

Augustine, *Confessions* (c. 400 AD): Philosophies and Religions

References to footnotes and page numbers refer to the Henry Chadwick translation.

Christianity: the faith of followers of Jesus Christ, including the teaching that Christ is both fully God (a member of the **Trinity**) and fully human (**incarnate**).

- The central tenets of Christianity, according to the Apostle Paul, are Christ's death for the sins of humanity, Christ's resurrection from death to life, and the promise of salvation and resurrection for Christ's followers (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 15:16-22; Romans 10:9-10).
- (See *Manichaeism vs. Christianity* handout for more detail.)

catholic (Greek *katholikos*, "universal"): describes the whole Christian church consisting of all Christians throughout the world, as opposed to a specific local church.

- This does *not* refer to a separate denomination. The Roman Catholic church and the Eastern Orthodox church did not split until 1054 AD (centuries after Augustine), and the Roman Catholic church and Protestant church did not begin to split until 1517 AD (more than a thousand years after Augustine).

orthodox (Greek *orthodoxos*, "right opinion"): describes the **doctrine** (Latin *doctrina*, "teaching") accepted by the universal church (as defined by Christian churches, councils, and creeds), and excludes beliefs the universal church has rejected; rejected beliefs are described as **heterodox** (Greek *heterodoxos*, "other opinion") or referred to as **heresy** (Greek *hairesis*, "sect").

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Manichaeism: the religion of followers of the Iranian prophet Mani (c. 216-276), including a belief in **dualism**, a conflict between light/good and darkness/evil, entities which are similar in substance and status (for example, the good entity did not create the evil entity). (See *Manichaeism vs. Christianity* for more detail.)

astrology: using the stars to predict a person's future (horoscopes); Augustine comes to reject astrology for two reasons: (1) because astrological predictions are not reliable: they are only occasionally right by chance, and (2) if the stars controlled our actions, we would not be responsible for our sins and could not repent of them as God commands (*Confessions* IV.iii.4, VII.vi.8; pages 54, 116-117).

- Note: Augustine does not actually use the word *astrologia* (from the Greek for "study of stars"); the word he uses for astrologers is *mathematici*, which can also mean "mathematicians."

Academics: philosophers named for Plato's Academy, who teach that "an understanding of the truth lies beyond human capacity," although Augustine suspects they secretly believe something else (*Confessions* V.x.19; page 84, also see footnote).

Platonism, Neoplatonism: philosophy adapted from Plato (c. 424–347 BC).

- Augustine reads works by Plotinus (c. 204–270 AD) and Porphyry (c. 234 – c. 305 AD).
- Augustine says Platonism shares many important ideas with Christianity, but also lacks many key Christian ideas, and as a non-Christian philosophy leads to pride (*Confessions* VII.ix.13-14; pages 121-122). The footnotes in our edition note many ideas which Augustine takes from these philosophers.
- "**the One**": an idea in Plotinus equivalent to Plato's idea of "the Good" in the *Republic* (see footnotes).

Epicureanism: philosophy of Epicurus (341–270 BC); belief that the gods do not interact with the material world and that there is no afterlife. Augustine considers this philosophy but decides he believes in an afterlife (*Confessions* VI.xvi.26; pages 109-110).

Arianism: heretical teaching of Arius (c. 256–336 AD), who taught that Christ had not always existed and was not divine in the way that God the Father was divine. The Christian Council of Nicaea (325 AD) rejected this teaching. Augustine mentions the Arian empress Justina, who persecuted Christians (*Confessions* IX.vii.15; pages 164-165).