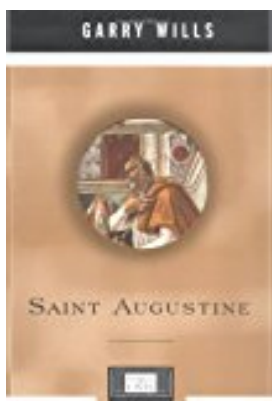


[PDF] Saint Augustine: A Penguin Life (Penguin Lives)

Garry Wills - pdf download free book



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Description:

Saint Augustine, by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and cultural critic Garry Wills, is a 145-page biography of a saint whose collected works total 13 volumes. Despite its brevity, the book offers a complex and compelling interpretation of Augustine's life and work. Much of Wills's task is demythologizing: Augustine was not a central figure in 4th-century Christianity but was "peripheral in his day, a provincial on the margins of classical culture," who did not know Greek, the intellectual lingua franca of his time. Although Augustine has been portrayed by artists as a bishop "wearing all

the episcopal finery of the late Middle Ages," he actually "dressed in the gray clothes of a monk." And far from being a self-righteous pontificator, Augustine was "impatient with all preceding formulations, even his own." He wrote, "Since it is God we are speaking of, you do not understand it. If you could understand it, it would not be God." Wills also argues that Augustine's *Confessions* (which, Wills persuades the reader, is an anachronistic, egoistic translation of the original Latin title, a word Wills more accurately renders as "Testimony") has been misread in a way that suggests Augustine led a debauched sexual life before his conversion. In the Shocking Revelation department, Wills does, however, find more detailed (if elaborately coded) information about Augustine's mistress and about the son they raised together than other biographers have found. Like Wills's masterful , *Saint Augustine* accomplishes its revisionist aims completely and yet lightly. Wills makes his arguments without ever forgetting his first job: telling the story of a life. --Michael Joseph Gross

From Publishers Weekly In the West, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is most famous for his teaching on original sin. He believed, and the Catholic Church continues to affirm, that we are all marked from birth with the stain of sin. This sin, he argued, was transmitted to us from our original parents Adam and Eve through the sexual act. Although this is his most famous legacy, Augustine was also an active bishop who was engaged in sometimes polemical controversies with the Pelagians and the Donatists over matters of doctrine and Church polity. In this brief and easy-to-read biography, Wills (Lincoln at Gettysburg) traces the major events in Augustine's life and uses selections from Augustine's writings to narrate the manner in which Augustine arrived at his spiritual maturity. Giving a new reading to Augustine's *Confessions*, Wills debunks the persistent theory that Augustine's greatest guilt was over his early sexual excesses. Perhaps most interesting about Augustine's early life was his dependence on what he probably would have called pagan teaching. While other Christian writers such as Tertullian denied the power of Greek or Roman classical texts, Augustine embraced these writers, especially Cicero. In a famous passage from the *Testimony* (as Wills calls the *Confessions*), Augustine exclaims with great passion how Cicero's *Hortensius* was the book that "altered my prayers, Lord, to be toward yourself." Wills narrates Augustine's development from his youthful years of pear-stealing to his education in classical and Christian learning, to his mature years as an active bishop preaching and doing his Church's work throughout North Africa. Like the other volumes in the Penguin Lives series, Wills's captivating and accessible biography of Augustine introduces the work of one of the West's most important thinkers to a new generation.

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