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## EVIL AND THE AUGUSTINIAN TRADITION

Recent scholarship has focused attention on the difficulties that evil, suffering, and tragic conflict present to religious belief and moral life. Thinkers have drawn upon many important historical figures, with one significant exception – Augustine. At the same time, there has been a renaissance of work on Augustine, but little discussion of either his work on evil or his influence on contemporary thought.

This book fills these gaps. It explores the “family biography” of the Augustinian tradition by looking at Augustine’s work and its development in the writings of Hannah Arendt and Reinhold Niebuhr. Mathewes argues that the Augustinian tradition offers us a powerful, though commonly misconstrued, proposal for understanding and responding to evil’s challenges. The book casts new light on Augustine, Niebuhr, and Arendt, as well as on the problem of evil, the nature of tradition, and the role of theological and ethical discourse in contemporary thought.

CHARLES T. MATHEWES is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where he teaches theology, ethics, and religion and culture. He has published in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Modern Theology*, *The Journal of Religion*, *Anglican Theological Review*, and *The Hedgehog Review*.

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CHARLES T. MATHEWES

*Department of Religious Studies  
University of Virginia*



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Henry Hill Mathewes  
January 1, 1930 – July 14, 1996

*imus autem non ambulando sed amando*  
St. Augustine, *Epistula*, 155.4

Ουκουν, εφη, εγω . . . των γε σων κληρονομος;  
Plato, *Republic* 1.331d.8

. . . Indeed some of these new writers, at the same time that they have represented the doctrines of these ancient and eminent divines, as in the highest degree ridiculous, and contrary to common sense, in an ostentation of a very generous charity, have allowed that they were honest well-meaning men: yea, it may be some of them, as though it were in great condescension and compassion to them, have allowed that they did pretty well for the day which they lived in, and considering the great disadvantages they labored under: when at the same time, their manner of speaking has naturally and plainly suggested to the minds of their readers, that they were persons, who through the lowness of their genius, and greatness of their bigotry, with which their minds were shackled, and thoughts confined, living in the gloomy caves of superstition, fondly embraced, and demurely and zealously taught the most absurd, silly, and monstrous opinions, worthy of the greatest contempt of gentlemen possessed of that noble and generous freedom of thought, which happily prevails in this age of light and inquiry. When indeed such is the case, that we might, if so disposed, speak as big words as they, and on far better grounds . . .

Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will*

The generally accepted view teaches  
 That there was no excuse,  
 Though in the light of recent researches  
 Many would find the cause

In a not uncommon form of terror;  
 Others, still more astute,  
 Point to possibilities of error  
 At the very start.

W. H. Auden

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Charlottesville, Virginia  
*August 28, 2000*  
*Feast Day of Saint Augustine*

## *Abbreviations*

<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>DCD</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>DDC</i>	<i>De doctrina Christiana</i>
<i>DeMor.</i>	<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</i>
<i>DeMus.</i>	<i>De musica</i>
<i>DLA</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>De natura boni contra Manichaeos</i>
<i>DUC</i>	<i>De utilitate credendi</i>
<i>DVR</i>	<i>De vera religione</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>IoEp.</i>	<i>Tractatus in epistolam Iohannis,</i>
<i>OpImp.</i>	<i>Contra Julianum opus imperfectum</i>
<i>QAS</i>	<i>De quaestionibus ad Simplicianum</i>
<i>Retr.</i>	<i>Retractationes</i>
<i>Sermo</i>	<i>Sermones</i>