



Biblical Interpretation: Martin Luther's Commentary on Genesis / The Confessions of Saint Augustine

St. Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther

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Augustine St. Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther

Martin Luther, theologian and founder of Lutheranism (November 10, 1483 – February 18, 1546) changed the course of Western civilization by initiating the Protestant Reformation. As a priest and theology professor, he confronted indulgence salesmen with his 95 Theses in 1517. Luther strongly disputed their claim that freedom from God's punishment of sin could be purchased with money. His refusal to retract all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms meeting in 1521 resulted in his excommunication by the pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the emperor.

Luther taught that salvation is a free gift of God and received only by grace through faith in Jesus as redeemer from sin, not from good works. His theology challenged the authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge and opposed sacerdotalism by considering all baptized Christians to be a holy priesthood. Those that identify with Luther's teachings are called Lutherans.

His translation of the Bible into the language of the people (instead of Latin) made it more accessible, causing a tremendous impact on the church and on German culture. It fostered the development of a standard version of the German language, added several principles to the art of translation, and influenced the translation into English of the King James Bible. His hymns inspired the development of singing in churches. His marriage to Katharina von Bora set a model for the practice of clerical marriage, allowing Protestant priests to marry.

Confessions of Saint Augustine is the name of an autobiographical work, consisting of 13 books, by St. Augustine of Hippo, written between AD 397 and AD 398. Modern English translations of it are sometimes published under the title *The Confessions of St. Augustine* in order to distinguish the book from other books with similar titles, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*.

The work outlines Augustine's sinful youth and his conversion to Christianity. It is widely seen as the first Western autobiography ever written, and was an influential model for Christian writers throughout the following 1000 years of the Middle Ages. It is not a complete autobiography, as it was written in his early 40s, and he lived long afterwards, producing another important work (*City of God*); it does, nonetheless, provide an unbroken record of his development of thought and is the most complete record of any single individual from the 4th and 5th centuries. It is a significant theological work. In the work St. Augustine writes about how much he regrets having led a sinful and immoral life. He discusses his regrets for following the Manichaean religion and believing in astrology. He writes about Nebridius's role in helping to persuade him that astrology was not only incorrect but evil, and St. Ambrose's role in his conversion to Christianity. He shows intense sorrow for his sexual sins, and writes on the importance of sexual morality. He also mentions that his favorite subject in school was mathematics because it was concrete and more rigorously defined than other subjects. The book is thought to be divisible into chapters which symbolize various aspects of the Trinity and trinitarian belief.

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