

## Part 1: The Ancient Church (100-500)

### Week 3: St. Augustine of Hippo

“All of 20th century Western theology is a footnote to Augustine’s theology; although he doesn’t answer everything right, he raises the right questions.” (W. Robert Godfrey)

#### An Overview of His Life

1. Born Aurelius Augustinus in 354 in Tagaste, a city near Carthage in North Africa
2. Father: Patricius (wealthy unbeliever); Mother: Monica (devout Christian)
3. Educated in Carthage as a lawyer and rhetorician
4. At age 18 he took a concubine and had a son, Adeodatus (“given by God”)
5. In his late teen years he joined the cult of Manicheanism
  - a. Determinism: all things are determined absolutely, nothing can be changed
  - b. Dualism: reality and history is the outworking of good and evil, between the sons of light and sons of darkness.
    - i. Two classes of Christians: (1) the higher class led an ascetic life, but for (2) second class Manicheians, you can live a more lax life.
6. In 383 met Faustus, the leading Manicheian, and asked many questions, which could not be answered. Augustine left and became skeptical.
7. In 384 traveled to Rome to teach rhetoric, which was crucial to the legal and political processes at the time; while there went to Milan to hear the preaching of Ambrose
8. Monica came to Rome to live with Augustine, his concubine, and his son; his mother wanted him to stop living in sin; this is when he prayed, “Give me chastity, but not yet” and took another concubine
9. Eventually met a man who told him of Athanasius’ book *The Life of St. Anthony*, which is about Anthony the desert monk; Augustine was humbled as the book detailed two men who had given up a life in the military (and all that entailed in terms of living in sin) for a monastery, but he was unable to give up his lust
10. Soon after he was in his garden at home reading *The Life of St. Anthony* and heard the words of a child outside, saying, “Take up and read, take up and read” (Latin, *tolle lege, tolle lege*); the first words he turned to in the Bible were Romans 13:11-14 and was converted in 386
11. After he stopped living with his concubine and he and his son (now age 17) were catechized and baptized
12. He returned to N. Africa and in 389 was ordained a presbyter; in 395 assistant bishop of Hippo, and in 396 bishop of Hippo
13. Died in 430 in Hippo as it was surrounded by the Vandal barbarians

#### Writings

1. *The Confessions*
  - a. Spiritual autobiography filled with prayers, a confession of his faith, and apologetics for his faith
  - b. Book 1, Chapter 1  
“Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and infinite is thy wisdom.” And man desires to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation; he bears his mortality about with him and carries the evidence of his sin and the proof that thou dost resist the proud. Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee. Grant me, O Lord, to know and understand whether first to invoke thee or to praise thee; whether first to know thee or call upon thee. But who can invoke thee, knowing thee not? For he who knows thee not may invoke thee as another than thou art. It may be that we should invoke thee in order that we may come to know thee. But “how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe without a preacher?” Now, “they shall praise the Lord who seek him,” for “those who seek shall find him,” and, finding him, shall praise him. I will

seek thee, O Lord, and call upon thee. I call upon thee, O Lord, in my faith which thou hast given me, which thou hast inspired in me through the humanity of thy Son, and through the ministry of thy preacher.

2. *The City of God*

- a. Christian philosophy of history; written after Rome was invaded by Alaric the Goth in 410
- b. Pagan reaction to Rome's downfall: a great shock as Rome had never been successfully attacked and because it was assumed Rome would always be the predominant power in the world. One writer said Christianity was destroying the Empire.
- c. Christian reaction: how could God let this happen? At the very moment that it seems that the Empire has become Christian, what is God doing? Perhaps even more profoundly, the question was, "Will Christianity survive if the Roman Empire doesn't survive?" "Will the collapse of the Empire mean the collapse of Christianity?"
- d. Augustine worked on it from 413 to 426 AD. Books 1-10 are a polemic reply to pagan challenges to Christianity. Books 11-22 are about the nature of human history. There are two cities: he said that to understand the city of God, we have to look at the city of this world.
- e. The origin of the eternal city: Originally, mankind was created united. But with the entrance of sin into the world you have good and evil fighting each other, its icons are Cain and Abel. The two cities are built by two different kinds of love. The city of God is built by the love of God that is even to the contempt of the self, and this world is built by the love of self even to the contempt of God. The city of God type is Jerusalem, and Babylon is the type of the city of this world. These two cities will ultimately be separated and judged; the evil and good angels are already separated; at return of Christ, this world will be divided into two cities; but now, in the present, these two cities are mingled together, and the progress of these two cities are often indistinguishable to the eyes of man, but always distinguishable to the eye of God. And this is the ambiguity, this is the difficulty of living in the present world, and this is why this idea of Augustine is called the Amillennial view of history, the idea that wheat and the weed grow out together.

3. *On the Trinity*

- a. Expresses the full equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; no subordinationism; gives the illustration that the Father is the lover, the Son the beloved, and the Holy the Spirit the bond of love.
- b. Related the Holy Spirit directly to the Father *and* the Son