversion" is somewhat misleading. Even the young Augustine was never truly in doubt about the existence of God. Although he flirted briefly with the radical skepticism of the Academics, he was always certain, even as a Manichee, that Christ was the savior of the world. Augustine simply had the details wrong – in his view, disastrously wrong. Augustine is a kind of everyman, representing a lost and struggling humanity trying to rediscover the divine, the only source of true peace and satisfaction. As in a fairy tale, the outcome of the Confessions is never really in doubt; its hero is predestined, as Monica foresees, to find what he seeks. One of the distinguishing features of Platonism is its assertion that the visible, tangible forms of the physical world are based on immaterial models, called Forms or Ideas. Tangible forms are transitory, unstable, and imperfect, whereas ideal Forms are eternal, perfect, and unchanging. Physical forms are many and diverse, but ideal Forms are single and unified. Platonism places a definite hierarchy of value on these qualities: Eternity is superior to the temporal; unity is superior to division; the immaterial is superior to the material. In Platonism, the fleeting physical world that humankind inhabits becomes a kind of flawed manifestation of a perfect and eternal model that can be perceived only by the intellect, not by the senses. The Neo-Platonist philosophers Plotinus c. In the *Enneads*, Plotinus proposed a supreme divinity with three aspects. The "One" is a transcendent, ineffable, divine power, the source of everything that exists. It is complete and self-sufficient. Its perfect power overflows spontaneously into a second aspect, the Intelligence Mind or *Nous*, which contemplates the power of the One. By contemplating the One, the Intelligence produces Ideas or Forms. The unity of the One thus overflows into division and multiplicity. These Forms are translated into the physical world through the creative activity of the World Soul. In the immaterial realm, the higher part of the Soul contemplates the Intelligence, while in the material realm, the lower part of the Soul acts to create and govern physical forms. According to Plotinus, the Soul, in descending from the immaterial to the material world, forgets some of its divine nature. All human individual souls, therefore, share in the divinity of the One and will eventually return to the divine realm from which they came, after they shed their

physical bodies. However, by the exercise of virtue and contemplation of the spiritual, the human soul can ascend from the lower, material realm, toward the highest good, the absolute beauty and perfection of the immaterial One. Augustine refers to this Platonic "ascent of the soul" in Book 9 of the Confessions. Christians, for their part, were deeply suspicious of Platonism and of all the old pagan philosophies that Christianity had superseded. Nonetheless, Neo-Platonism had qualities that made it attractive to intellectual Christians. Augustine found Neo-Platonism to contain all the major ideas of Christianity, with the important exception that it did not acknowledge Christ. Manichaeism was actually one of several Gnostic religions that flourished during this period. Gnostic religions from gnosis, the Greek word for knowledge promise believers a secret knowledge, hidden from non-believers, that will lead to salvation. Gnostic religions are also intensely dualistic, viewing the universe as a battleground between the opposing forces of good and evil. Like all Gnostic religions, Manichaeism held that darkness and the physical world were manifestations of evil, while light was a manifestation of good. Manichaeism was founded by the prophet Mani A. Born in Persia, Mani was raised as a member of a Christian sect, but as a young man he received a series of revelations that led him to found a new religion. Manichaeism was distinguished by its elaborate and detailed cosmology. According to Manichee myth, Light and Darkness originally existed separately, without knowledge of each other. Its opposite, the realm of Darkness and matter, consisted of five disorderly elements. The Prince of Darkness then discovered the realm of Light and tried to conquer it. Together with the five elements, the Primal Man went out to battle Darkness, but he was overcome, and demons of Darkness devoured his Light. Light became trapped in evil physical matter. In order to rescue the Light, the Father created the Living Spirit. They formed the sun and the moon from liberated bits of Light. Plants and animals were formed by the abortions and ejaculations of demons, as they tried to imprison the Light. The demons, overcome by lust, copulated, eventually giving birth to the first human couple, Adam and Eve. Salvation began when Adam received enlightenment about his true state from the Primal Man. One of the central beliefs of Manichaeism was the notion that every human being had two warring souls: Human sin was caused by the activity of this evil soul; salvation would come when the good part of the soul was freed from matter and could return to the realm of pure Light. Through lust and the act of procreation, the Darkness tries to imprison more and more bits of Light within matter. Through Mani, the true revelation of knowledge will allow believers to liberate the Light within themselves and achieve salvation. Manichee believers were of two types. The Elect, having reached spiritual perfection, practiced extreme asceticism, fasting regularly, following a strict vegan diet, and abstaining from all sexual activity. The Hearers, who made up the majority of believers, devoted themselves to caring for the Elect. Hearers were not held to the same rigorous standards of asceticism, but they were admonished not to have children, because doing so imprisoned more Light within matter. Manichees were not to eat any food derived from animals, because after it was dead and, therefore, empty of Light, animal flesh was nothing but evil matter. Eating fruits and vegetables, however, was a sacred act. Plants contained Light, and by eating them, the Manichee Elect freed the Light from bondage. Finally, no Manichee was to ever give food to an unbeliever, because by doing so, the Manichee would be imprisoning more bits of Light in matter. Augustine mocks this belief in Book 3. Manichaeism had a strong missionary element, so it spread rapidly through the Middle East. Because Manichaeism had absorbed some elements of Christianity, it appealed to many mainline Christians. The Manichees, however, viewed Christianity as a flawed and incomplete religion. They were sharply critical of the moral failings of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, David, and Moses. The Manichees pointed to Old Testament stories that described episodes of lust, anger, violence, and deceit to support their claims that the Old Testament God was really an evil demon, not a God of Light. The Manichees specifically rejected the idea that Christ had been born from a human mother into a material body, because they viewed the body as evil. It was, therefore, also impossible that Christ could have suffered a physical death on the cross. Despite its popularity, Manichaeism was viewed as subversive by most civil authorities, and it was repeatedly banned. By the sixth century, Manichaeism had largely disappeared in the western part of the empire, although it survived well into the 14th century in parts of China, and religions similar to Manichaeism reappeared in Europe during the Middle Ages. Augustine was a Manichee Hearer for almost ten years, and in the Confessions, he frequently refers to Manichaean doctrine and practices. Although

they are distinctly different, Manichaeism and Neo-Platonism agree on a few basic ideas: Unlike Neo-Platonism, Manichaeism was intensely materialistic. Where Neo-Platonism posits a completely spiritual, immaterial realm of being, even the Manichee Light seems to have a kind of substance, which was literally imprisoned within the bonds of physical matter.

Chapter 9 : St. Augustines spiritual journey of divine reverence as evidenced in Essay

Much like Dante, St. Augustine's journey also begins with his confessions as being spiritually lost, especially in his earlier years as a sinful youth, turning away from God, and preoccupied with only worldly desires and needs of the flesh.