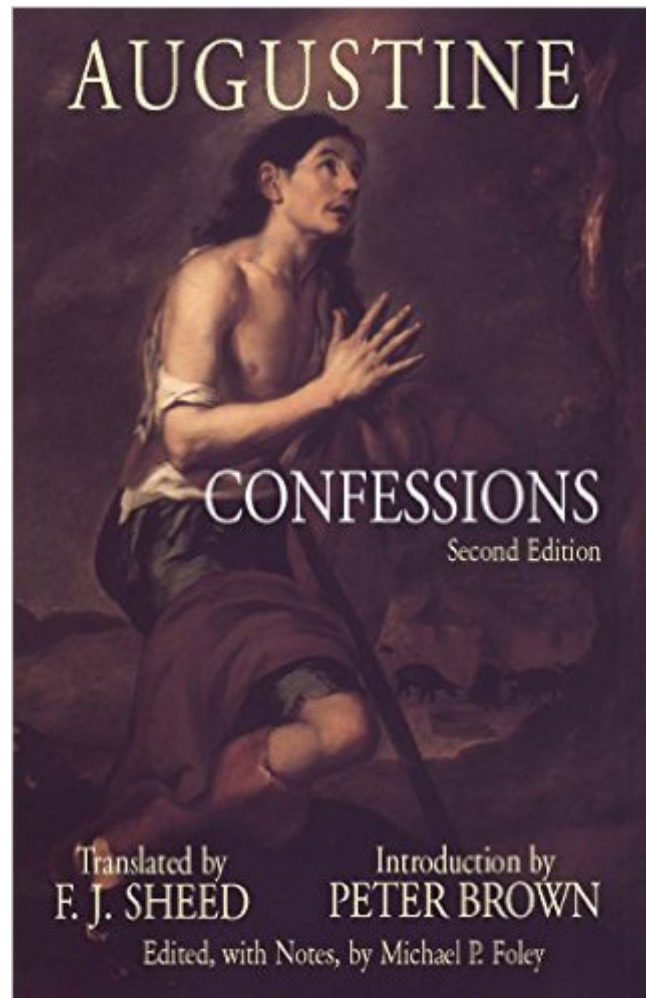


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Confessions



Synopsis

Like the first Hackett edition of the Augustine's Confessions, the second edition features F. J. Sheed's remarkable translation of this classic spiritual autobiography with an Introduction by noted historian of late antiquity Peter Brown. New to this edition are a wealth of notes on literary, philosophical, biblical, historical, and liturgical topics by Michael P. Foley, an Editor's Preface, a map, a timeline, paragraph numbers in the text, a glossary, and a thorough index. The text itself has been completely reset, with textual and explanatory notes placed at the foot of the page for easy reference.

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Customer Reviews

Sheed's translation of this classic of Western and Christian culture is truly beautiful. He went beyond presenting an accurate translation; beyond a clear translation. He gave us a translation that is accurate, clear, and sonorous. The footnotes, introductions (one by famous Augustine scholar Peter Brown), and index make this a solid scholarly edition. This is a translation I will reread often.

Confessions essentially is a story of one man's spiritual journey from a life of sin (self-centered) to a life of faith (God-centered). It is simultaneously a personal narrative where Augustine of Hippo describes his quest from humble beginnings in North Africa to a position of authority in first century Milan, Italy. The reader is invited to join Augustine as he battles with his own war with sin and the different ideologies of the time, starting from youth and proceeding well

into adulthood. Augustine begins as a true skeptic, raises a multitude of doubts about the Christian faith, and then systematically uses scientific, philosophical (he even draws up the ancient Greek philosophers), religious, and logical arguments to debunk alternative theories and finally reach the overriding conclusion that there is only one truth and that truth is found in God. Confessions ends up being love letter written by one man to his Creator. One of the biggest highlights in Confessions is Augustine's formulation of original sin, or an act of free will rooted in a misdirection toward serving the self and not God and subsequently that act is what degraded and corrupted the will for all of humankind. Adam and Eve had fallen away from God, and sin was thus birthed into humanity, inescapably tainting each and every one of us with a corrupted will, a sinful nature, and an evil disposition. Augustine postulates that without God, we are free only to sin, and only with God are we free not to sin. Prior to the fall of man, Adam remained wholly good, and he had the power to do either good or evil. He unfortunately chose the latter. Augustine emphasized that the original sin was grounded in conceit and that human pride is the root of all sin. Arguably, Augustine is the most influential theologian of all-time and his ideology can be seen in the works of other great titans of Christian thought such as Luther, Calvin, and Niebuhr. Everyone should read this book, and if you are involved in any form of Christian ministry, you absolutely must read this book—it will change how you view and interact with the world.

There is no need to discuss the mercy, wisdom and beauty of Augustine's "Confessions", a classic treatise on the human condition, the source of sorrows and joys. Having read several translations with my favorite being worn out, I replaced it with this translation hoping for the best. The translation exceeded my expectations bringing me new and fresher understanding of Augustine's theological thoughts and my own situation. I am a simple lay person, not scholarly; I know there is much more to be gleaned from this wonderful translation and will keep at it. What I especially enjoyed are the footnotes that refer the reader to the scriptures that reflect Augustine's words, fleshing out a deeper, more practical meaning to the scriptures contextualized with everyday life. This is the area I want to follow up more thoroughly and diligently. The book binding is good for me as the inner margin seems slightly bigger than most paperback books easing the usual tendency of having to read on the curve of a book. A silly little thing that makes reflective reading better somehow. I agree with the translators decisions to keep some of the "Thee's" and "Thou's" to convey Augustine's use of the words when they express his personal intimacy with God as distinguished from generalized concepts of God. They draw me in to greater reverence and understanding.

This is an extremely welcome second edition of F.J. Sheed's 1943 translation, which is both close to the original in wording and style (unlike, say, the Chadwick or the Pinecoffin translations) and yet a fine piece of English (unlike the 19th-century translations I have seen). This new edition has several advantages over the original edition: very few changes have been made to the text, but it includes both sets of chapter numbers (the omission of one set in Sheed was a major drawback), useful notes and index, and a magisterial introduction by Peter Brown, the 'doyen' of Augustine and late antique studies in the English-speaking world. This is surely the best English edition of the work to date. A case could have been made, however, for a little more revision. Sheed found himself in difficulties over the constant addresses to God in the work -- should one use the traditional second person singular ('Thou') or the normal modern idiom ('You')? Sheed decided to use 'Thou' in more obviously prayer-like contexts, and 'You' in more discursive ones. But now that 'You' is generally used in modern liturgy it would surely be better to use 'You' throughout this text -- rather than introducing a distinction that is totally absent from the Latin.

I had started reading a copy of the Confessions before hurricane Katrina. I lost the book, along with everything else I owned. I found that book a difficult read, but was determined to finish it. I don't remember who translated my original book, but I decided to try again and ordered a copy from . The translation by F.J. Sheed made a startling difference. The text has a beautiful poetic flow to it. I am thoroughly enjoying it and have told friends to order a copy.

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