

**ST. AUGUSTINE,
ASPECTS OF HIS
LIFE AND THOUGHT**

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St. Augustine, aspects of his life and thought by W. Montgomery

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ASPECTS OF HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

BY

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PREFACE

ST. AUGUSTINE has been described as "the first modern man." A statement of that kind can always be attacked from various points of view; it can also be defended. I quote it here neither for attack nor for defence, but simply to focus an impression. It may serve, that is, to suggest a certain unity of purpose underlying the series of studies here offered to the reader. For they will deal, at least chiefly, with those aspects of his life and thought which appeal most readily to us as moderns.

In the case of all the great figures of European history, in some respects they stand in lines of development which have come down to us, and along these lines it is comparatively easy to reascend to them. In other respects they belong to their own time, in ways that render them remote from us and make it a matter of long and painful study to think ourselves back

into their thoughts and surroundings. The historian must not of course neglect this more difficult task, but it is obviously sound method to make a first approach along the lines of less resistance.

In the case of a man like St. Augustine, who has left his permanent mark for good and ill upon the Western civilisation amid which we stand, it is natural that there should be many of these lines along which it is comparatively easy to approach him. And this way of approach has for most of us a special fascination. Andrew Lang has somewhere remarked that "there is a peculiar pleasure in finding ourselves, our common humanity, our puzzles, our cares, our joys, in the writings of men severed from us by race and speech and [he is speaking, of course, of a more remote era] half the gulf of recorded time."

Such were the general considerations which I had in mind in selecting materials for a course of lectures upon St. Augustine given in the Lent Term of last year in St. John's College, Cambridge. The lectures were not directed especially to examination requirements, but received some encouragement from various quarters as an attempt to promote, in some small degree, a

wider interest in Church History. The scope of the lectures would perhaps best be defined by saying that they were intended, not indeed as a general introduction to St. Augustine—a much more ambitious undertaking—but as a series of introductions to particular aspects of his thought. They were intended, that is, to provide the student with a choice of starting-points, from one or other of which, according to his tastes and previous training, he might usefully approach the study of this great and many-sided figure.

That is the genesis of the studies which are here offered to a wider audience. They have been carefully revised and to some extent recast, but I have not attempted to remove all traces of their origin.

In a book of this kind it is hardly necessary to give a bibliography, but among works to which I have been indebted I should like to mention especially G. J. Seyrich, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Augustins* (Chemnitz, 1891); Joseph Mausbach, *Die Ethik des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1909); W. Thimme, *Augustin, Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild auf Grund seiner Briefe* (Göttingen, 1910); R. C. Trench, *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount drawn from the*