

The Cleansing Power of Love: How Augustine's Confessions and Dante's Inferno Exemplify What Love Can Accomplish

Abstract

- Augustine's *Confessions* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* both narrate conversion stories that parallel each other in that both characters begin in a state where little love is present and progress toward a state where love is the center of their being.
- In *Confessions*, Augustine lived a life of sin until he felt a call from God and converted to Catholicism.
- In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante progresses through the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso, ending in heaven where the grand power of love is revealed that all who open their hearts have access to in Paradiso.
- Augustine's *Confessions* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* both illuminate what love can accomplish by exemplifying how love frees all who are open to it from sin.

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Hypothesis

By defining love and analyzing Augustine and Dante's stories before and after conversion, Augustine's *Confessions* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* both illuminate what love can accomplish by exemplifying how love frees all who are open to it from sin.

Augustine's Conversion

- Prior to Conversion
- "At this stage of my life" "what miseries I experienced" (Augustine 11)
- After Conversion
- "You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours (Augustine 201)

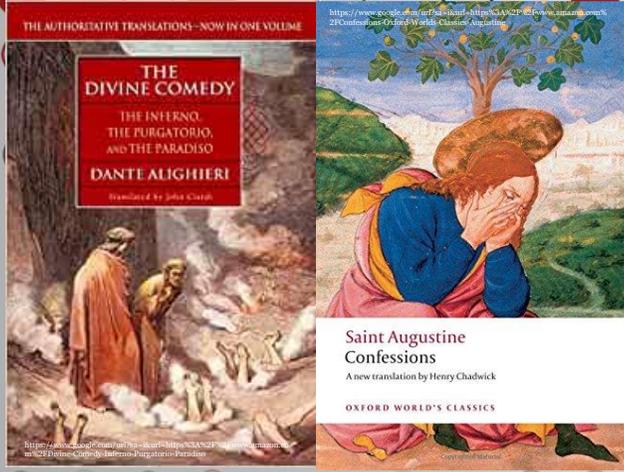


Dante's Conversion

- Prior to Conversion
- "I am the way into the doleful city, I am the way into eternal grief" (Dante 14)
- After Conversion
- "At this point power failed high fantasy but, like a wheel in perfect balance turning, I felt my will and my desire impelled by the Love that moves the sun and other stars" (Dante 585)

Definition of Salvific Love

- Augustine
- "The love which makes them good people tells them that I am not lying in confessing about myself, and the love in them believes me" (Augustine 179)
- Dante
- Beatrice – sent by Saint Lucia who was sent by the Virgin Mary due to her intercession on behalf of Dante in order to "help the one whose love was such it made him leave the vulgar crowd for you" (Dante 12)



References

Augustine. *Confessions*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
 Dante. *The Portable Dante*. Edited by Mark Musa, Penguin Books, 2003.

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