**Medieval Philosophy**

Medieval philosophy places heavy emphasis on the *theological*.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy#cite_note-5) With the possible exceptions of [Avicenna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna) and [Averroes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Averroes), medieval thinkers did not consider themselves philosophers at all: for them, the philosophers were the ancient [pagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagan) writers such as [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) and [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy#cite_note-Gracia2003-4): 1 However, their theology used the methods and logical techniques of the ancient philosophers to address difficult theological questions and points of doctrine. [Thomas Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas" \o "Thomas Aquinas), following [Peter Damian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Damian), argued that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology (*ancilla theologiae*).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy#cite_note-Gracia2003-4): 35 Despite this view of philosophy as the servant of theology, this did not prevent the medievals from developing original and innovative philosophies against the backdrop of their theological projects. For instance, such thinkers as [Augustine of Hippo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) and [Thomas of Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_of_Aquinas) made monumental breakthroughs in the philosophy of temporality and metaphysics, respectively.

The principles that underlie all the medieval philosophers' work are:

* The use of logic, [dialectic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectic), and analysis to discover the truth, known as *ratio*;
* Respect for the insights of ancient philosophers, in particular Aristotle, and deference to their authority (*auctoritas*);
* The obligation to co-ordinate the insights of philosophy with theological teaching and revelation (*concordia*).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy#cite_note-Gracia2003-4): 3–5

One of the most heavily debated things of the period was that of faith versus reason. [Avicenna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna) and [Averroes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Averroes) both leaned more on the side of reason. [Augustine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) stated that he would never allow his philosophical investigations to go beyond the authority of God.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_philosophy#cite_note-Kretzmann2002-6): 27 [Anselm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm_of_Canterbury) attempted to defend against what he saw as partly an assault on faith, with an approach allowing for both faith and reason. The Augustinian solution to the faith/reason problem is to (1) believe, and then (2) seek to understand (*fides quaerens intellectum*).

**SAINT AUGUSTINE**

**CONFESSIONS-**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)>

***Confessions*** ([Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin): *Confessiones*) is an [autobiographical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography) work by Saint [Augustine of Hippo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo), consisting of 13 books written in Latin between AD 397 and 400.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-1) The work outlines Saint Augustine's conversion to [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity).

*Confessions* is generally considered one of Augustine's most important texts. Professor [Henry Chadwick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Chadwick_(theologian)) wrote that *Confessions* will "always rank among the great masterpieces of western literature."[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-3)

**Summary[**[**edit**](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=1)**]**

The work is not a complete autobiography, but it is a significant theological work, featuring spiritual meditations and insights.

In the work, Augustine writes about how he regrets having led a sinful and immoral life. He discusses his regrets for following the [Manichaean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism) religion and believing in [astrology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology). He writes about his friend [Nebridius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebridius)'s role in helping to persuade him that astrology was not only incorrect but evil, (…) The first nine books are autobiographical and the last four are commentary and significantly more philosophical. The books were written as prayers to God, thus the title, based on the [Psalms of David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms_of_David); and it begins with "For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-Hippo.)2009-4) The work is thought to be divisible into books which symbolize various aspects of the Trinity and trinitarian belief.

Outline (by book)[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=2)]

1. His infancy, and boyhood up to age 14. Starting with his infancy, Saint Augustine reflects on his personal childhood in order to draw universal conclusions about the nature of infancy: the child is inherently violent if left to its own devices because of [Original Sin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_Sin). Later, he reflects on choosing pleasure and reading secular literature over studying Scripture, choices which he later comes to understand as ones for which he deserved the punishment of his teachers, although he did not recognize that during his childhood.

(…)

1. Augustine shifts from personal memories to introspective evaluation of the memories themselves and of the self, as he continues to reflect on the values of confessions, the significance of prayer, and the means through which individuals can reach God. It is through both this last point and his reflection on the body and the soul that he arrives at a justification for the existence of Christ.
2. Augustine analyzes the nature of creation and of time as well as its relation with God. He explores issues surrounding [presentism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical_presentism). He considers that there are three kinds of time in the mind: the present with respect to things that are past, which is the memory; the present with respect to things that are present, which is contemplation; and the present with respect to things that are in the future, which is expectation. He relies on [Genesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Genesis), especially the texts concerning the creation of the sky and the earth, throughout this book to support his thinking.
3. Through his discussion of creation, Augustine relates the nature of the divine and the earthly as part of a thorough analysis of both the rhetoric of Genesis and the plurality of interpretations that one might use to analyze Genesis. Comparing the scriptures to a spring with streams of water spreading over an immense landscape, he considers that there could be more than one true interpretation and each person can draw whatever true conclusions from the texts.
4. He concludes the text by exploring an allegorical interpretation of Genesis, through which he discovers the [Trinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity) and the significance of God's creation of man. Based on his interpretation, he espouses the significance of rest as well as the divinity of Creation: "For, then shalt Thou rest in us, in the same way that Thou workest in us now [...] So, we see these things which Thou hast made, because they exist, but they exist because Thou seest them. We see, externally, that they exist, but internally, that they are good; Thou hast seen them made, in the same place where Thou didst see them as yet to be made."[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-12)

Purpose[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=3)]

*Confessions* was not only meant to encourage conversion, but it offered guidelines for how to convert. Saint Augustine extrapolates from his own experiences to fit others' journeys. Augustine recognizes that God has always protected and guided him. This is reflected in the structure of the work. Augustine begins each book within *Confessions* with a prayer to God. For example, both books VIII and IX begin with "you have broken the chains that bound me; I will sacrifice in your honor."[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-13) Because Augustine begins each book with a prayer, Albert C. Outler, a Professor of Theology at Southern Methodist University, argues that *Confessions* is a "pilgrimage of grace [...] [a] retrac[ing] [of] the crucial turnings of the way by which [Augustine] had come. And since he was sure that it was God's grace that had been his prime mover in that way, it was a spontaneous expression of his heart that cast his self-recollection into the form of a sustained prayer to God."[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-14) Not only does *Confessions* glorify God but it also suggests God’s help in Augustine's path to redemption.

Written after the legalization of Christianity, *Confessions* dated from an era where martyrdom was no longer a threat to most Christians as was the case two centuries earlier. Instead, a Christian's struggles were usually internal. Augustine clearly presents his struggle with worldly desires such as lust. Augustine's conversion was quickly followed by his ordination as a priest in 391 AD and then appointment as bishop in 395 AD. Such rapid ascension certainly raised criticism of Augustine. *Confessions* was written between 397–398 AD, suggesting self-justification as a possible motivation for the work. With the words "I wish to act in truth, making my confession both in my heart before you and in this book before the many who will read it" in Book X Chapter 1,[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-15) Augustine both confesses his sins and glorifies God through humility in His grace, the two meanings that define "confessions",[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-16) in order to reconcile his imperfections not only to his critics but also to God.

Hermeneutics[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=4)]

St. Augustine suggested a method to improve the [Biblical exegesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_exegesis) in presence of particularly difficult passages. Readers shall believe all the Scripture is inspired by God and that each author wrote nothing in which he didn't believe personally, or that he believed to be false. Readers must distinguish philologically, and keep separate, their own interpretations, the written message and the originally intended meaning of the messenger and author (in [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin): *intentio*).[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-hermeneutics,0733-4311_2001-17)

Disagreements may arise "either as to the truth of the message itself or as to the messenger's meaning" (XII.23). The truthfulness of the message itself is granted by God who inspired it to the extensor and who made possible the transmission and spread of the content across centuries and among believers.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-hermeneutics,0733-4311_2001-17)

In principle, the reader isn't capable of ascertaining what the author had in mind when he wrote a biblical book, but he has the duty to do his best to approach that original meaning and intention without contradicting the letter of the written text. The interpretation must stay "within the truth" (XII.25) and not outside it.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-hermeneutics,0733-4311_2001-17)

Audience[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=5)]

Much of the information about Augustine comes directly from his own writing. Augustine's *Confessions* provide significant insight into the first thirty-three years of his life. Augustine does not paint himself as a holy man, but as a sinner. The sins that Augustine confesses are of many different severities and of many different natures, such as lust/adultery, stealing, and lies. For example, in the second chapter of Book IX Augustine references his choice to wait three weeks until the autumn break to leave his position of teaching without causing a disruption. He wrote that some "may say it was sinful of me to allow myself to occupy a chair of lies even for one hour".[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-18) In the introduction to the 1961 translation by R. S. Pine-Coffin he suggests that this harsh interpretation of Augustine's own past is intentional so that his audience sees him as a sinner blessed with God's mercy instead of as a holy figurehead.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-19) Considering the fact that the sins Augustine describes are of a rather common nature (e.g. the theft of pears when a young boy), these examples might also enable the reader to identify with the author and thus make it easier to follow in Augustine's footsteps on his personal road to conversion. This identification is an element of the protreptic and paraenetic character of the *Confessions*.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-20)[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-21)

Due to the nature of *Confessions*, it is clear that Augustine was not only writing for himself but that the work was intended for public consumption. Augustine's potential audience included baptized Christians, catechumens, and those of other faiths. [Peter Brown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Brown_(historian)), in his book *The Body and Society*, writes that *Confessions* targeted "those with similar experience to Augustine's own."[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-22) Furthermore, with his background in Manichean practices, Augustine had a unique connection to those of the Manichean faith. *Confessions* thus constitutes an appeal to encourage conversion.

Legacy[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Confessions_(Augustine)&action=edit&section=6)]

*Confessions* is one of the most influential works in not only the history of Christian theology, but philosophy in general. [Kierkegaard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%B8ren_Kierkegaard) and his [Existentialist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism) philosophy were substantially influenced by Augustine's contemplation of the nature of his soul.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_(Augustine)#cite_note-23)