Augustine

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1. AUGUSTINE: INTRODUCTIONS, BIOGRAPHIES & REFERENCE WORKS

William Harmless, ed., *Augustine In His Own Words* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010) paperback, $35. Few thinkers have shaped Western civilization more powerfully than St. Augustine (354-430). This volume offers a comprehensive portrait—or rather, self-portrait, since its words are mostly Augustine's own—drawn from the breadth of his writings and from the long course of his career. One chapter is devoted to each of Augustine's masterpieces (*Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, and *City of God*) and one to each of his best-known controversies (against Manichees, Donatists, and Pelagians). It also explores the often overlooked facets of his career, namely, his
everyday work as a bishop, preacher, and interpreter of the Bible. Augustine was an extraordinarily prolific writer, and his eloquent long-windedness can prove overwhelming not only to newcomers, but even to experts. Few know what to read first or how best to read him in context, given the complex and dauntingly remote world of Late Antiquity. This collection is designed to help readers not only to sort through his vast corpus of writings but also to tune their ears to the melodies of his speech and the swirl of his mind. What catches our ear today, as it caught the ear of Augustine's first hearers, is the heart beneath the voice, his uncanny ability to speak across the centuries, heart to heart, his heart to ours. His was an agitated eloquence, and he used it to ponder and wrestle aloud with life's mysteries, both those glimpsed in the epic of human history and those astir in the depths of the human heart. But Augustine's center and passion was another far greater mystery, the God he met in the Bible and in his heart. This book is an introduction, intended for first-time readers. It brings together a judicious selection of readings, including excerpts from newly discovered letters and sermons as well as from hard-to-find translations of his often formidable opponents.

Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). This is certainly the best biography of Augustine—written with masterful insight and in masterful prose. Brown's gift is to bring alive all the richly human tensions and depths of Augustine's personality and world. This new edition has an epilogue on the newly discovered sermons and letters.


Cornelius Mayer, ed., *Augustinus Lexikon*, 3 volumes complete, vol. 4 in process (Basel: Scwabe, 1986- ). A massive encyclopedia on Augustine, with first-rate articles written in one of three languages (German, English, French). An essential work for all researchers. Lengthy entries with fine bibliographies. This ambitious but slow-moving project will, at the present rate, take years to complete.


2. AUGUSTINE’S WRITINGS: TEXTS

**Latin Texts (PL, CCL, BA, CSEL)**

Nearly all of Augustine’s works can be found in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (PL), vol. 32-47. Migne reproduced the excellent 17th-century edition of the Benedictines of St. Maur. Recently, the publishers of Augustine’s works in Italian (the *Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana*) have provided a valuable service to students of Augustine by posting this classic edition (for free!). Here’s the address:

http://www.augustinus.it/latino/index.htm

This older *Patrologia Latina* edition is slowly being replaced by modern critical editions in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL) and the *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (CCL). The valuable, but still incomplete *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* (BA) (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949- ) has volumes with the Latin text and a French translation on facing pages, often with valuable introductions and notes. I have listed the individual works of Augustine under the major divisions of his corpus. In each case, I have listed the major editions of the Latin text (as well as major English translations) using the standard abbreviations (PL, CCL, CSEL, BA); for the Latin critical editions, I have listed the date of publication in the parenthesis.

**Newly Discovered Letters & Sermons**

Two groups of recently discovered texts have been the focus of much recent study. The first are a set of 29 letters: Johannes Divjak, ed., *Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae*,

3. **AUGUSTINE'S WRITINGS: TRANSLATIONS**

Translations: Collections & Series (FOTC, ACW, NPNF, WSA)

A number of Augustine's works are found in two large series: *Fathers of the Church* (FOTC) (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press) and *Ancient Christian Writers* (ACW) (New York: Paulist Press). See also the 8-volume collection in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF), 1st series, for 19th-century translations (and these can be found at various places on the internet). The best and most up-to-date collection is *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (WSA), eds. John E. Rotelle & Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 1990- ). I have listed individual translations under the headings of each of the major divisions of Augustine's works, giving first those from the *Fathers of the Church* series (FOTC), then those from the *Works of Saint Augustine* series (WSA). After that, I list other dependable translations.

4. **AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY: SURVEYS & COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS**

Robert Dodaro & George Lawless, eds., *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Augustine welcomed critics, and from the beginning his views have faced some sharp ones. This recent collection offers fresh perspectives on Augustine’s most controversial perspectives—and in the process debunks certain long-standing critiques of his work.


James Wetzel, *Augustine: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2010). A creative and synthetic overview of some of the most contested areas of Augustine's thought (sexuality, grace and the will, body and soul, original sin), written with an eye to newcomers to Augustine, yet adept at clearing the ground for a balanced appreciation.


Bibliographies for Theology, compiled by William Harmless, S.J.


5. THE CONFESSIONS: TEXT, TRANSLATIONS & STUDIES

*Confessions* is one of the uncontested classics of world literature. Even if Augustine had written no other work, this alone would have insured his lasting fame. *Confessions* is sometimes described as autobiography. Calling it autobiography is at once true and untrue. It is true inasmuch as it narrates pivotal episodes from his life, from childhood through his dramatic conversion and baptism and ending with his mother’s death in 387. But it is untrue in other ways. Augustine records only a handful of events within each of its first nine books, and few facts are given. *Confessions* may be thin on facts, but it is long on meditation. Augustine offers detailed psychological self-analyses. *Confessions* is a history of Augustine’s heart, a story told from the inside: how things felt to him, what they mean to him as he writes. Augustine’s deepest concern is theological. *Confessions* is Augustine’s attempt to read his life through biblical lenses, to trace out the way God’s under-the-surface promptings subtly shaped the twisting and twisted coursings of his life. In *Confessions*, Augustine charts his personal salvation history.

Text


Translations


Studies


### 6. AUGUSTINE THE PHILOSOPHER

Philosophic concerns permeate Augustine's entire corpus. That said, many of Augustine's earliest works are explicitly philosophical in concern and in style. Several were composed during the days between his conversion and his baptism, namely, the four philosophical dialogues that he composed during his stay at Cassiciacum. Several others were composed in the years after his baptism:

**Texts & Translations**


Studies


James Wetzel, Parting Knowledge: Essays After Augustine (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), paperback, $33. NEW. James Wetzel, one of the finest commentators on the philosophical dimensions of Augustine's thought, has collected his masterful essays published over the last decade. These treat Augustine's Platonism, his views on free choice and grace, his views of the self and the will, desire and grief.


### 7. AUGUSTINE THE BISHOP

Augustine was not just a theologian, but was also a struggling 5th-century North African pastor who had a flair for teaching and who meditated deeply on the complexities of the human heart. Peter Brown’s and Serge Lancel’s biographies offer helpful portraits of Augustine the bishop. Brown captures the mood and atmosphere of Augustine’s congregation and North African Christianity (pp. 183-206); Lancel does an excellent job on matters of archeology and incorporates perspectives from the recent Divjak letters (pp. 235-270). The classic study is Frederic van der Meer's *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. B. Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961); while badly dated in certain ways, it still has much to offer. One of the best glimpses that we have into his life as a bishop is with his letters. The publication of 29 new letters discovered by Johannes Divjak has opened new
perspectives, especially on Augustine’s later years. Also instructive is the early biography by his friend (and later editor) Possidius of Calama:

**Texts & Translations**

For a selection of Augustine's letters, see E.M. Atkins & Robert J. Dodaro, trans., *Augustine: Political Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a complete set, see:


**Studies**

J. Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) hardcover, $55. NEW.  
Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Care of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).  


**8. AUGUSTINE THE PREACHER**

Augustine’s friend, Possidius of Calama, once remarked that “those who read what Augustine has written in his works on divine subjects profit greatly, but I believe that the ones who really profited were those who actually heard him and saw him speak in church” (*Vita* 31). Augustine was a virtuoso orator. The surviving corpus of Augustine’s sermons is staggering, yet it likely represents only a small proportion of what he actually delivered. It includes the 124 sermons of his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (*In Johannis evangelium tractatus*) and the 10 sermons of his *Tractates on the First Letter of John* (*In epistulam Johannis ad Parthos tractatus*). It includes his massive *Expositions of the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*) which preserves at least one sermon on each of the 150 psalms. But the largest collection is his *Sermons to the People* (*Sermones ad populum*). When Augustine’s 17th-century editors, the Benedictines of St. Maur, published their remarkable edition of his complete Latin works, they concluded that some 363 sermons had good claim to authenticity, with another 33 classified as "doubtful." Later 19th- and early 20th-century researchers (notably, Michel Denis, Cyrille Lambot, Germain Morin) continued the effort, authenticating (by a rough count) over 170 additional sermons, some complete, some fragments. The hard work of recovering lost sermons continues. In 1990, François Dolbeau made a momentous discovery, unearthing 26 long lost sermons from a 15th-century Carthusian manuscript, now preserved in the Mainz Stadtbibliothek. Dolbeau’s discovery, published in a scatter of remarkable articles in the 1990s, has sparked international scholarly conferences and a host of reassessments. A further six sermons were published in 2008.
Texts & Translations


Studies


William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2014) NEW edition as of November 2014. This study examines Augustine's work as a teacher of candidates for baptism and reconstructs the complex rituals and training used in Augustine's North African church. This edition has been revised from top to bottom, with changes on virtually every page, incorporating a host of new perspectives and includes a study of a variety of new materials.


**9. AUGUSTINE THE EXEGETE**

Augustine understood his central task to be an interpreter of the Scriptures. His sermons expound a wide variety of texts (see above). In addition, he composed – in the form of sermons – complete commentaries on the Book of Psalms and on the Gospel of John. Both are huge works – now published in large multi-volume sets. He also composed commentaries on Genesis, on the First Letter of John and on Galatians as well as reflections on hard-to-interpret passages from the Heptateuch and other Old Testament works. Augustine also developed a unique and influential theories about the art of biblical interpretation that appear in his classic *On Christian Teaching* (*De doctrina christiana*). His major exegetical works are:
**Texts & Translations**


**Studies**

Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine’s Early Figural Exegesis*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). It offers superb analysis and highlights Augustine's gradual and many-sided evolution. This is the place to start any study of Augustine the exegete.


10. AUGUSTINE’S DEBATE WITH THE MANICHEES

Augustine has often been thought of as a systematic theologian. That is not accurate. He was, by training and by temperament, a controversialist, a debater. Four great debates shaped his
career and have come to define his theological legacy. The earliest of these was his debate against his onetime co-religionists, the Manicheans. Mani (216-276), born in Persian Mesopotamia, experienced a series of visions which convinced him that he was called to complete what earlier religious founders—Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus—had left incomplete. Mani believed himself called to found the first true world religion, the “Religion of Life,” and described himself as the “apostle of Jesus Christ.” His followers went further, calling him "the Paraclite." The religion he founded would last 1400 years and spread west to Spain and east to China and rival Christianity in the Roman Empire. New archeological discoveries and new methods have opened up important perspectives on Manicheism as a religion and on the insights that Augustine gained through his long debate with his former co-religionists.

Manicheism: Texts & Studies

Iaian Gardner & Samuel N.C. Lieu, Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). This anthology of Manichaean texts gathers important and hard-to-find texts and is edited by two of the finest scholars on Manichaeanism. A major resource.


Jacob Albert van der Berg, Biblical Argument in Manichaean Missiornary Practice: The Case of Adimantus and Augustine, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 70 (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2010).


Augustine’s Response: Texts & Translations


Studies


G.R. Evans, Augustine on Evil (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).


N. Joseph Torchia, 'Creatio Ex Nihilo’ and the Theology of St. Augustine, Collectanea Augustiniana (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

11. AUGUSTINE'S DEBATE WITH THE DONATISTS

Catholics were a local minority in Augustine's North Africa. For much of the 4th century, the majority church of North Africa was Donatist. Donatists claimed that they—and they alone—were the one true Church, a Church "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27), the true descendants of the Church of the martyrs, the Church who alone possessed the Holy Spirit, and the only one whose Spirit-charged waters of baptism could cleanse sinners of their sins. In their view, Catholics, whether locally or worldwide, were not real Christians; Catholics were the "church of Judas," a demonic parody of authentic Christianity. Augustine spent much of his best energies between 400 and 412 debating the Donatists.

Ancient Texts by & about Donatists


Augustine's Response: Texts & Translations

Only a small portion of Augustine's anti-Donatist writings are currently available in English. A new translation of the complete corpus is forthcoming in the Works of Saint Augustine series, with the first of two volumes due out in 2013.


Studies


12. AUGUSTINE THE THEOLOGIAN: On the Trinity (De Trinitate)

Theology literally means “speaking of God.” For Augustine and his age, the great theological issue was how to speak rightly about “the Trinity who God is” (“Trinitate quae Deus est”). His classic exposition appears in the 15 books of On the Trinity (De trinitate), a work nearly as influential as Confessions.
Texts


Translations


Studies

Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) new in paperback. Over the last decade, Lewis Ayres and Michel Barnes have been at forefront of rethinking Augustine's approach to the Trinity, and in process, have successful debunked old stereotypes and demonstrated Augustine's creativity and distinctiveness within the complex pro-Nicene developments of the late 4th-century. In this new work, Ayres brings together his thinking in a systematic way.


David Meconi, *The One Christ: St Augustine’s Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013) hardcover, $65. NEW.


13. AUGUSTINE'S DEBATE WITH THE PAGANS: *The City of God* (De civitate Dei)

*On the City of God (De civitate Dei)* is Augustine’s third masterpiece. It is, as he admits in his final words, “a huge work,” running nearly 900 pages in the Latin original. Its scope is epic, an ambitious meditation on the contours and meaning of human history, from the genesis of the human race to its final judgment.

**Texts**


**Translations**


**Studies**


Miles Hollingworth, *The Pilgrim City: St. Augustine of Hippo and His Innovation in Political Thought* (New York: T&T Clark / Continuum, 2010).


Gerard P. O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). This is a valuable overview of Augustine’s magnum opus.


Phillip Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) paperback $49. NEW.
14. AUGUSTINE’S DEBATE WITH THE PELAGIANS

Pelagius & the Pelagians

Historical scholarship over the last 80 years has done much to strip away centuries of misunderstanding fostered by medieval and Reformation anti-Pelagian polemic. Drawing on Pelagius’ genuine works, a more balanced (and more sympathetic) view of Pelagius and of those he inspired has emerged. Also we have a new appreciation of the intricate and complex unfolding of the events of the Pelagian Controversy, arguably Augustine's most complex theological debate. For a translation of key writings of Pelagius and his allies, see B.R. Rees, Pelagius: Life and Letters (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1991). For a balanced presentation and assessment of Pelagius’ theology, see Robert F. Evans, Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals (1968; reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010). On his aristocratic social milieu, see Peter Brown, “Pelagius and His Supporters: Aims and Environment,” in Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine (reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 183-207.


Augustine’s Response: Texts & Translations


Studies

On Augustine’s role in the anti-Pelagian controversy, see Serge Lancel, Saint Augustine, pp. 325-365 (on Pelagius) and 413-438 (on Julian of Eclanum and the monastic reaction); and Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo, pp. 340-377 (on Pelagius) and 383-410 (on Julian and the monastic reaction), as well as 465-468 and 491-493 (Brown’s “reconsiderations” of his 1968 portrait of the late Augustine).

On Augustine’s theology of grace and predestination, see especially J. Patout Burns, The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 82 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980), which skillfully traces the often subtle evolution of Augustine’s theology of grace prior to, during, and through the Pelagian Controversy. See also:


15. AUGUSTINE'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MONKS OF GAUL

In the aftermath of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine received inquiries from a fervent disciple in southern Gaul, Prosper of Aquitaine, who complained that local holy men were critical of Augustine's views. This has long been referred to as the "Semi-Pelagian" Controversy. Recent studies have rendered this terminology out of date and have stressed seeing the reaction of the Gallic monks in terms both of local concerns and of emerging Christian monasticism.

Texts & Translations


Studies

On developments in Gaul, see Conrad Leyser, Authority and Ascecticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great, Oxford Historical Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). One major monastic leader based in Marseilles who disagreed with Augustine was John Cassian. On his life and spiritual theology, see Columba Stewart, Cassian the Monk, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also:


16. AUGUSTINE’S INFLUENCE & LEGACY

Karla Pollman, ed., The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine, 3 volumes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), $300 per volume. NEW. This is a major advance in Augustinian studies, a comprehensive study of Augustine's influence through the centuries.


