

Augustine in context. Edited by Tarmo Toom. Pp. xiv + 265. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023 (first publ. 2017). £22.99 (paper). 978 1 316 50228 0

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The editor of *Augustine in context*, Tarmo Toom, has packaged together a sweeping assemblage of synopses composed by an international team of scholars with diverse areas of expertise. The result is a fast-paced collection of essays welcoming newcomers to the world of Augustine of Hippo. According to Toom, the book's aim is to reconstruct 'contexts within which readers can place and interpret Augustine's texts' (p. 4). It is not assembled for colleagues within the domain of Augustinian studies so much as to offer a wider pathway into Augustine's works by illuminating some of the most germane contexts in which they were composed. Toom offers within his introduction a brief exposé on some of problematics surrounding the concept of 'context' and specifies the relative importance of literary (select essays in parts I and IV), personal (I), and historical contexts (II–IV), in ascending order, for this volume. Aside from Toom's introductory essay, the book contains five parts.

The first part, 'Life' (chapters II–VII), examines Augustine's life from a few different vantage points as well as the sources by which we have access to it. Arthur Urbano lays out the slippery genre, the historical development and the rhetorical function of ancient biography (ch. II). Annemaré Kotzé's article welcomes readers to the complexities of *Confessions*, its genre, milieu and artfulness (ch. III). Erika Hermanowicz outlines the purposiveness of Possidius' *Vita* and *Indiculum* for preserving Augustine's legacy and his library (ch. IV). In Gareth Sears's contribution, readers find a concise overview of the history and geography of Augustine's Roman Africa, specifically Thagaste and Carthage (ch. V). David Gwynn sketches the contours of Augustine's journey into Roman high society in Rome and then Milan while also attending to his eventual departure from such aspirations (ch. VI). In rounding out the consideration of Augustine's final years, Andrea Sterk describes the episcopacy, envisaging what it meant for Augustine to serve as the bishop of Hippo (ch. VII).

In the second part, 'Literary and Intellectual Context' (chapters VIII–XV), contributions continue the movement from introducing Augustine the person to the contexts of his writings and ideas, covering language and classical literature, Christian writings and philosophical trends. James Clackson provides a succinct answer to the age-old question of Augustine's knowledge of Greek as well as where Latin and Punic fit into his multilingual setting (ch. VIII). Martin Bloomer locates Augustine's criticism of Roman traditionalism within its Roman African context (ch. IX) and Yun Lee Too describes how Augustine put education, rhetoric and grammar into Christian service (ch. X). Stephen Cooper traces the development of the Latin Christian interpretation of Scripture and the rich inheritance it bestowed upon Augustine (ch. XI). Josef Lössl's essay examines the Latin theological tradition, especially the apologetic efforts of authors from Tertullian to Lactantius, post-Nicene debates and the signal controversies of Augustine's own lifetime (ch. XII). David Hunter provides an overview of the Latin spirituality that Augustine received: early North African spiritual writings and martyrdoms, the fruits of Christian Platonism especially as seen in the writings of Ambrose of

Milan, and the deliverances of monastic and ascetic movements in Augustine's own time (ch. xiii). Jaclyn Maxwell initiates the newcomer to the conventions of letter-writing and preaching in late antiquity (ch. xiv) and Giovanni Catapano adumbrates the philosophical landscape of Augustine's environment (ch. xv).

The third part – 'Religious Contexts' (chapters xvi–xxi) – incorporates treatments of religions influential on Augustine as well as the movements and controversies attendant on his Christian faith. In the first entry of this grouping, Jeffrey Brodd breaks Roman religion down into its civil and private expressions, the mystery religions and religious philosophy (ch. xvi). Nicholas Baker-Brian opens readers up to the complexity of Augustine's entanglement with Manichaeism (ch. xvii). Alden Bass (ch. xviii), Dominic Keech (ch. xix) and Mark Weedman (ch. xx) explore what was at stake in Augustine's involvement in controversies concerning ecclesiology with the Donatists, soteriology with the Pelagians and the doctrine of the Trinity with the Homoeans, respectively. Marilyn Dunn finishes the section by walking through the development of monasticism and its bearing upon Augustine (ch. xxi).

The fourth part presents a batch of chapters on Augustine's 'Political, Social and Cultural Contexts' (chapters xxii–xxvi). Dean Hammer probes three principal ways imperial law and politics trickled down to North Africa (ch. xxii). Alexander Sarantis surveys perspectives on war and violence as well as imperial ideology in the late antique Roman world (ch. xxiii) and Despina Iosif suggests the pervasive presence of religious violence in the ancient world and among Christians in particular (ch. xxiv). Geoffrey Nathan maps out Augustine's relational network of friends and family members, patrons and acquaintances (ch. xxv). Lastly, in Jerry Toner's essay, readers learn of the popular culture in Augustine's world and the line he had to walk as a Christian leader when so many forms of entertainment were interlaced with 'pagan' meaning (ch. xxvi).

In an attempt to fill the gap left by *The Oxford guide to the historical reception of Augustine* (2013), edited by Karla Pollman and Willemien Otten, part v, 'Reception' (chapters xxvii–xxix), considers Augustine's reception of himself, while still living, and shortly following his death. Johannes Brachtendorf examines Augustine's critical self-reception (ch. xxvii), Mathijs Lamberigts traces the mixed reception of contemporary friends and foes (ch. xxviii), and Alexander Hwang wraps up the book with an essay on the reception of Augustine's theology of predestination and grace in the so-called semi-Pelagian controversy in southern Gaul and Hadrumetum (ch. xxix).

There is much to commend in this volume: its combination of substance and brevity, its accessibility to newcomers, and its utility for classroom instruction at the undergraduate or master's level. The chronological chart placed near the beginning of the book and the short 'Further Reading' section (pp. 261–6) affixed to the end offer helpful resources and reference points for students. Generally speaking, the contributors achieved a high level of success at distilling important contextual matters related to Augustine's life, writings, religion, society and early reception. There were a few contributions that were more critical than this reviewer expected to find in a volume such as this. For instance, Toom's essay is quite stark in its assessment of the opposition between rhetoric and Christianity and Keech continues to express himself as a suspicious, if not inimical,

reader of Augustine. Although Toom suggests explicitly that the arrangement of topical sections ‘attempts to avoid ... a stark separation between “religious” and “secular” spheres, ideas, and material culture’ (p. 5), it is not always clear whether that attempt has been successful. A couple of questions left for fellow scholars of Augustine include whether the chapter divisions themselves represent the field they intend to convey to outsiders and to what extent meaningful reflections on some of these large topics can be given in such small chapters.

All things considered, this collection of essays regarding Augustine’s context offers a provocation to some in the orbit of Augustinian studies to widen their horizons and for others to consider the accuracy of their long-held assumptions. It will also serve as a welcome resource to give to students interested in beginning to understand Augustine’s milieu.

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Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo and the Filioque. By Chungman Lee.
(Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 169.) Pp. xiv + 366. Leiden–Boston:
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The two documents which inspired this study, according to the first chapter, are the memorandum issued on behalf of the World Council of Churches in 1981 and the Vatican’s clarification on the Filioque in 1995. The former contends that the Filioque (the Latin addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381) does not compromise the status of the Father as sole principle of the Trinity, but ‘maintains the revealed and accepted taxis’ of the three persons, filling a *lacuna* in the creed and acknowledging the centrality of Christ to the faith. The latter adds that the Latin tradition upholds the equal divinity of the Son and the Father without (as eastern criticism alleges, according to Lee) subordinating the Spirit to the other two persons, and distinguished between the processing of the Spirit from the Father also and the joint communication of the consubstantial divinity from the Father and the Son. In the light of subsequent exchanges between Congar, Larchet and Zizioulas, Lee concludes that the eastern Church continues to suspect the West of deriving the Spirit not from the Father alone but from the essence of the Godhead, of confusing the divine essence with the divine energies in its account of the imparting of the consubstantial divinity, and of confounding *theologia* with *oikonomia* by deducing the ontological dependence of the Spirit on the Son within the Trinity from the mission of the Spirit in this world (p. 69). It is these objections that Lee undertakes to test in the remainder of the book by a comparison between Gregory of Nyssa, the favoured spokesman of the East in western circles, and Augustine, the undisputed fountainhead of western thought on the Trinity, as on so much else.

The chapter on Gregory of Nyssa begins with a useful summary of the presuppositions governing his defence of the Nicene faith against Eunomius. The first is that we know God not (as Eunomius is alleged to hold) in his essence but only by the *epinoiai* or conceptions that he vouchsafes to us; the second is that there is no