



BOOK I: Augustine's Invocation of God

Confessions 1.1.1 - 1.5.6; Boulding Translation, p. 14



Passage Summary

Augustine opens with an invocation of God, revealing his unquiet heart, and raising a central paradox in the act of confession: do we call upon God in order to know God, or must we know God before we can call God?



App Integrations

- Digital Highlighting & Annotation
- Synchronized Audio



Learning Objectives

- Analysis and discussion
- Listening comprehension
- Close reading of primary texts



Further Connections

Confessions: Augustine's account of his "unquiet heart" reverberates across Confessions, but really takes off at the opening to Book III. His question "Where is God?" is also ongoing, and becomes entangled in the problem of evil from Book III to Book VII. Books X-XIII develop the notion of a dispersed and gathered self.

Augustine and Culture: Genesis 1 gives the account of heaven and earth with God as Creator; The Psalms capture the tone and rhythm of Augustine's confession, as does the Book of Job; the unquiet heart echoes Eros in Plato's Symposium; Hobbes' Leviathan develops and extends the unquiet heart, stripping it of its God-dimension.

In-App Commentaries: Paul Kolbet (1) addresses the idea of the "unquiet heart" (or restless heart) and how this invites the reader to discover the same; Fr. Allan Fitzgerald (2) relates the opening to the end of Confessions, noting the parallel emphasis on Genesis and creation; Fr. Fitzgerald (3) also emphasizes that this opening is a prayer, not just a litany of biblical quotes (or "proof-texting").



Out-Of-Class Assignment Suggestions

- Read Augustine's opening invocation in Book 1 (1.1-5.6)
- Using the App Highlight feature, highlight the opening question(s) to each of the paragraphs starting with the second paragraph (1.1).
- Using the App Annotation feature, summarize in one sentence the main question Augustine is asking. Try to look for a pattern or progression.



In-Class Assignment Suggestions

- Invite students to read out loud the opening paragraph (1.1).
- Ask students to consider the tone of Augustine's voice: how he is presenting this, with what feeling he approaches his "confessions," etc.
- You may also want to point out Augustine's use of Scripture. What does this say about his method? (Cf. Commentaries #4 and #5).
- Play the audio file of the invocation (1.1).
- After listening to the audio, ask students what stood out to them.
- Consider the problems with invocation. Invite students to list the questions Augustine asks about God, himself, and his confession.
- Discuss why Augustine asks so many questions. Does he answer those questions? Does he expect to answer them? Are these questions a part of "confession" or preparation for it? If God knows everything already, what is the point of confessing and questioning? (Cf. Commentary #4).