

**THE CONFESSIONS
OF S. AUGUSTINE:
BOOKS I TO X**

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The Confessions of S. Augustine: Books I to X by Augustine

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AUGUSTINE

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The Confessions of S. Augustine

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1882
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The Confessions
of S. Augustine
Books I to X *ss*



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To the
VENERABLE BROUGH MALTBY,
ARCHDEACON OF NOTTINGHAM,
AS TO ONE WHO KNOWS MANY BOOKS
AND LOVES THEM,
AND SEEKS THE BEST BOTH OF
OLD AND NEW,
THIS LIBRARY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN
THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE
Is Respectfully Inscribed
BY HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,
MINDFUL OF MANY KINDNESSES,
THE EDITOR.

Michaelmas, 1886.

57 X 16



P R E F A C E.

SAIN'T AUGUSTINE, the "Doctor of Grace," was born in the year 354, at Thagaste in Numidia, and the incidents of his early life up to the thirty-third year of his age form much of the matter of this book. After his conversion, upon the interruption of his journey to Africa by his mother's death, which is recorded in the ninth book of the "Confessions," he turned back for a while to Rome, but returned to Thagaste about the year 390, where for some time he lived a retired life in community with some of his friends. At length, though very reluctantly, thinking that the excesses of his youth were a disqualification for holding office in the Church, in obedience to the great desire of Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, and the Christian Church in that place, he consented to be ordained to the priesthood, and was soon raised to the Episcopate as coadjutor with Valerius, at whose death he succeeded to the Bishopric.

The three great heresies of the Manichæans, Arians, and Pelagians, and the Donatist schism, during the life-time of S. Augustine, menaced the Catholic Faith: of his association with the Manichæan heresy, Books III. to VIII. of the "Confessions" contain the record. Upon his conversion he became a most stout and valued champion of the Catholic Faith, and had the happiness of seeing the Donatist sect almost entirely reabsorbed within the Church, and the Pelagian heresy utterly discredited.

The "Confessions" of S. Augustine are exceedingly interesting in the picture they present to us of the Church in the fourth century, surrounded with paganism and heresy; in conflict with both, as also with the moral degradation which marks the decay of the Roman Empire. Clearly manifest is the fact that "She was indeed the Salt of the earth," which but for her must have continued to wallow in corruption. The life which she at that time demanded of her "Faithful" members was strict, severe, and ascetic; and to the calm contentment of such a life were drawn those who were wearied with the turmoil and restless activity which belonged to the secular life, with the pleasures and pursuits of that day. It may possibly have been in danger of becoming not only "not of the world," but almost "not in the world." Verecundus, for example, long delays his conversion, because he was a married man, and the ascetic celibate life of the Church, which thus was rendered impossible for him, was what most attracted him; and if he could not be a Christian of that type, he would not, he thought, become a Christian at all. The fruit of this teaching and practice, in souls such as that of S. Augustine, was an entire renunciation of the joys of the world, and a complete absorption in the religious life.

The temperament of the Saint was ardent, affectionate, and excitable. Whether in early youth he is led by desire of his companions' praise to rob a neighbour's orchard, or records the desolation of soul caused by the death of a friend, whether later he dwells on the characters of Alypius and Nebridius, or that of Adeodatus, the son of his sin, or whether it is his converse with Monica his mother, and her loving and tender care of him, or his sorrow for her death, that is his theme, he reveals himself as a loving-hearted man, to whom

friendship and fellowship were absolutely essential, and one in whom was no trace of paltry personal feeling. The style of the "Confessions" bears many traces of his training in rhetoric. It is often epigrammatic, and in a stately and untranslatable way he plays on the sound of words, and balances them with extraordinary care. His familiarity with and common use of Scripture is remarkable. His mind was thoroughly steeped in it, and its phrases had become so much a part of his vocabulary that they are of constant recurrence in his writings. The piety of his purpose, which does not shrink from unveiling the darkest recesses of his soul, cannot save the book in parts from being terrible. The long struggle between his higher spiritual impulses and his lower carnal habits; the way in which his moral character and conduct act and react upon his mental clearness of vision, and his state of religious doubt; these things are set forth in a manner which cannot fail to awaken deep interest, and to manifest the intimate connection between moral habit and right faith. To the Agnostic of the nineteenth century the "Confessions of S. Augustine" are a warning; while the complete satisfaction and rest which his keen and cultured intellect, after at the prompting of his lower nature it had subtly sought many respites from a faith which demanded a purer life than he was prepared to live, found at length in the Creed of the "Catholic Mother," may suffice to convince that the Religion of Christ has in it depths which can afford to the most logical and scientific minds a peace which will elsewhere be sought in vain.

The translation is revised, and the issue of this edition is made in the hope that the self-humiliation of S. Augustine, in so baring his inmost soul to the criticism of a gainsaying