



Confessions (Bks. 7–13) by Augustine of Hippo

BOOK OF THE MONTH – OCT 3, 2023
WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
R. CARLTON WYNNE

THE PLAN

- ▶ I. Who was Augustine again?
- ▶ II. Augustine's Conversion (Bk. 8)
- ▶ III. Augustine on God's Grace
- ▶ IV. Making Sense of Books 10–13

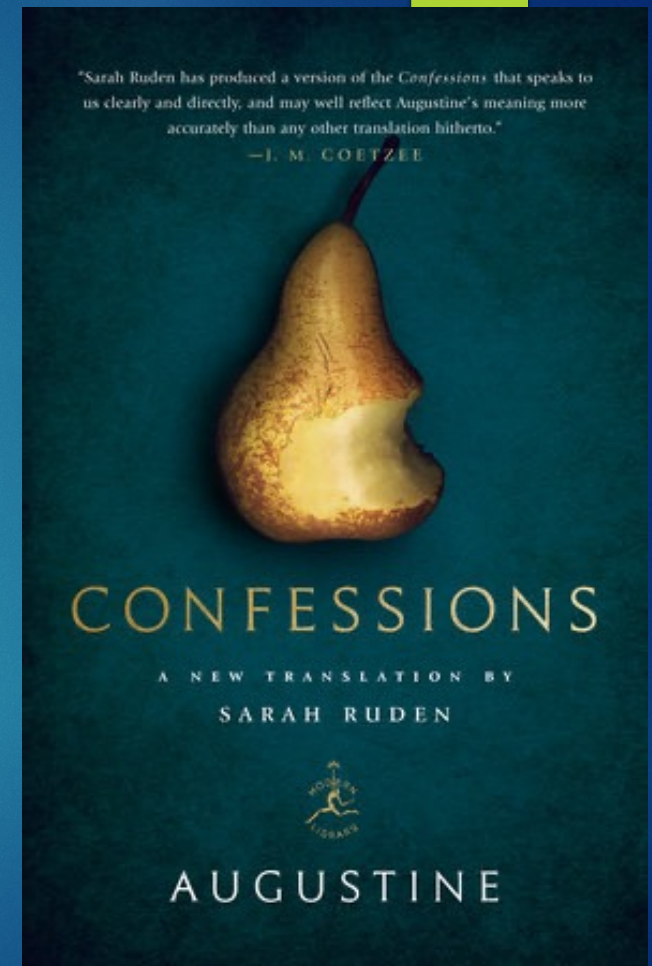
I. Who was Augustine (354–430 AD)?



- ▶ Born in Thagaste (modern Algeria) in 354 AD
- ▶ Parents: Patrick (pagan) & Monica (Christian)
- ▶ Born into a “success driven” culture
- ▶ 370–384 AD – Common-law relationship with unnamed woman (son, Adeodatus – “Gift from God”—dies in 390 AD at age 17)
- ▶ 376 AD – Teaches rhetoric in Carthage; Augustine’s unnamed friend dies
- ▶ 386 AD – Augustine is converted to Christ
- ▶ 391 AD – Ordained as bishop of Hippo
- ▶ Writes *Confessions*, *City of God*, *On Christian Doctrine*, *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love*, etc.

I. Who was Augustine?

- ▶ *"My sin was that I sought not in God himself, but in things he had created—in myself and the rest of his creation—delights, heights, and perceptions of what was true and right, and in this way I collapsed into sufferings, embarrassments, and erring ways."*
(Bk. I.20; Ruden transl).
- ▶ *"My sin consisted in this, that I sought pleasure, sublimity, and truth not in God but in his creatures, in myself and other created beings. So it was that I plunged into miseries, confusions, and errors."*
(Bk. I.20; Chadwick transl).



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MANICHAEANISM – Two equally opposing forces, a GOOD invisible realm vs. an EVIL material realm, *fight*.

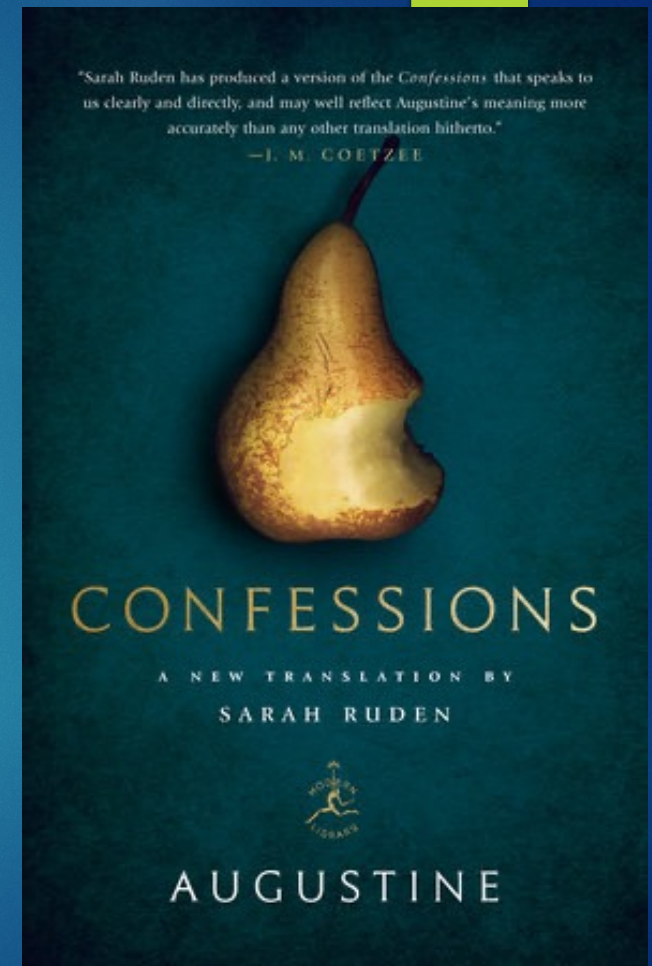
NEOPLATONISM – All existing things *emanate* from, and yearn to *return* to, the transcendent “One.”

CHRISTIANITY – God the Trinity freely and sovereignly *creates* non-divine creatures for *covenant fellowship*!



I. Who was Augustine?

- ▶ “I actually begged you for chastity by saying, ‘**Give me chastity and self-restraint, but don’t do it just yet.**’ I was afraid that you’d hear my prayer quickly and quickly cure me of the disease of lust, which I preferred to have satisfied rather than nullified.” (Bk. VIII.7)



II. Augustine's Conversion



II. Augustine's Conversion

► “I was brought to him by you, though I was oblivious of it, so that through him I could be brought knowingly to you. That man of God took me up as a father takes a newborn baby in his arms ... I fell in love with him, as it were, not at first as a teacher of the truth—as I had no hope for that whatsoever in your church—but simply as a person who was kind to me.” (Bk. V.13.23)



AMBROSE OF MILAN (Bishop from 374–97 AD)

II. Augustine's Conversion

- ▶ “Then, in the course of that big brawl in the most intimate recesses of my house, the brawl with my soul that I’d violently provoked in our bedroom, my heart—I attacked Alypius. I was as wildly disturbed in my face as in my mind, and I yelled, **‘What’s happening to us? What’s this? What have you heard about it?’** Uneducated people are rising up and seizing heaven, and here we are with all our heartless learning, wallowing in flesh and blood!’” (Bk. VIII.8.19)



II. Augustine's Conversion

- ▶ ***“There was a small garden belonging to the place we were staying in, a garden we were enjoying as we did the entire house: our host, the owner, wasn't living there at the time. The uproar in my heart drove me out there, where no one would get in the way of this flaming lawsuit with myself that I was pursuing, insisting on a result—and you knew what that result would be, but I didn't ...” (Bk. VIII.8.19)***



II. Augustine's Conversion

- ▶ “With abandon, I uttered pitiful words: ‘How long, how long will it be ‘Tomorrow! No, the next tomorrow!’? Why not now? Why can’t this hour be the end of the disgusting state I’m in?’ ... I was saying these things and weeping, with agonizing anguish in my heart, and then I heard a voice from the household next door, **the voice of someone—a little boy or girl, I don’t know which—incessantly and insistently chanting, ‘Pick it up! Read it! Pick it up! Read it!’**” (Bk. VIII.12.28–29)



II. Augustine's Conversion

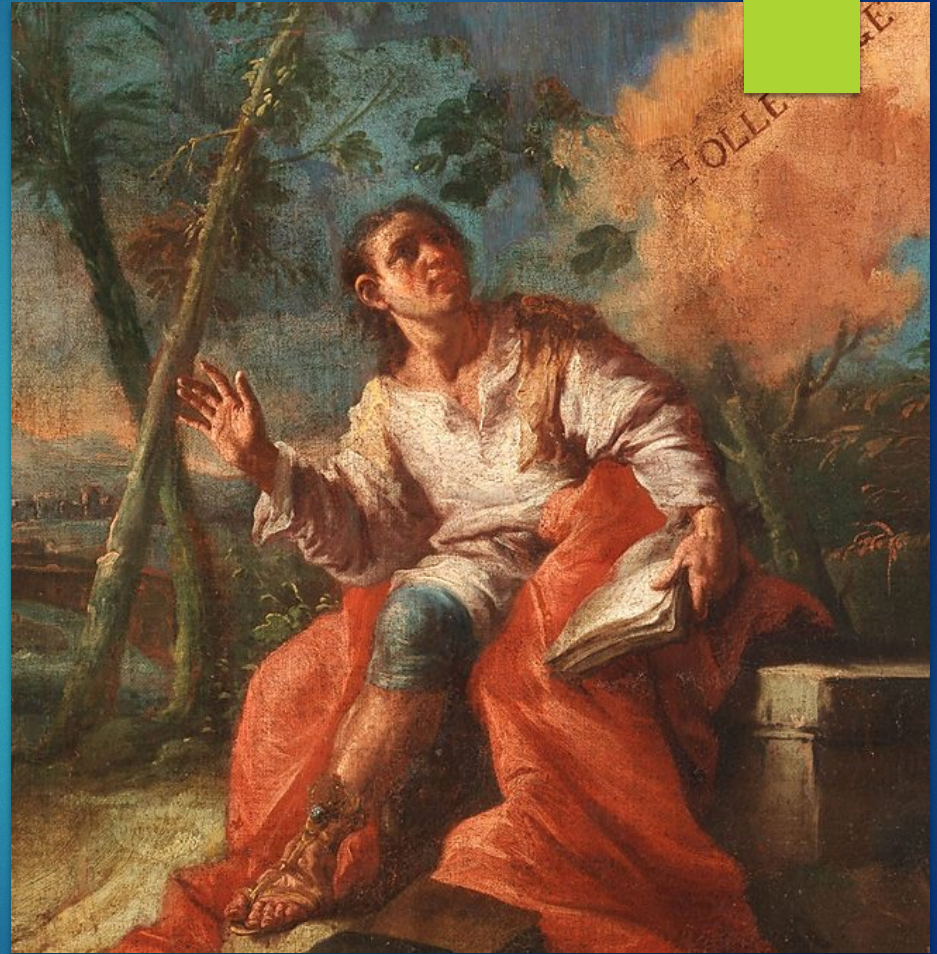
- ▶ “I got control over the onslaught of my tears and got up, **construing the chant as a straightforward divine command to open a book and read the chapter I first found there** ... Excited, I returned to the spot where Alypius was sitting: I’d put down a book of the apostle Paul’s letters there when I got up. I grabbed it and opened it, and I read in silence the passage on which my eyes first fell: **‘Don’t clothe yourself in raucous dinner parties and drunkenness, not in the immorality of sleeping around, not in feuds and competition; but clothe yourself in the Master, Jesus Christ, and do not make provision for the body in its inordinate desires.’** I didn’t want to read further, and there was no need. The instant I finished this sentence, **my heart was virtually flooded with a light of relief and certitude**, and all the darkness of my hesitation scattered away.” (Bk. VIII.12.28–29)

II. Augustine's Conversion

- ▶ ***"Then we went indoors to my mother, and told her: she was overjoyed. We told her how it had happened; she was thrilled and exultant and blessed you, who in your power do more than we ask for or understand. She saw that you had granted her so much more, in me, than she had been used to asking for in her wretched, tearful groaning."*** (Bk. VIII.12.28–29; Ruden transl.)

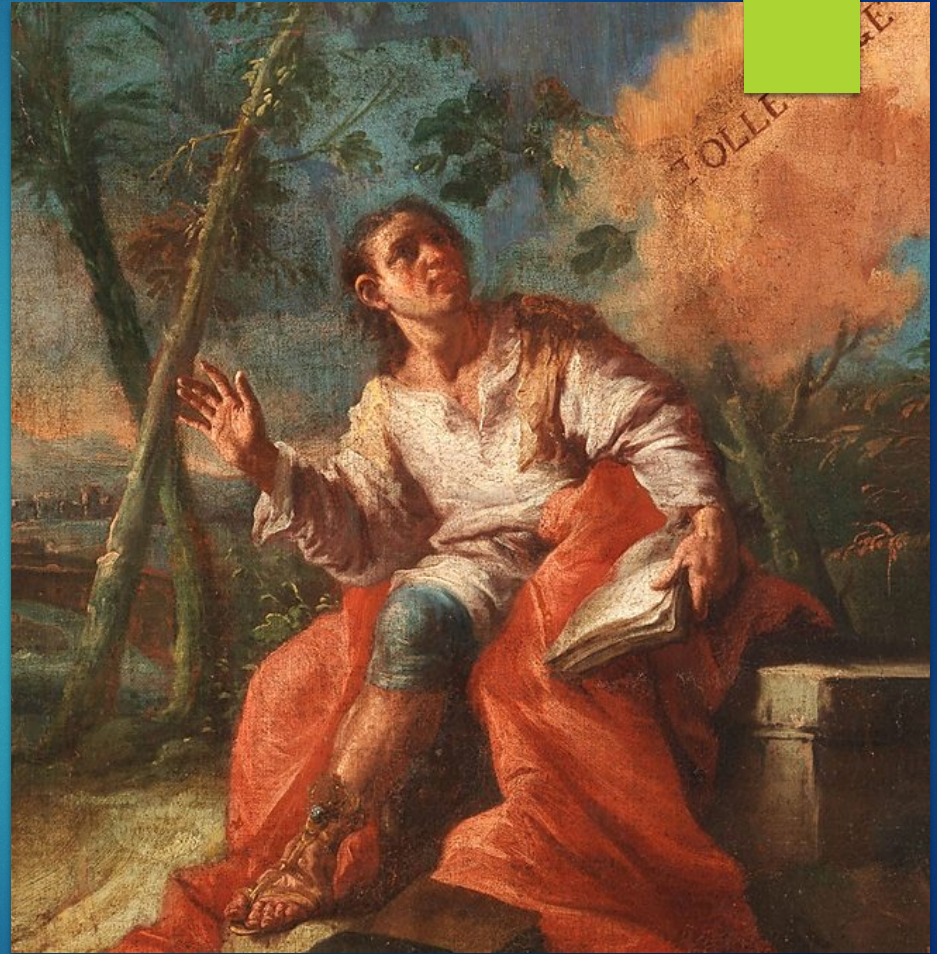


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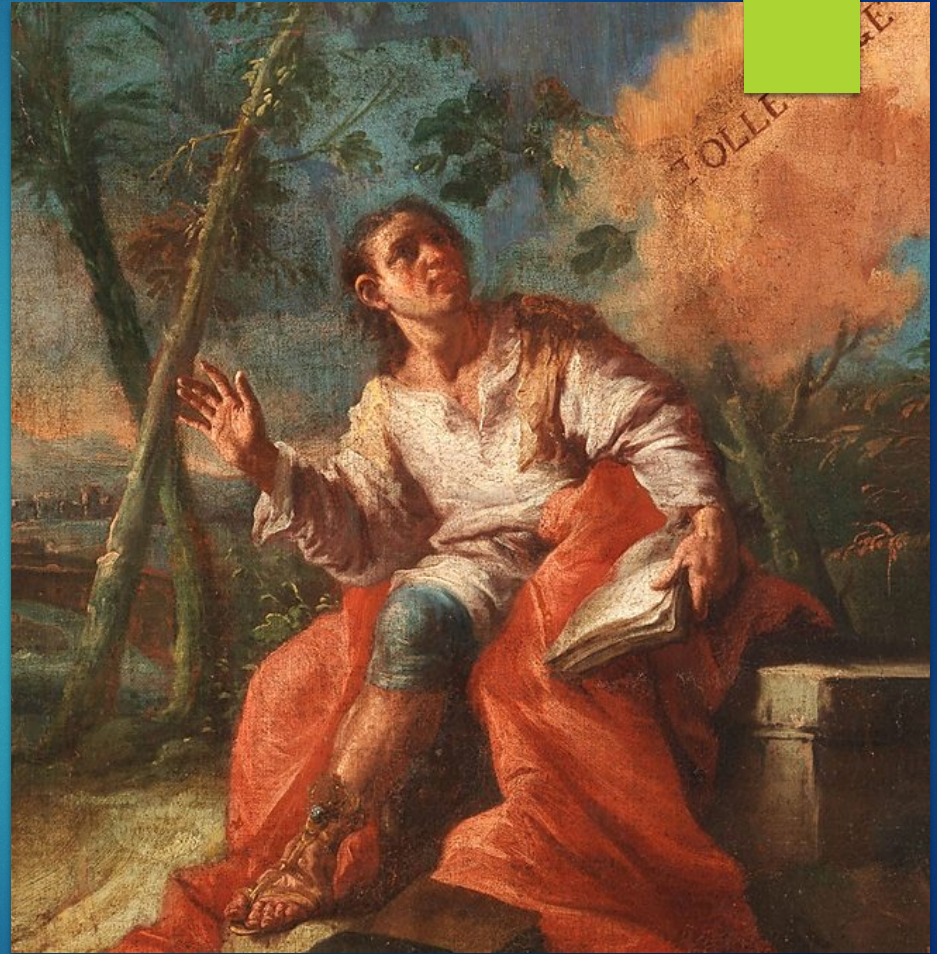
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- ▶ (1) God breaks down human pride and brings one to Himself through Christ.



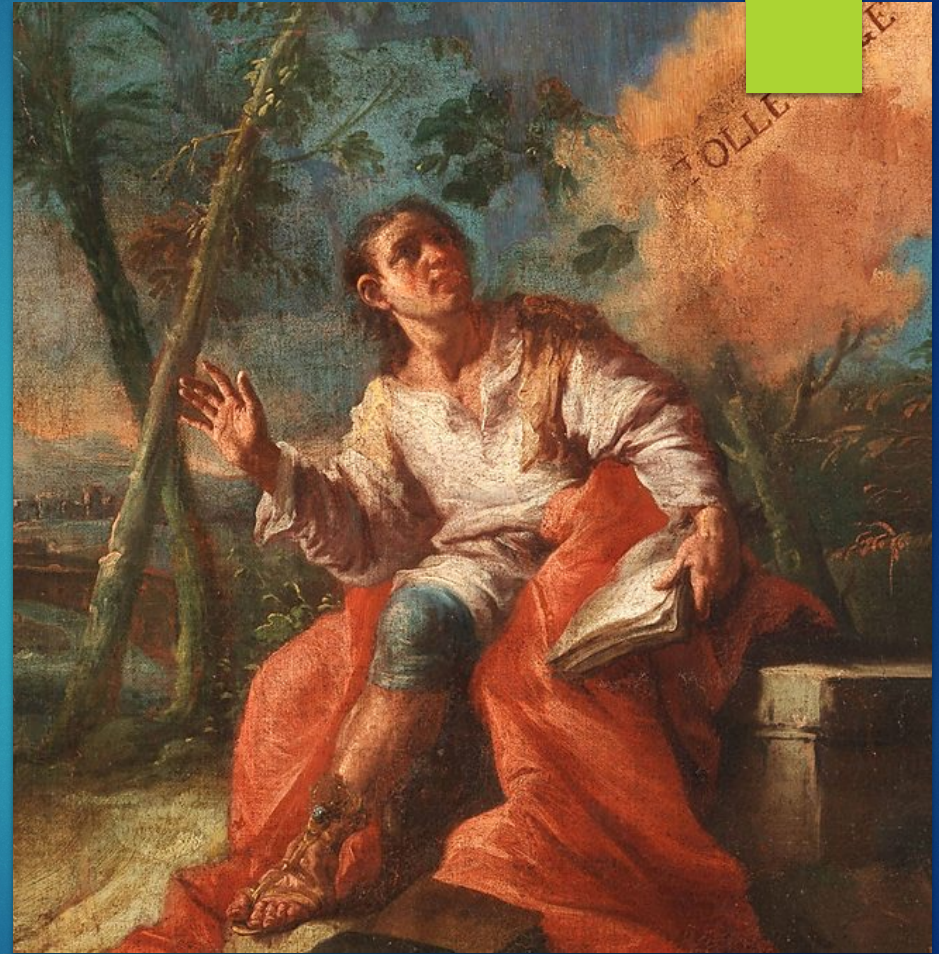
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- ▶ (2) God works through unexpected providential events.
- ▶ (3) A dramatic change before and after conversion



III. Augustine On God's Grace



"The whole of my hope is only in your powerfully great mercy. Grant what you command, and command what you wish. You order us to have self-restraint ... A person loves you less if he loves, along with you, something he doesn't love because of you. Oh, passion of love, you who are always burning and never quenched; you, tender love, my God, set me on fire! You command me to be self-restrained: give what you command, and command what you wish." (Bk. X.19.40)

III. Augustine On God's Grace



***“Give what you command,
and command what you wish.”***

Ps 119:35–36 – “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. ³⁶ Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!”

Phil 2:13–14 – “... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

III. Augustine On God's Grace



Augustine: "O God, command what you wouldst, and grant what thou dost command."



Pelagius: "If God is just, righteous and holy, and God commands of the creature to do something, certainly that creature must have the power and the moral ability within himself to perform it."

Pelagianism – a heretical lay movement that rejected original sin from Adam and emphasized human choice in salvation ("ought implies "can").

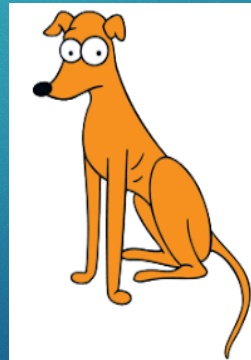


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Semi-Pelagianism – a “middle ground,” holding that Adam’s sin weakened the will of man, who must cooperate with God’s grace to be saved.



Augustinianism – the biblical notion that all are dead in sin and require a *monergistic* work of grace in order to believe and be saved.



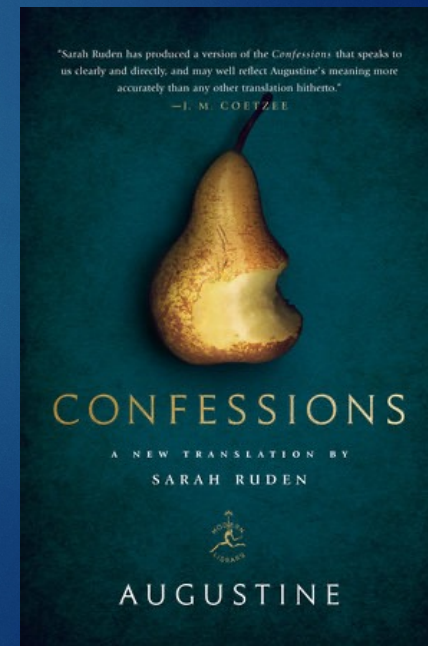
III. Augustine On God's Grace

“Augustine was both the founder of Roman Catholicism and the author of that doctrine of grace which it has been the constantly pursued effort of Roman Catholicism to neutralize, and which in very fact either must be neutralized by, or will neutralize, Roman Catholicism. Two children were struggling in the womb of his mind. ... **For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church.**”

– B.B. Warfield

Augustinus ... totus noster est. – John Calvin

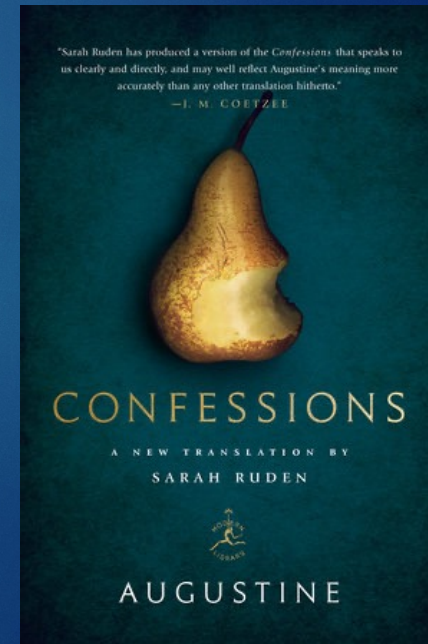
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► **BOOK 10**

- Why write the *Confessions*, an analysis of memory/prayer
- “Give what you command, and command what you wish.”



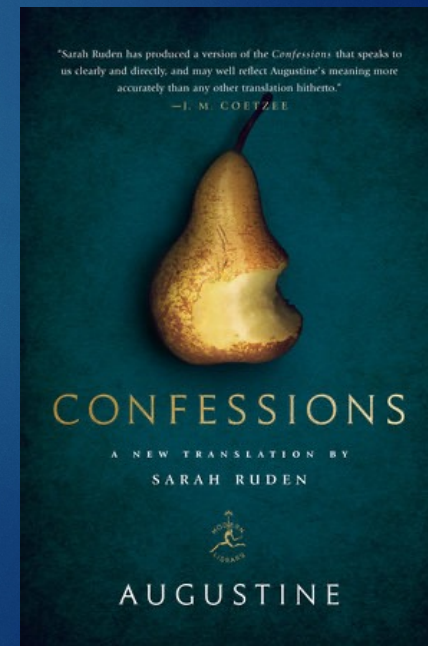
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► **BOOK 11**

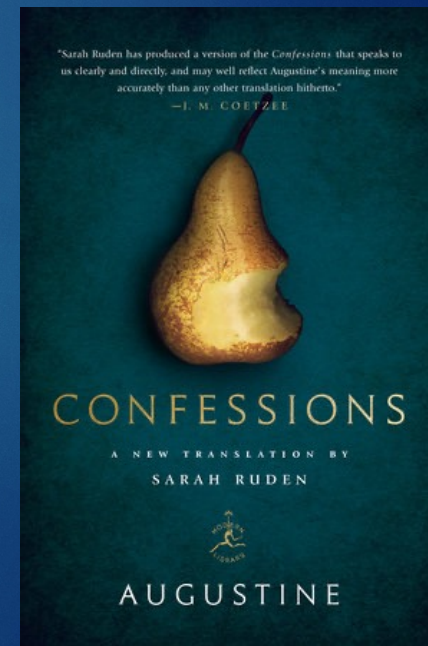
- Elaborate exploration of Gen 1:1
- The nature of time
- “We do in fact understand “time” when we talk of it, and we also understand when we hear somebody else talking of it. So: What is time? If nobody’s asking me, I know. If I’m trying to explain it to somebody who asks me, I don’t know.” (Bk XI 14.17).



IV. *Confessions*, Books 10–13

► BOOK 12

- Elaborate exploration of Genesis 1:1–2, esp. the creation of “the heavens” as God’s house, for which we are made.



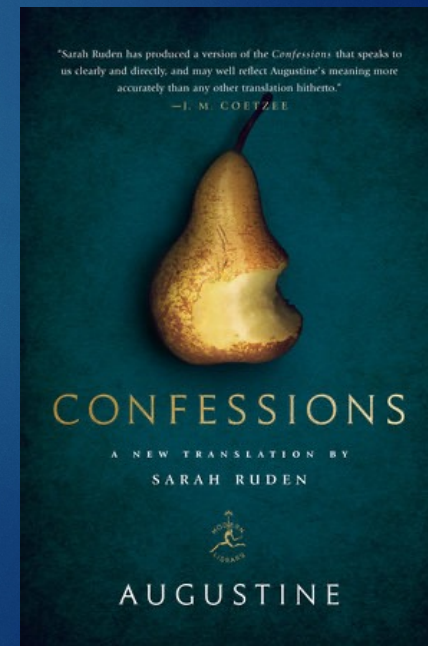
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► **BOOK 13**

- Allegorical study of Gen 1:1–31 as a mirror of the soul’s departure from, and journey to, God in Christ.
 - Heaven and earth = Christ as Head, Earth as Church
 - Firmament/sky = authority of Scripture over all people
 - Gathering of waters = gathering of believers from world
 - Dry land appearing = growth of Christians
 - Animals on land = domesticating of the soul by reason
 - “Be fruitful and multiply” = the fruitfulness of human reason



IV. Confessions, Books 10–13

► BOOK 13

- *“But the seventh day is without an evening and has no setting sun; you made it holy so that it could remain steadfast for all time. You made it after your other very good works. You made them all, of course, when you were at rest, so this expression in your book, that you rested in the seventh day, is meant to foretell to us that after our works, which are very good in that you granted them to us, we, too, will rest in you on the Sabbath of eternal life.”*

(Bk XIII.36.51)

