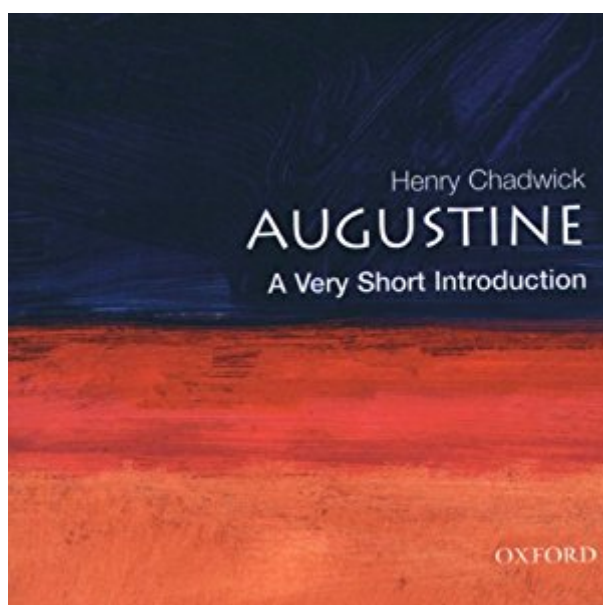


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Augustine: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

By his writings, the surviving bulk of which exceeds that of any other ancient author, Augustine came to influence not only his contemporaries but also the West since his time. This Very Short Introduction traces the development of Augustine's thought, discussing his reaction to the thinkers before him, and themes such as freedom, creation, and the trinity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This compact book is perfect. It provides just the right background information, from influences of people who lived before St. Augustine to influences of his modern world, as well as lots of other information about the early Christian era & pagan dissidents, numerous similar & conflicting spiritual beliefs -- without getting boring by losing focus on the topic, Augustine, or by focusing on him too much which would mean omitting information about the strata he found his place in. It offers a great framework of biographical information which sheds much light on Augustine's works. It also, significantly, contains brilliant scholarly summaries & explanations & assessments of many of Augustine's beliefs without becoming subjective or dry ever. I recommend this as compulsory background reading for anyone interested in mysticism, medieval history, philosophy, saints, or especially Augustine himself.

Firstly, it should be noted that this book is not 895 pages! It is, in actuality, 144 pages - and it is a detailed 144 pages, too. This is actually the first book I ever read that got me interested in the

thought of the early Church Fathers and it is a great introduction to St. Augustine. (The entire series is great, actually.) Although this book is only a sketch, it provides some really helpful information when it comes to issues such as the Pelagian controversy and Augustine's views on Original Sin. It is interesting to note that although Augustine is held in such high regard by many today, his own ideas were sometimes reviled and considered heretical in his own time. Of course, it is also worth noting that Augustine's ideas are oftentimes completely misunderstood today; people sometimes force later developments onto Augustine. Due to his continuing controversy - and the man is one of the more controversial orthodox thinkers in the history of the Christian Church - this book is worth reading. For those interested in further reading, the suggested readings in the back are a great place to start (I myself just picked up Peter Brown's autobiography on Augustine). For those who have no desire to become scholars on Augustine, however, this "very short introduction" is a very fine introduction as well. It is a great place to start.

Man, I wish I had these books when I was in school. It's not an in-depth review of all of Augustine's thought & writings, but it's amazing how much is packed into this little book (it will literally fit into your shirt pocket). The book will give you a great layman's introduction to Augustine, and you can be sure to impress anyone should your conversation turn towards the topic. Recommended for the layman, just don't use it to prepare for debates with religious scholars :-)

This book was an absolute pleasure to read. Henry Chadwick's erudition is evident in his writing, but his style keeps the reading highly enjoyable. Anyone should be able to sit down with this book and read it in a matter of hours enjoying every minute of it. This is not a biography of Augustine's life as much as a biography of Augustine's thought. It traces the development of his thought in neoplatonism and his reliance upon Plotinus in particular, his time as a follower, but later opponent against Manicheism and his prolonged arguments against Donatism. The book is not comprehensive, but gives brief introductions to Augustine's thoughts on Creation, Trinity, Politics, Sacerdotalism, and a few other topics and shows how they developed through his life and ministry. I highly recommend this short volume and would suggest that it would be a perfect read for a short introduction to Augustine at an undergraduate level.

A country-boy-come-to-town who tries to make his mark on secular society while enjoying himself as much as possible winds up an ascetic philosopher/theologian who shapes the course of Western thought for the next several centuries. A profound thinker with a talent for poetic prose, St.

Augustine was a prolific writer. More of his writings survive than of any other ancient author. The book is small, but don't let the size fool you--the typeface is also small. Chadwick crams more information onto fewer pages than you could think possible. The typeface and the dense content lend themselves to a rather tedious reading experience, but the reward is well worth the effort. Augustine's thought is placed in the context of contemporary society, and the reader learns of the little-known Manichee and Donatist heresies. The way the ancient Church dealt with the Donatist heresy stands in stark contrast to the way the medieval Church dealt with heretics. Chadwick, of course, discusses the "Confessions" and "The City of God," but he does not neglect Augustine's other writings, taking pains to point out how indebted Augustine was to the Old Testament and the Classical authors (Cicero in particular) for his language, but not his ideas. It is ironic that Cicero, such a mediocre philosopher, had such a profound effect on St. Augustine, such a towering figure in the fields of philosophy and religion.

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