

This is a book for absolute beginners, who will be given an outline that they can pursue further, but anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of the period and the subject will need to look elsewhere.

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Augustine and Tradition: Influences, Contexts, Legacy. Edited by David G. Hunter and Jonathan P. Yates. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2021. xix + 481 pp. \$80.00 hardcover.

Tracing the textual traditions that formed Augustine presents several difficulties and temptations. Augustine's library was vast, drawing from a wide variety of genres, especially compared to the disciplinary boundaries of modern academia. He often failed to explicitly identify who he had in mind when writing. He sometimes distanced himself from earlier figures who most influenced him. He was very effective at representing—and sometimes misrepresenting—those he was responding to. Modern readers of Augustine could be forgiven for thinking they know all they need to know about Augustine's influences just from Augustine's descriptions. Furthermore, Augustine wrote so much and so provocatively that one could enjoy a lifetime of fruitful engagement with him without paying much attention to his library.

Despite this, however, scholarship on Augustine benefits from careful attention to his sources. This commitment animates *Augustine and Tradition*. The essays in this volume focus mainly on the historical and contemporaneous texts that influenced Augustine. Its goal is “to examine Augustine's relationship to the traditions that preceded him and to some of his most important Christian contemporaries” (xii). The aforementioned difficulties and temptations and the relative dearth of such scholarship make this edited volume timely and necessary. I should also note that the volume was edited in celebration of the great Church historian and theologian, J. Patout Burns. Its introduction provides a lovely, touching overview of Burns's life and the development of his scholarship, and the range of essays it contains is a testament to his influence as a colleague, teacher, and friend.

Essays that at once introduce readers to Augustine's influences and contribute to the present state of the scholarship are among the volume's major strengths. Dennis Trout's chapter, “Augustine and the Classical Literary Tradition” (204–229), which peers into Augustine's relationship with Roman literature and history (especially Cicero, but also Sallust and Livy), is exemplary. It will serve readers both new to and familiar with Augustine's classical Latin sources. Similarly excellent is Michael Cameron's chapter, “Augustine's Rhetorical Reading of Genesis in *Confessions* 11–12” (3–27), which displays the method of reading Augustine on Scripture that Cameron has developed across other publications, and demonstrates shows how Augustine's reading of Genesis aims to form a community of readers.

A second strength is this volume's attention to oft-overlooked ground, especially in Anglophone Augustine scholarship. Chapters on Augustine and the North African

Martyrological Tradition by William Tabbernee, Opatus of Milevis by Alden Bass, Porphyry by Thomas Clemmons, and Ambrosiaster by Theodore de Bruyn will serve as excellent starting points for readers wishing to learn more about these underappreciated influences.


Augustine and Tradition's weaknesses are its omissions. It would be unreasonable to demand that any single volume adequately treat all of Augustine's influences. Nevertheless, several absences are notable. Plotinus, whose *Enneads* did the most to shape Augustine's understanding of Platonism, earns only a few brief mentions and one modest discussion. The Stoics, whom Charles Brittain, Gerald Boersma, Sarah Byers, Jennifer Herdt, and Terrence Irwin have shown crucially informed Augustine on perception, virtue, love, and passions, are also mostly missing.

Perhaps most striking is the near absence of Varro in the volume. The Latin writer mentioned most often by Augustine by some way in *City of God*—more than Terence, Livy, or Virgil; and by my count about as often as Cicero and Sallust combined—was Varro. Augustine assented to Varro's reputation in the Latin world as the most insightful and sophisticated theorist of Roman religion. He took extended engagement with Varro to be central to his criticism of Roman religious institutions. This polemic was a central plank of Augustine's own religious program.

The recovery of Varro's influence on Augustine is challenging not least because the text of Varro's that Augustine referred to most often is the lost *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*. Nevertheless, a wealth of excellent Varro scholarship in the last half-century, especially in Europe (including work by Burkhard Cardauns, Daniel Hadas, Hubert Cancik, Jörg Rüpke, and Peter van Nuffelen) and Harald Hagendahl's magisterial *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (two vols; Gothenburg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothenburgensis), have made it easier for scholars of Augustine to trace Varro's influence on Augustine.

This volume seems to have had two aims in deciding on which of Augustine's influences to focus. Several chapters recover overlooked influences. One reason these influences have been overlooked is because their influence has been difficult to discern. Other chapters focus on the figures who clearly shaped Augustine's thinking. Varro is one of only a handful of thinkers whose inclusion could have been justified on either aim. Given the pride of place Augustine gave Varro, the fact that he has been mostly overlooked in Augustine studies, and the recent wealth of scholarship on Varro in classics and early Christianity, historians of religion might have hoped for a discussion of Varro in this volume.

Its limits aside, *Augustine and Tradition* will be useful to many. In addition to its potential as a research aide, it will also serve teachers hoping to introduce students to the study of Augustine in his various contexts. If its cost is not prohibitive, its breadth and accessibility will make it an excellent companion text for undergraduate and graduate courses on Augustine.

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