



the enchiridion

Saint Augustine of Hippo (as translated by J. F. Shaw)

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The Enchiridion or Handbook by Saint Augustine is a short book written to encourage Christian piety. The book is written to be used as a worship instruction manual. Augustine wrote the work in response to a request by a man named Laurence, who desired a handbook that addressed the many theological questions he had. Alternatively titled Faith, Hope, and Love, taken from a biblical passage in 1 Corinthians, the book is organized by these three themes. The first part looks at Christian faith, the second Christian hope, and lastly, Christian love. The entire work contains 33 short chapters.

In the first chapter, Augustine pragmatically explains the purpose of the book. In response to Laurence's request, he writes the following in chapter 1: "It is easy to say what one ought to believe, what to hope for, and what to love. But to defend our doctrines against the calumnies of those who think differently is a more difficult and detailed task. If one is to have this wisdom, it is not enough just to put an enchiridion in the hand. It is also necessary that a great zeal be kindled in the heart."

Saint Augustine was baptized into the Christian faith in 387 BC. He soon after gave up most of his worldly possession and sought a life of simplicity and piety. He was ordained a priest in Hippo and dedicated himself to teaching and preaching God's word. He wrote practical lessons that addressed many of the fundamental teachings of the Christian church. He is considered to be one of the great figures in the history of Christianity.

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