

Augustine on the Nature of Virtue and Sin

Augustine of Hippo is a key figure in the history of Christianity and has had a profound impact on the course of western moral and political thought. Katherine Chambers here explores an important topic in Augustinian studies by offering a systematic account of the meaning that Augustine gave to the notions of virtue, vice, and sin. Countering the view that he broke with classical eudaimonism, she demonstrates that Augustine's moral thought builds on the dominant approach to ethics in classical 'pagan' antiquity. A critical appraisal of this tradition reveals that Augustine remained faithful to the eudaimonist approach to ethics. Chambers also refutes the view that Augustine was a political pessimist or realist, showing that it is based upon a misunderstanding of Augustine's ideas about the virtue of justice. Providing a coherent account of key features in Augustine's ethics, her study invites a new and fresh evaluation of his influence on western moral and political thought.

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Pam and Ross Chambers

François

Abigail, Christian, and Elsa

“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.”
(Psalm 51:15)

A Note on Translations and Abbreviations

There is no shortage of excellent English translations of Augustine’s texts. I have usually followed existing translations, preferring to use the most literal, even if this means using an older translation with more archaic language. When using the translations of Augustine’s works found in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* series (ed. Philip Schaff) I have updated some pronouns such as “thou.” I have also consistently changed “righteous” and “righteousness” (Latin, *iustus* and *iustitia*) to “just” and “justice.” This is to allow for a clearer philosophical and philological analysis of the text.

I have followed the format for abbreviating the titles of Augustine’s writings found in Allan Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. xxxv–xlii.

<i>B. Vita</i>	<i>De Beata Vita</i> (On the Happy Life)
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>De Baptismo</i> (On Baptism)
<i>C. Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i> (Against the Skeptics)
<i>C. Ep. Pel.</i>	<i>Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum</i> (Against Two Letters of the Pelagians)
<i>C. Faust.</i>	<i>Contra Faustum Manicheum</i> (Against Faustus, a Manichee)
<i>C. Jul.</i>	<i>Contra Julianum</i> (Against Julian)
<i>C. Jul. Imp.</i>	<i>Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum</i> (Against Julian, an Unfinished Book)
<i>Civ. Dei</i>	<i>De Civitate Dei</i> (The City of God)
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i> (Confessions)
<i>Cont.</i>	<i>De Continentia</i> (On Continence)

x	<i>A Note on Translations and Abbreviations</i>
<i>Div. Qu.</i>	<i>De Diversis Quaestionibus Octaginta Tribus</i> (Eighty-Three Different Questions)
<i>Doc. Chr.</i>	<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> (On Christian Doctrine)
<i>En. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> (Expositions of the Psalms)
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion ad Laurentium de Fide, Spe et Caritate</i> (A Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love)
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> (Letters)
<i>Ep. Jo.</i>	<i>In Epistulam Joannis ad Parthos Tractatus</i> (Tractates on the First Letter of John)
<i>Ex. Gal.</i>	<i>Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas</i> (Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians)
<i>Ex. Prop. Rm.</i>	<i>Expositio quarandam propositionum ex epistula Apostoli ad Romanos</i> (Commentary on Statements in the Letter to the Romans)
<i>Gn. Litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i> (On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis)
<i>Gn. Adv. Man.</i>	<i>De Genesi Adversus Manicheos</i> (On Genesis, against the Manicheans)
<i>Gr. et Lib. Arb.</i>	<i>De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio</i> (On Grace and Free Will)
<i>Gr. et Pecc. Or.</i>	<i>De Gratia Christi et De Peccato Originali</i> (On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin)
<i>Jo. Ev. Tr.</i>	<i>In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus</i> (Tractates on the Gospel of John)
<i>Lib. Arb.</i>	<i>De Libero Arbitrio</i> (On Free Will)
<i>Mend.</i>	<i>Contra Mendacium</i> (Against Lying)
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manicheorum</i> (The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life)
<i>Mus.</i>	<i>De Musica</i> (On Music)
<i>Nat. et Gr.</i>	<i>De Natura et Gratia</i> (On Nature and Grace)
<i>Nupt. et Conc.</i>	<i>De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia</i> (On Marriage and Concupiscence)
<i>Pecc. Mer.</i>	<i>De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione et de Baptismo Parvulorum</i> (On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and on Infant Baptism)
<i>Perf. Just.</i>	<i>De Perfectione Justitiae Hominis</i> (On the Perfection of Human Righteousness)
<i>Quant.</i>	<i>De Animae Quantitate</i> (On the Magnitude of the Soul)
<i>S.</i>	<i>Sermones</i> (Sermons)

<i>S. Dom. Mon.</i>	<i>De Sermone Domini in Monte</i> (On the Lord's Sermon the Mount)
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum</i> (To Simplicianus)
<i>Sol.</i>	<i>Soliloquia</i> (Soliloquies)
<i>Spir. et Litt.</i>	<i>De spiritu et Littera</i> (On the Spirit and the Letter)
<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i> (On the Trinity)
<i>Util. Cred.</i>	<i>De Utilitate Credendi</i> (On the Advantage of Believing)
<i>Vera Rel.</i>	<i>De Vera Religione</i> (On True Religion)

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

<i>Ad Simplicianum</i>	<i>Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician in Selected Writings on Grace and Pelagianism</i> , trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 2011)
<i>Confessiones</i>	<i>Confessions</i> , trans. J. G. Pilkington (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
<i>Contra Academicos</i>	<i>Saint Augustine: The Happy Life and Answer to Skeptics and Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil and Soliloquies</i> , trans. Denis Kavanagh (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948)
<i>Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum</i>	<i>Against Two Letters of the Pelagians</i> , trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
<i>Contra Faustum Manicheum</i>	<i>Against Faustus, a Manichee</i> , trans. Richard Stothert (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
<i>Contra Julianum</i>	<i>Against Julian</i> , trans. Matthew Schumacher (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1957)
<i>Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum</i>	<i>Against Julian, an Unfinished Book</i> , trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 1997)
<i>Contra Mendacium</i>	<i>Against Lying</i> , trans. H. Browne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
<i>De Animae Quantitate</i>	<i>Saint Augustine: The Immortality of the Soul; The Magnitude of the Soul; On Music; The Advantage of Believing; On Faith in Things</i>

- Unseen*, trans. John McMahon (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947)
- De Baptismo* *The Seven Books of Augustin, Bishop of Hippo, On Baptism, against the Donatists*, trans. Rev. J. R. King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Beata Vita* *Saint Augustine: The Happy Life and Answer to Skeptics and Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil and Soliloquies*, trans. Ludwig Schopp (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948)
- De Civitate Dei* *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Continentia* *On Continnence*, trans. C. L. Cornish (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Diversis Quaestionibus Octaginta Tribus* *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David Mosher (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982)
- De Doctrina Christiana* *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. James Shaw (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Genesi ad Litteram* *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, and the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2002)
- De Gratia Christi et De Peccato Originali* *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio* *On Grace and Free Will*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Libero Arbitrio* *On Free Will in Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. J. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953)
- De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, trans. Richard Stothert (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Musica* *Saint Augustine: The Immortality of the Soul; The Magnitude of the Soul; On Music; The Advantage of Believing; On Faith in Things*

- Unseen*, trans. Robert Catesby Taliaferro
 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of
 America Press, 1947)
- De Natura et Gratia* *On Nature and Grace*, trans. Peter Holmes and
 Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin
 B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI:
 Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Nuptiis et
 Concupiscentia* *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, trans. Peter
 Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised
 by Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI:
 Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Peccatorum
 Meritis et
 Remissione et de
 Baptismo
 Parvulorum* *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and on
 Infant Baptism*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert
 Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin
 B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI:
 Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Perfectione
 Justitiae
 Hominis* *On the Perfection of Human Righteousness*, trans.
 Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and
 revised by Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids,
 MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Sermone
 Domini in Monte* *On the Lord's Sermon the Mount*, trans. William
 Findlay (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Spiritu et Littera* *On the Spirit and the Letter*, trans. Peter Holmes
 and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by
 Benjamin B. Warfield (Grand Rapids, MI:
 Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Trinitate* *On the Trinity*, trans. Arthur West Haddan
 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Utilitate
 Credendi* *On the Advantage of Believing*, trans. C. L.
 Cornish (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
- De Vera Religione* *On True Religion in Augustine: Earlier Writings*,
 trans. J. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster
 Press, 1953)
- Enarrationes in
 Psalmos* *Expositions of the Psalms* (vols. 1–6), trans. Maria
 Boulding (New York: New City
 Press, 2000–2004)
- Enchiridion ad
 Laurentium de
 Fide, Spe et
 Caritate* *A Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. J. F.
 Shaw (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)

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<i>Epistulae</i>	<i>Letters</i> (vols. 1–4), trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 2001–2005)
<i>Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas</i>	<i>Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes</i> , trans. Eric Plumer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
<i>Expositio quarandam propositionum ex epistula Apostoli ad Romanos</i>	<i>Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans</i> , trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982)
FCNT	<i>The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation</i> (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947–)
<i>In Epistulam Joannis ad Parthos Tractatus</i>	<i>Tractates on the First Letter of John</i> , trans. H. Browne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
<i>In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus</i>	<i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i> , trans. John Gibb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1887)
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> , ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1886–1900)
<i>Sermones</i>	<i>Sermons</i> (vols. 1–11), trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1990–1997)
<i>Soliloquia</i>	<i>Soliloquies in Augustine: Earlier Writings</i> , trans. J. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953)
WSA	<i>The Works of St. Augustine, a Translation for the 21st Century</i> (New York: New City Press, 1990–)