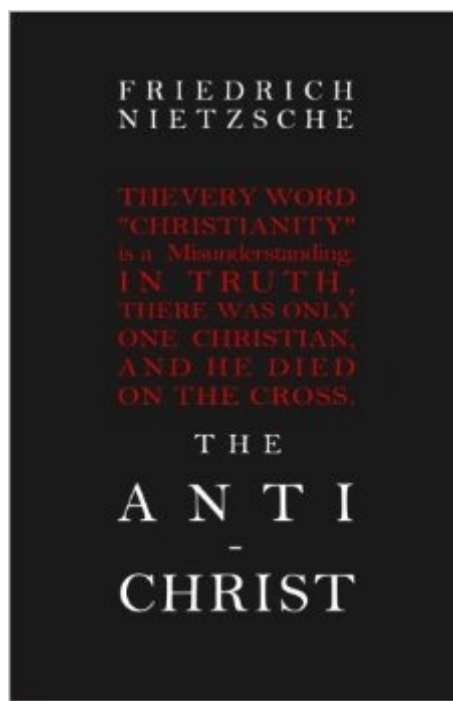


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The Anti-Christ



Synopsis

Here is Friedrich Nietzsche's great masterpiece *The Anti-Christ*, wherein Nietzsche attacks Christianity as a blight on humanity. This classic is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand Nietzsche and his place within the history of philosophy. "We should not deck out and embellish Christianity: it has waged a war to the death against this higher type of man, it has put all the deepest instincts of this type under its ban, it has developed its concept of evil, of the Evil One himself, out of these instincts-the strong man as the typical reprobate, the 'outcast among men.' Christianity has taken the part of all the weak, the low, the botched; it has made an ideal out of antagonism to all the self-preservative instincts of sound life; it has corrupted even the faculties of those natures that are intellectually most vigorous, by representing the highest intellectual values as sinful, as misleading, as full of temptation. The most lamentable example: the corruption of Pascal, who believed that his intellect had been destroyed by original sin, whereas it was actually destroyed by Christianity!" -Friedrich Nietzsche

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Customer Reviews

Nietzsche's "The Anti-Christ" was one of the last books Nietzsche wrote before the onset of his insanity in 1888. Unlike many of Nietzsche's other books, which raise tantalizing questions and examine experience from a variety of angles, some of them contradictory, "The Anti-Christ" is a relatively straightforward presentation of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. Contrary to what many think, Nietzsche did not advocate the general abolition of Christianity. He thought it served the needs of the majority of people quite well, but believed it had psychologically destructive effects on

the minority of people in a society who were most capable of intellectual, artistic, and other achievement. Mencken was one of the great American prose stylists of the Century, and, as one would expect, his translation of "The Anti-Christ" is an outstanding read. I happen to think it is a far better read than R.J. Hollingdale's translation, which is the one most often used by scholars and students. Whether it is more or less faithful to Nietzsche's original is a question I cannot answer, not being sufficiently fluent in German. In any event, it's great to see Mencken's much-neglected 1917 translation back in print.

The publisher does something common but sleazy on the copyright page, claiming copyright for the entire work, which is in the public domain. Secondly, they incorrectly state on the copyright page that the original edition was published by Knopf in 1895(!), not 1920. Third, and this is what really pisses me off, is that they simply reproduced the See Sharp Press edition type, while omitting the footnotes and the introductory publisher's note (the layout matches exactly, and there's even the same typo -- misplaced quotation mark -- in the second line of the first page of the text (p. 21)). It's sad when a publisher tries to rip off another publisher, and poorly. This Cosimo edition even cuts out the footnotes in an effort to create a cheapo book.

This is Nietzsche's most vigorous work; it contains in little over one hundred pages, a summary of his later philosophy, and as such, should probably be read after all of his other works if one means to avoid misunderstanding what Nietzsche is saying. He portrays Christianity in gory detail as the religion of revenge, dishonesty, small-mindedness and pity which it is, and a leading cause of the west's descent into nihilism. (A reading of this book almost forms a mini spiritual biography of western civilisation of the last three centuries). The adherence to a religion like Christianity forms a sort of enslavement to an outdated meaning system thus causing anyone with a scrap of intellectual integrity to lie to themselves as a means of supporting a bankrupt world-view and while appropriate for Zarathustra's "last men", is death for all higher types, and had waged a bitter war against all manner of vitality, strength and honour which are the hallmarks of the *übermensch*. He talks of the psychology of the priest and the natural hatred of science that they all possess as well as the slave morality and cowardice that Christianity promotes, but for all the vim that the book possesses, it is not a very scholarly work, and contains many errors. Nietzsche understandably finds it difficult to restrain himself, but this gives the work a sort of amateurish tone. Mencken has done a wonderful job here -- all the more because he had a deep appreciation for Nietzsche -- the man and his work. For those who cannot understand Nietzsche's "hatred" of Christianity, I would recommend a very

thorough reading of the Genealogy of Morals, which goes into much greater detail and is much more scholarly and will provide better insight into the anti-Christian perspective. One of the jewels of modern literature.

A vigorous and courageous look at Christianity as it is practiced and the psychology of the people who practice it. This book can not be understood properly unless Nietzsche's previous philosophical works have been read, particularly "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" and the "Genealogy of Morals." It should be the last of Nietzsche's works to be read rather than the first, as is often the case.

Whether you agree with him or not, you gotta admit that Nietzsche had some very strong arguments about the validity of Christianity, and how he views it as a form of weakness posing as a strong institution. There is a section where he takes verses from the Bible itself and explains in a way on how it is evangelical and dictatorial. Nietzsche was a deep thinker, perhaps too deep because he got really sick shortly after this book, and he didn't seem like the type of guy to just ramble about a topic without knowing about it. Him quoting the Bible and many other religious texts proves that he well-researched Christianity and made enough valid points to defend his position on Christianity. I am not an antichrist myself, though I more or less shun organized religion, but Nietzsche has some very thought-provoking concepts. Sure it is offensive to one devout to Christianity, and I'd probably be offended if I was a practicing Christian, but this is recommended for those who study religions and philosophy, or just a powerful book in general.

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