



Teaching Augustine with Dr. Junius Johnson

Lecture 3: Augustine's *Confessions*, Part II

Confessions: Books VIII-XIII

Augustine's spiritual transformation and theological reflections.

Introduction to Confessions, Part II

- **Overview:**
Focuses on Augustine's struggle with will, desire, and conversion, as well as his theological meditations on creation and memory.
- **Themes:**
 - The internal battle between vice and virtue.
 - The nature of free will, grace, and divine providence.
 - Intellectual and spiritual journey toward God.

Augustine's Struggle and Conversion (Book VIII)

- **The Formation of Vice and Virtue:**
 - Augustine maps the process of free will surrendering to vice.
 - Quote: "The consequence of a distorted will is passion... and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity" (p. 140).
 - Relates to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—formation of dispositions of virtue or vice.
- **Weakness of Will:**
 - Augustine's personal experience of acedia, often translated as "sloth," a spiritual struggle.
 - Famous plea: "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet."
- **Influence of St. Anthony:**



- Augustine's conversion is sparked by reading *The Life of St. Anthony*.
- Dramatic scene in the garden where he experiences his final struggle and conversion ("tolle lege" moment).
- Connections to Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane and the wilderness.

Reflections on Monica's Life and Death (Book IX)

- **Augustine's Loss of His Mother:**
 - Augustine reflects on his mother Monica's faith and influence on his conversion.
 - Prayer at the end of the book invites readers to remember his parents at the altar.
- **Legacy of Faith:**
 - Monica's persistence in prayer and Augustine's eventual embrace of the faith she instilled.
 - Themes of reconciliation with parents and reflection on the human flaws they exhibited.
- **Reflection on Loss and Orphanhood:**
 - Augustine explores the universal experience of losing one's parents.
 - In Roman culture, the loss of parents also represented a significant spiritual and societal shift.

Augustine's Search for God and Memory (Book X)

- **Taking Stock of His Journey:**
 - Augustine reflects on where to place his heart after his mother's death.
 - The introspection suits the moment of losing his last living parent.
- **Creation and Creator:**
 - Augustine asserts that created things declare their own createdness, warning against idolatry.
 - Engages with the concept of the "chain of being" from irrational creation to rational man.
- **Memory and Yearning for Happiness:**
 - Augustine examines how we yearn for the happy life even if we've never fully experienced it.



- Connections to Plato's *Meno* and the myth of Ur in *The Republic*—the concept of recollection and memory.
- **Famous Passage:**
 - “Late have I loved you”—Augustine’s recognition of his misplaced love in created things rather than the Creator.

Metaphysical Reflections on Creation and Time (Books XI-XII)

- **Context for Augustine’s Reflections:**
 - These books explore deeper metaphysical questions about creation, time, and the nature of God.
 - Augustine’s struggles with lust and Manichaeism were linked to his misunderstanding of God’s nature as something material.
- **The Nature of God and Creation:**
 - Once Augustine understood God was not a body, it helped him overcome his sensual desires.
 - His intellectual journey and moral struggles are intertwined, leading to his ultimate conversion in both mind and will.

Resolution and Rest (Book XIII)

- **Intellectual and Spiritual Completion:**
 - Augustine reflects on how his heart, once restless, has found rest in God.
 - His conversion is total—mind, will, and body transformed.
 - **Concluding Reflection:**
 - The *Confessions* ends with Augustine finding security in divine perfection, resting fully in God’s presence.
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