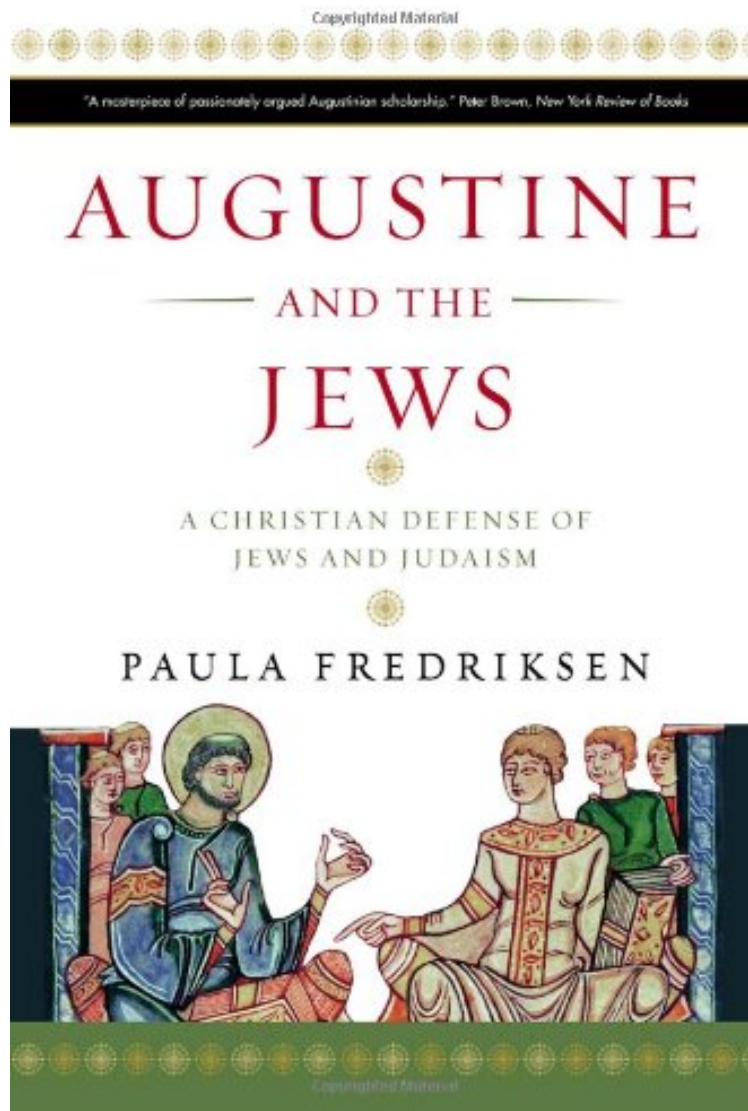


Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism

Paula Fredriksen

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Paula Fredriksen : Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism:

22 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant book By James D. Williams Augustine is one of the more interesting figures of late antiquity. His exploration of Scriptures and theology was a significant factor in developing Christian doctrine. In the process, he changed the nature of rhetoric, shifting its focus from oratory to textual exegesis,

what George Kennedy called "secondary rhetoric." His application of allegoresis to biblical interpretation laid the foundation for modern literary hermeneutics, and his *CONFESSIONS* provided a new model for autobiography. A significant factor in the rise of early Christianity was the movement's hostility toward Jews, who--owing to the influence of Greek philosophy--were viewed as followers of the subordinate, "fleshly" God of the Old Testament and whose innate obstinance would not allow them to accept the True God, who existed outside the realm of the flesh. Fredriksen examines how Augustine came to reject this view and to argue that the Jewish God and the Christian God were one and the same. In doing so, Augustine fundamentally altered the relationship between Christianity and Judaism and one might argue saved Jews from the widespread persecution that Christians carried out against all other religious groups between the 4th and 6th centuries. Fredriksen is a first-rate scholar and a brilliant writer. Her book is beautifully written, thoroughly researched and documented, a sheer joy to read, and it certainly should be required reading for anyone interested in Augustine. Arguably, it is the best book written on Augustine since Peter Brown's classic *AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO*. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Dr. Fournier Who would think that a scholarly book on such a seemingly arcane topic could be so thoroughly enjoyable! With the right balance of scholarship, detail and humor, Paula Fredriksen makes the classical era of Greco-Roman learning come alive, while leading readers through the evolution of thought on many philosophical and theological issues, some of which haunt us to this day. In the process, the personalities of the principles - St. Augustine the erudite scholar, St. Paul, the conflicted Jew, St Jerome, "the diva" (as the author terms him) - come shining through. A "must-read" for students of philosophy, theology and history, as well as general readers who wish to trace the evolving polytheism to monotheism, Paganism, Judaism and Christianity. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Worth a read By Everett I have only completed reading a small portion of this book, but so far it is very good and sheds light on the background of the Gospels.

Now in paperback with a new postscript, this updated edition of Paula Fredriksen's critically acclaimed *Augustine and the Jews* traces the social and intellectual forces that led to the development of Christian anti-Judaism and shows how and why Augustine challenged this tradition. Drawing us into the life, times, and thought of Augustine of Hippo (396-430), Fredriksen focuses on the period of astounding creativity that led to his new understanding of Paul and to his great classic, *The Confessions*. She shows how Augustine's struggle to read the Bible led him to a new theological vision, one that countered the anti-Judaism not only of his Manichaean opponents but also of his own church. The Christian Empire, Augustine held, was right to ban paganism and to coerce heretics. But the source of ancient Jewish scripture and current Jewish practice, he argued, was the very same as that of the New Testament and of the church--namely, God himself. Accordingly, he urged, Jews were to be left alone. Conceived as a vividly original way to defend Christian ideas about Jesus and about the Old Testament, Augustine's theological innovation survived the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, and it ultimately served to protect Jewish lives against the brutality of medieval crusades. *Augustine and the Jews* sheds new light on the origins of Christian anti-Semitism and, through Augustine, opens a path toward better understanding between two of the world's great religions.

From Publishers Weekly In this densely argued and exhaustive book, religion professor Fredriksen (*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*) does for Augustine what she has already done so brilliantly for the historical Jesus. Drawing primarily on Augustine's *Confessions* and on his little-studied treatise, *Against Faustus*, she recreates the religious and political tensions of late fourth-century Christianity in North Africa and its attempts to understand its relationship to Judaism. While many early Christian writers condemned Jews as killers of Christ, Augustine turned the rhetorical tables on such polemic. As Fredriksen elegantly contends, Augustine argued that the Jews should be exempt from Christian persecution. Since the religious practices of the Jews devolved from God the Father--the same God Christians worshipped who was also the source of Jewish scriptures, tradition and practice--therefore God and the Jews, and thus the church and the Jews, maintain an abiding relationship. Contrary to many traditional interpretations, Fredriksen's deeply nuanced study demonstrates that the bishop of Hippo's later writings forcefully challenge the anti-Jewish tendencies of much of early Christianity and offer fresh ways of thinking about contemporary dialogue between the two religions. (Dec.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal A recognized scholar of the historical Jesus, Fredriksen (*Aurelio Professor of Scripture, Boston Univ.; From Jesus to Christ*) explores Augustine of Hippo's journey into his own particular understanding of Scripture and of the place of Judaism in the Christian world. She particularly focuses on Augustine's commentaries on Paul's letters, the Psalms, and recorded disputations with the Manicheans whom he had once embraced. Over time, Augustine (354-430) arrived at his ideas of a just God and of human freedom, which in turn led to his teaching that Jews, divinely chosen, were necessary witnesses in the development of Christianity. The author draws especially on Augustine's *Confessions* and *City of God* and also references writings of contemporaries such as Ambrose and Jerome. She points out that despite the early development of anti-Judaism in the rhetoric of the day, the populations of urban Mediterranean cities intermingled socially, with Jews practicing their religious traditions, holding civil office, etc. Featuring textual analysis of a very high caliber and an extensive bibliography, this worthy contribution to the

literature on Augustine is recommended for scholarly and religion collections. Anna M. Donnelly, St. John's Univ. Lib., NY Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist For readers who regard Christianity as the prime incubator of anti-Semitism, St. Augustine remains a great riddle. Fredriksen probes that riddle, searching for the reasons this prominent exponent of the Christian gospel unexpectedly parted company with contemporary Christian leaders by arguing for official tolerance of Judaism. Readers retrace the torturous path Augustine traveled on his way to Christian baptism, noting particularly how deeply he imbibed from pagan philosophy and mythology and how he developed an exceptionally sophisticated perspective on a Hellenistic world filled with ethnically exclusive deities. From that perspective, the brilliant theologian reinterpreted key passages of both the Old and New Testaments as evidence that God intended the Jews to remain a separate and singular people. In stark contrast to his unwieldy hostility to Christian heretics, Augustines efforts to carve out a realm of religious autonomy for Jews profoundly affected his overall understanding of how God effects his will within salvific history, so shaping the very foundations of Christian orthodoxy. --Bryce Christensen