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Leidenhag, J. orcid.org/0000-0002-1164-7032 (Cover date: February 2023) *Book Review: Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account* by Han-luen Kantzer Konline. *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 36 (1). pp. 194-197. ISSN 0953-9468

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468221139645e>

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Han-luen Kantzer Komline, *Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account*

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). 492 pp. US\$125.00. ISBN 978-0-1909-4880-1 (hbk).

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Han-Luen Kantzer Komline, Associate Professor of Church History and Theology at Western Theological Seminary, starts by noting that two questions have dominated secondary scholarship on Augustine's view of the will: (1) Was Augustine the first to employ a unified concept of the will as distinct from both reason and emotion? (2) Is Augustine's understanding of the will cogent and coherent? Komline provides a brief and illuminating survey of key historical figures who have sought to answer the first question, including David Hume, Søren Kierkegaard, Hannah Arendt, Albrecht Dihle, C.H. Kahn, and Sarah Catherine Byers. This short literature review shows the enduring liveliness of debates regarding Augustine's theory of the will. However, it is the second question, not the first, that is of primary concern to Komline. As she writes, 'Augustine's evolving view of the will is more than a philosophical inception or conclusion... It tells a story unto itself—it retells the biblical story—of transformation from division to delight' (p. 13). Komline finally returns to the first question in the conclusion (pp. 419-31), arguing that it is only by appreciating the fully theological nature of Augustine's account(s) of the will that one can then see its originality and place in history.

Komline's primary argument is that the coherency and ultimate continuity of Augustine's view on the will can be seen, despite dramatic changes over time, by describing it as a 'theologically differentiated' or 'theologically periodized' account (p. 9, p. 55) of creation, fall, redemption, and eschaton. For Komline, 'Augustine's account of the will holds together in the context of this narrative, not as a system' (p. 225). A second, but equally important, argument of the book is that Augustine's method was consistently and predominantly that of 'interpreting scripture via scripture' (p. 164). What we have in this text is a compelling presentation of Augustine, the exegete first and foremost, Augustine the theologian and pastor secondarily, and Augustine the philosopher hardly at all. As she puts it, 'In the chariot of Augustine's thinking on the will, theology is the charioteer' (p. 377). A third argument is that the various stages of Augustine's own life and career correspond to his vision of how 'the willing functions differently, depending on where one finds oneself in the Christian story' (p. 86). This allows Komline to organise the chapters of the book both chronologically and thematically.

Chapter 1 considers *De libero arbitrio* and other texts from Augustine's early anti-Manichaean writings, between his baptism and ordination, which describe the state of the created will (*posse non peccare*) as a good gift of God and as 'the hinge of the soul' that is itself both the necessary and sufficient condition for good and bad action. Even in these early texts, Komline argues that Augustine's reasoning should not be considered "philosophical", as opposed to the more "theological" and "biblical" approach of his later thinking... because, while not yet differentiated according to the periods of the Christian story, even here, 'the will is a category that aids in making the distinctions necessary to think about God rightly' (p. 52). Komline argues that as time goes on Augustine considers generalised human

willing less and less, and the theologically differentiation brought on by detailed exegetical analysis continues to intensify.

In Chapter 2, Komline suggests that Augustine's deep reading of Genesis and Paul during his preparation for ministry leads him to focus on the fallen will (*non posse non peccare*), understood no longer as a freely pivoting hinge (*cardo*), but as a link in a chain (*ansula catenae*) to sin. The first part of this chapter traces the development of Augustine's thought about the fallen will through *De duabus animabus* (391-395), *Contra Fortunatum* (392), *De libero arbitrio* book 3, (391-395), and *Ad Simplicianum* (396-398). The second part examines Augustine's portrayal of the fallen will's impact on his own life in *Confessions* 8. Detailed treatment is given to *Ad Simpl.* both because Augustine's in-depth exegesis of Romans 7 and 9 in book 1 bolsters Komline presentation of Augustine as a biblical exegete (p. 89), but also because of his famous change of mind during question 2 of book 1, which creates the first differentiated characterisation of the will as fallen.

The majority of *Augustine on the Will*, chapters 3-6, details Augustine's view of the redeemed will (*posse non peccare*) throughout Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings. The question that Augustine wrestles with throughout this period is both how to characterise the redeemed will and its relationship to God's will in willing the good. Chapter 3 examines what is in the redeemed will's power. Chapter 4 uses Augustine's view of prayer and the prayers found within the bible to understand God's impact on the redeemed will. Together, chapters 3 and 4 examine the development of Augustine's thought across three stages of the Pelagian controversy: From 411-417, as Augustine responds to the Rufinus, Pelagius, and Caelestius, Komline sees Augustine as portraying the redeemed will as able to will the good with indirect help from God. After the Council of Carthage in 418 and until 426, Augustine is depicted as offering a more corporative account of divine and human willing against his chief interlocutor, Julian of Eclanum. From 426 onwards, writing against the monks of Hadrumentum and Gaul, God's agency takes centre stage as the exclusive, necessary, and sufficient source of a good human will within a non-competitive framework (pp. 218-221). These chapters provide a microcosm of Komline's presentation as a whole; despite an overarching developmental story of how Augustine's views changed, Komline stresses continuity with even the earliest texts, a continuity and consistency attributed to Augustine's continuous reading of Christian scripture (p. 127-128).

Chapter 5 maximises on Augustine's use of metaphors to distil his view of the redeemed will as a root of love. The redeemed will is, then, a wholly different source of action from the created and fallen will, because it has been uprooted and replanted in order to grow towards God. Komline argues that 'In this sense, Augustine's overarching conception of will is not gradualistic but apocalyptic' (p. 225) This image also gives Komline the opportunity to explore Augustine's use of the will as the mediator between human nature and action. Komline more briefly examines a second Augustinian metaphor for the redeemed will, that of the eye of the soul (in response to Pelagius' use of Sirach 15:16-17). With this image, Augustine can emphasise the will's dependency on God (light), not simply to function in a minimal sense, but to fulfil its purpose. The second part of chapter 5 details the characteristics of the good will in the process of conversion, as directed to God (interestingly, using Augustine's arguments in *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* concerning the end of marriage as the procreation of Christian children), and the tight relationship between the good will and faith. Part three argues that Augustine saw the will as synonymous with love and the heart,

thereby opening up a raft of biblical material to support and shape his increasingly theologically differentiated argumentation against the Pelagians.

Chapters 6 and 7 are innovative and important contributions to the secondary literature on Augustine, and for this reviewer were the highlights of the volume. Together they give a clearly Trinitarian shape to Augustine's account of how God intervenes to transform human willing in the history of salvation. With more explicit engagement with secondary scholarship and other patristic authors than previous chapters, chapter 6 explores how Augustine's Christology informs his view of the good will. First, Komline argues that, long before Maximus the Confessor, Augustine depicted Christ as taking on a human will distinct from his divine will. Second, she shows how Christ's struggle in Gethsemane models Augustine's own struggle in the garden in Milan and how a redeemed will prioritises justice over power. Finally, Komline claims that Augustine uses exposition of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms to argue for how Christ liberates and transforms the human will.

Breaking significant new ground in comparison to other secondary scholarship, chapter 7 considers the role of the Holy Spirit in Augustine's presentation of both human and divine willing, and the relationship between them. Whereas the early text, *De Genesi aduersus Manicheos* (388/389), depicted the Spirit and the will 'on parallel tracks that never intersected' (p. 332), *De Trinitate* presents the Spirit and the human will as causally connected. Part I describes how the Spirit completes Christ's transformation of the will. Part II argues that Augustine's reflections on the will shed light on Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and the identity of the Holy Spirit as the will (as well as the love) of God that drives human wills.

Chapter 8 considers the last period of the will's journey and the last texts of Augustine's career. In Book 22 of *The City of God* Augustine reflects on the eschatological or perfected will as not able to sin (*non posse peccare*). This gives Komline the opportunity for an interesting and valuable discussion of how Augustine's mature vision of freedom includes, but goes beyond, freedom of choice. This aids Komline in making sense of Augustine's claim that the saints' common resurrected will (as well as Christ's human will and the divine will) enjoys 'a voluntary and blessed necessity' (pp.395-96, 402-404). This eschatological will is more than the created will ever could be, as it brings with it memory of all the stages of its redemption in praise to God.

Parts of Komline's story have been told before, but her work is a more ambitiously comprehensive, thoroughly theological, and even confessional retelling of Augustine's account of the will than I have encountered before, which is sure to stand the test of time as a piece of secondary scholarship. Komline provides clear and lucid summaries at the start and end of each chapter and the reader never loses sight of the wood from the trees, as she frequently reminds us of where we are in the overall narrative and argument. This clarity of writing means that, whilst primarily aimed as an intervention for other researchers, there is no reason that this book should not be set on reading lists for higher level undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Komline never uses the contemporary labels 'compatibilism' or 'libertarian' in this text, and this may be in part because Augustine fits both at different times and even simultaneously. Although the Augustine of *Augustine on the Will* is a theologian first and a philosopher second, there is much for philosophers to engage with and think deeply about in this text.