



# Augustine in His Own Words

*William Harmless*

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Few thinkers have shaped Western civilization more powerfully than St. Augustine (354-430). This volume offers a comprehensive portrait—or rather, self-portrait, since its words are mostly Augustine's own—drawn from the breadth of his writings and from the long course of his career. One chapter is devoted to each of his masterpieces (*Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, and *City of God*) and one to each of his best-known controversies (against Manichees, Donatists, and Pelagians). It also explores the often overlooked facets of his career, namely, his everyday work as a bishop, preacher, and interpreter of the Bible.

Augustine was an extraordinarily prolific writer, and his eloquent long-windedness can prove overwhelming not only to newcomers, but even to experts. Few know what to read first or how best to read him in context, given the complex and dauntingly remote world of Late Antiquity. This collection is designed to help readers not only to sort through his vast corpus of writings but also to tune their ears to the melodies of his speech and the swirl of his mind. What catches our ear today, as it caught the ear of Augustine's first hearers, is the heart beneath the voice, his uncanny ability to speak across the centuries, heart to heart, his heart to ours. His was an agitated eloquence, and he used it to ponder and wrestle aloud with life's mysteries, both those glimpsed in the epic of human history and those astir in the depths of the human heart. But Augustine's center and passion was another far greater mystery, the God he met in the Bible and in his heart.

This book is an introduction, intended for first-time readers. It brings together state-of-the-art scholarship, lucid translations, and a judicious selection of readings, including excerpts from newly discovered letters and sermons as well as from hard-to-find translations of his often formidable opponents.

## ABOUT THE EDITOR:

William Harmless, S.J., is professor of historical theology and patristic studies at Creighton University. He is the author of *Mystics*, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* and *Augustine and the Catechumenate*. His research on Augustine and early monasticism has appeared in numerous journals including *Augustinian Studies*, *Theological Studies*, *Church History*, and *Studia Patristica*.

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:

"An extraordinary introduction to Augustine. The chapters on Augustine as bishop, preacher, and exegete set the controversial and doctrinal writings on the foundations of Augustine's daily practice of theology. William Harmless's own skill as an educator is worthy of his subject."—J. Patout Burns, Edward A. Malloy Professor

of Catholic Studies, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

"A guided tour through some of the most pertinent and expressive texts of Augustine. Harmless takes the reader on a journey that is thoughtfully planned, fascinating in its breadth and ample detail, and 'sure-footed' in its discerning comments about the man, his time, thought, and love."?Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., Director of the Augustinian Institute at Villanova University

"One of the best things to happen in Augustine scholarship in decades. No better guide than Harmless could be found to lead the reader through the profound depths and awe-inspiring heights of Augustine's works and thought. It will become the indispensable companion for any course on Augustine and the first resource for anyone who wants to find out what Augustine has to say, in his own words."?Carol Harrison, Professor of Theology, Durham University

"A splendid text. . . . The list of Augustine's works and translations, the chronology of his life, and the select bibliography on the various aspects of his life and work are precisely what a young student needs and older scholars will appreciate."?Roland Teske, Donald J. Schuenke

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