



GREGORY W. LEE, ANTHONY DUPONT

Augustine's Two Cities Revisited

Contemporary Approaches to *De civitate Dei*

ABSTRACT: This article presents the current state of discussion in contemporary interpretation and appropriation of Augustine's social and political vision in *City of God*, attending particularly to Augustine's two cities framework for conceiving the relation between Church and world. The two cities are trans-national, trans-historical communities distinguished by their different loves. While they are primarily eschatological communities, the earthly and heavenly cities are nevertheless manifest in empirical social realities and inextricably intermingled with each other during this earthly existence. It is precisely this dynamic that generates the ambiguities and interpretive diversity characteristic of current scholarly discussion of Augustine's political theology. The two cities framework undergirds Augustine's position on a variety of issues this article treats in turn: pagan virtue, Christian participation in non-Christian political orders, and the nature of politics. The final section provides a roadmap for contemporary proposals concerning Augustine's political theology.

KEY WORDS: Augustine of Hippo • City of God • Politics • Pagan virtue • Church-State

Introduction

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is unquestionably one of the most influential Christian thinkers of early Christianity, whose writings merit their place in the canon of Western literature. Though he lived sixteen centuries ago during a period of great political tumult, Augustine's ideas are still quite relevant for contemporary society. The current paper presents the social and political thought of his greatest work on the topic, *De civitate Dei*, which addresses fundamental questions concerning how Christians should relate to their historical and political context and what role they should play in human society. After sketching the historical context of this monumental book, we will show how Augustine uses the schema of the 'two cities' to reflect upon human society, politics, religion, and the relation between Church and state. We will note throughout different, sometimes conflicting interpretations this schema has generated. We will conclude with a short overview of contemporary approaches to Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.

Historical Context

On August 24, 410, the ‘impossible’ happened: the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths of Alaric. Though Rome was no longer the political centre, nor the factual capital of the Roman Empire, it was still – certainly in the West – regarded as the ‘centre’ of the world, the ‘eternal city,’ *Roma aeterna*. Besides creating a gulf of refugees fleeing from Italy, the sack of Rome had huge symbolic significance. Its fall seemed to mark the end of an era and produced an enormous shock among all layers of the population. Jerome, for instance, compared it with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and of Troy by the Greeks.¹ Many Christians who conflated the fates of the Christianized Roman state and the Church feared that the fall of Rome would negatively impact the future of the Church as well.

Augustine replied to these concerns in *De civitate Dei* (413–427), his “*magnum opus et arduum*,”² by disconnecting Church and ‘state’:³ the end of the Roman Empire does not imply the end of the Church, which have different origins, histories, and final ends. Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities is critical to this response.

The fall of Rome also intensified existing ‘pagan’ criticism towards Christianity. Despite the fact that pagan religion was forbidden by imperial law, it remained present especially among aristocrats, who had held important positions in the former religious system, and farmers, who followed a tendency in the countryside to resist ‘innovation’. The pagan critics noted that the emperor, the Empire and Rome had converted to Christianity, but the Christian God had not protected Rome. Rome was allegedly captured because the pagan rites that used to safeguard both the city and the Empire had been forsaken. More specifically, pagan philosophers claimed that Christian ethics (humility, love for the enemy, etc.) had weakened the previously strong Roman state.

¹ Augustinus, *Epistula* (later *ep.*) 127.12.

² *Idem*, *De civitate Dei*, (later: *Civ.*) 1. *praefatio*.

³ “By detaching the Roman Empire, and by implication, any earthly society, from a Christian historical destiny or from any sacred purpose, Augustine also liberated the Church from dependence or identification with any particular political entity, institutional and social structure, culture or ideology. His eschatologism implied distancing it from all institutions, all forms of social organization, all ideologies and utopias, subjecting them to the most exacting questioning. The City of God is permeated by the awareness of tension, conflict, ambivalence and opacity in human affairs, and the final hope of their eschatological resolution. This is a radicalism beyond political programmes, not otherworldly indifference to temporal existence.” R. A. Markus, *The City of God*, [in:] *Saint Augustine*, T. van Bavel, B. Bruning (eds.), Brussels 2007, pp. 94–95.

De civitate Dei's answer towards these challenges was threefold.⁴ First, Rome is a temporal city, not an eternal city. Here on earth there is no eternal empire; only the *civitas Dei* is eternal.⁵ In the pagan period, Rome faced many disasters which could just as easily be attributed to the 'gods' as the disasters the pagans now blame on Christ. Indeed, the Romans actually experienced protection in 410 through the name of Christ as the outside invaders did not exercise violence against pagans who hid in Christian basilicas.⁶ Above all, the city Rome – whose power was based on war and terror – did not comply with the proper aim of a city: to strive after justice and the good of all people, the *res publica*.⁷ Second, Augustine challenges

⁴ "Rather than seeing *Civ.* as refutation of pagan objections to Christianity, to be read directly by pagans, it is more in keeping with what Augustine actually says about his aims to think of *Civ.*'s readers as Christians or others closely concerned with Christianity, who require fluent and convincing rebuttal of pagan views, both for their own satisfaction and as weapons in arguments with defenders of paganism." G. J. P. O'Daly, *Civitate dei*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 5/6, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 1992, pp. 969–1010, here p. 977.

⁵ Augustine stresses the same in sermons he preached in the period shortly after the fall of Rome (*sermones* 80, 81, 105, 205, 296): Rome is not eternal, Rome is nothing else than its inhabitants, Rome already had a turbulent history before its Christianisation, and one has to distinguish visible and temporal things from invisible and eternal things. *Sermo* 80.8: "The times are bad, the times are hard, that is what people say. If we live in a good way, the times will be good: we are the times; as we are, the times are [...]. It is bad people that make the world bad." Scholars also read *De civitate Dei* for Augustine's vision on history, especially regarding the question whether Augustine perceived an evolution in history. According to Th. E. Mommsen, Augustine rejects the idea of Christianity as a progressive factor in the evolution in human history (which is linear, not cyclical). Christian ideals can only be reached in the spiritual realm, and not in the temporal/historical/political realm. O. O'Donovan states that Augustine has a historical concept of the growth of the Roman Empire, but understood this development to be a demonic history. Since providence has its own aims, Augustine cannot affirm hope in the progressive transformation of socio-political orders here on earth. Th. E. Mommsen, *St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress. The Background of The City of God*, "Journal of the History of Ideas" 12 (1952), pp. 346–374. O. O'Donovan, *Augustine's City of God XIX and Western Political Thought*, [in:] *The City of God. A Collection of Critical Essays*, D. F. Donnelly (ed.), New York e.a. 1995, pp. 135–149. See also: S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, Paris 1999, pp. 571–576. For Augustine's dialectical Christianization in *Civ.* 1–5 of the traditional Roman conception of the state and history, see K. Pollmann, *Augustins Transformation der traditionellen römischen Staats- und Geschichtsauffassung (Buch 1–V)*, [in:] *Augustinus, De civitate Dei*, Ch. Horn (ed.), Berlin 1997, pp. 25–40.

⁶ *Civ.* 1.1–7.

⁷ *Civ.* 2.21.1: the Republic of the 2nd century was not interested in justice; *Civ.* 2.21.4; 19.21: Rome was never a republic in the true sense of the word; *Civ.* 4.4; 4.6: earthly kingdoms are comparable with robbers, pirates, and gangs; *Civ.* 19.25: the so-called pagan virtues of the republic are actually vices; cf. *ep.* 91.4: the justice the pagan philosophers advocate is only a theoretical construct, which they do not bring into practice.

the sufficiency of pagan religion and pagan philosophy to provide happiness during this life or after. The so-called ‘gods’ are just divinised humans with human vices, and neo-Platonism fails to acknowledge the incarnation, which is according to Augustine the only basis of human redemption. Third, the expansion of the Roman Empire was the work of the one true God and not the pagan gods, whom Augustine identifies as demons who seek to harm the Romans and keep them in bondage.⁸ Augustine’s answer to pagan criticism in the first part of *De civitate Dei* leads to a positive exposition of Christianity in the second part, which is built on the concept of the two cities: *civitas terrena* and *civitas caelestis*.⁹

The Two Cities

The concept of *civitas* refers for Augustine to *societas*: “a city is nothing else than a multitude of people tied together by one or other group bond.”¹⁰ According to Augustine’s two cities framework, *civitas* does not indicate historical or geographical cities or political entities, but rather trans-national,

⁸ *Civ.* 4.8–34, 5.11–13.

⁹ For the historical circumstances surrounding Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, the chronology of its composition, and its internal structure, see E. L. Fortin, *Civitate Dei*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, A. D. Fitzgerald (ed.), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1999, pp. 196–202; S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 547–562; G. J. P. O’Daly, *Civitate dei*, pp. 970–975, 979–982; J. van Oort, *De civitate Dei*, [in:] *Augustinus Handbuch*, V. H. Drecoll (ed.), Tübingen 2007, pp. 347–363, 348–351; J.-Cl. Guy, *Unité et structure logique de la “Cité de Dieu” de saint Augustin*, Paris 1961; R. J. Deferrari and M. J. Keeler, *St. Augustine’s City of God: Its Plan and Development*, “American Journal of Philology” 50 (1929), pp. 109–137. For more bibliographic references regarding Augustine’s political thinking and his *De civitate Dei*, see also: D. F. Donnelly, M. A. Sherman (eds.), *Augustine’s De Civitate Dei: an Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1960–1990*, New York 1991; D. F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God. A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York e.a. 1995; J. Doody, K. L. Hughes, K. Paffenroth (eds.), *Augustine and Politics*, Lanham e.a. 2005; J. Dunn, I. Harris, *Augustine*, (Great Political Thinkers, 3), vol. I–II, Cheltenham – UK & Lume – US 1997; P. Piret, *La destinée de l’homme: la Cité de Dieu. Un commentaire du ‘De Civitate Dei’ d’Augustin*, Bruxelles 1991. For the rhetorical techniques and argumentative structure deployed in *Civ.*, see Ch. Tornau, *Zwischen Rhetorik und Philosophie: Augustins Argumentationstechnik in De civitate Dei und ihr bildungsgeschichtlicher Hintergrund*, Berlin–New York 2006. Michael C. Sloan charts the transmission and reception history of the manuscripts of Augustine’s *Civ.* and its ideas in *De civitate Dei*, [in:] *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, vol. 1, K. Pollmann (ed.), Oxford 2013, pp. 255–261. The entry in the same reference work on Augustine’s political thought written by Arjo Vanderjacht, *Political Thought*, [in:] *ibidem*, vol. 3, pp. 1562–1569, surveys Augustine’s influence on later Western thought concerning eschatological history, law and justice, compelling obedience and intolerance, and the individual and the state.

¹⁰ *Civ.* 15.8, Corpus Christianorum series Latina, (later: CCL) 48:664. “Civitas nihil est aliud quam hominum multitudo aliquo societatis uinculo colligata.”

trans-historical communities whose unity according to a common bond extends across different times and cultures.¹¹

At several places in *De civitate Dei*, Augustine opposes the two cities: city of God – city of the devil; heavenly city – earthly city; eternal city – temporal city; city of the faithful – city of the godless; immortal city – mortal city; holy city – godless city.¹² Though *De civitate Dei* is Augustine's "most self-conscious" and structured work,¹³ it is also characterized by a series of polemical, sometimes *ad hoc* arguments, in keeping with Augustine's character as a rather associative thinker (certainly compared with contemporary Western linear and systematic thinking).¹⁴ Scholars have therefore struggled and sometimes differed with one another on how precisely to define the two cities.

The most fundamental distinction Augustine draws between the two cities concerns their loves. Whether one's citizenship resides in the earthly city (Babylon, Cain) or the heavenly (Jerusalem, Abel) depends on the basic orientation of the individual's desires: "Two loves, then, have made two cities. Love of self, even to the point of contempt for God, made the earthly city, and love of God, even to the point of contempt for self, made the heavenly city."¹⁵ Though this definition of the two cities suggests the mutual exclusivity of the two cities – no citizen of the heavenly city can belong to the earthly city, and vice versa – Augustine insists that the two cities not only coexist during this temporal life but are even intermingled with each other. "In this

¹¹ J. D. Adams, *The Populus of Augustine and Jerome: A Study in the Patristic Sense of Community*, New Haven 1971.

¹² For general introductions of Augustine's thinking on the two cities, see E. Lamirande, *Civitas Dei*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 5/6, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 1992, pp. 958–969; S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 562–566; J. van Oort, *De civitate Dei*, pp. 353–360.

¹³ P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, London – Berkeley – Los Angeles 2000, p. 302.

¹⁴ "Even Augustine thought it a bit too long; and we tend to dismiss it, as Henry James dismissed the Russian novels of the last century, as a 'loose, baggy monster'. Above all, *De Civitate Dei* is a book of controversy. It should never be treated as though it were a static, complete photograph of Augustine's thought. It reads like a film of a professional boxing championship: it is all movement, ducking and weaving. Augustine is a really stylish professional: he rarely relies on the knock-out; he is out to win the fight on points. It is a fight carried on in twenty-two books against nothing less than the whole pagan literary culture available to him." P. Brown, *Saint Augustine*, [in:] *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, B. Smalley (ed.), New York 1965, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Civ.* 14.28, CCL 48:451. "Fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum dei, caelestem uero amor dei usque ad contemptum sui." Besides *De civitate Dei*, the most extensive source for Augustine's thinking on *civitas Dei* are the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. See A. Lauras and H. Rondet, *Le thème des deux cités dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin*, [in:] H. Rondet, M. Le Landais, A. Lauras, and C. Couturier (eds.), Paris 1953, pp. 97–160.

world, in fact, these two cities remain intermixed and intermingled with each other until they are finally separated at the last judgment.¹⁶ As van Oort has argued, the two cities are for Augustine primarily eschatological and thus exclusive concepts, yet they are also manifest in contemporary social realities during this earthly condition, which occludes the distinction between the two cities.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Civ.* 1.35, CCL 47:34. “Perplexae quippe sunt istae duae civitates in hoc saeculo inuicemque permixtae, donec ultimo iudicio dirimantur [...]” Augustine also discusses this ‘mixture’ of the two cities outside his *De civitate Dei. Cat. rud.* 31, CCL 46:155: “In this way there are two communities – one of the ungodly, and another of the holy – which are carried down from the beginning of the human race even to the end of the world, which are at present commingled in respect of bodies, but separated in respect of wills, and which, moreover, are destined to be separated also in respect of bodily presence in the day of judgment. For all men who love pride and temporal power with vain elation and pomp of arrogance, and all spirits who set their affections on such things and seek their own glory in the subjection of men, are bound fast together in one association; nay, even although they frequently fight against each other on account of these things, they are nevertheless precipitated by the like weight of lust into the same abyss, and are united with each other by similarity of manners and merits. And, again, all men and all spirits who humbly seek the glory of God and not their own, and who follow Him in piety, belong to one fellowship. And, notwithstanding this, God is most merciful and patient with ungodly men, and offers them a place for penitence and amendment.” “Duae itaque civitates, una iniquorum, altera sanctorum, ab initio generis humani usque in finem saeculi perducuntur, nunc permixtae corporibus, sed uoluntatibus separatae, in die iudicii uero etiam corpore separandae. Omnes enim homines amantes superbiam et temporalem dominationem cum uano typho et pompa arrogantiae, omnesque spiritus qui talia diligunt, et gloriam suam subiectione hominum quaerunt, simul una societate deuincti sunt; et si saepe aduersum se pro his rebus dimicant, pari tamen pondere cupiditatis in eandem profunditatem praecipitantur, et sibi morum et meritorum similitudine coniunguntur. Et rursus omnes homines et omnes spiritus humiliter dei gloriam quaerentes, non suam, et eum pietate sectantes, ad unam pertinent societatem. Et tamen deus misericordissimus, et super impios homines patiens est, et praebet eis paenitentiae atque correctionis locum.” *Sermo Dolbeau 4.* pp. 7–8, *REAug* 39 (1993), p. 519: “Babylon receives the fruits of what it has done. There is in fact an ungodly city that extends over all the earth and, so to speak, represents the consensus of human ungodliness: in the Scriptures it is called, spiritually (*mystice*), Babylon. In contrast, there exists a city in pilgrimage on this earth which represents for all nations the consensus of piety: it is called Jerusalem. Now the two cities are intermingled, but at the end they will be separated.” “[...] de se triumphare fecerunt: redditur Babyloniae quod fecit. Quaedam enim civitas impia describitur per omnes terras tamquam consensio impietatis humanae, et haec Babylonia in scripturis mystice nominatur. Rursus quaedam civitas peregrina in hac terra per omnes gentes in consensione pietatis, et haec Hierusalem nominatur. Modo ambae civitates permixtae sunt, in fine separabuntur.” James O’Donnell sees an anti-Donatist concern beneath Augustine’s position that the dividing line between the two cities is currently invisible. J. J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography*, New York 2005, pp. 251–252.

¹⁷ J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon. A Study in Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Leiden 1991, pp. 123–131.

The moral character of the two cities is determined by their relation to earthly goods. Bad people seek to appropriate and privatise earthly goods, to enjoy them (*frui*) as an end in and of themselves.¹⁸ Good people also pursue these goods, but want to share them with others for the common good.¹⁹ They do not enjoy them as an end (*frui*), but use them (*uti* – this term does not necessarily bear a utilitarian sense) in recognition that God is the only appropriate end of all human activity.

The earthly city is not wholly negative, nor should Christians completely avoid it, for it provides temporal goods that benefit Christians and non-Christians alike.²⁰ In this regard, Augustine particularly stresses the Babylonian city's value in stimulating earthly peace. Though *civitas terrena* and *civitas Dei* have different ends, they have a *modus communiter vivendi* and share certain objectives in their common (albeit uneasy) coexistence.²¹ Earthly peace is one such pursuit a Christian cannot live without,²² and

¹⁸ “Clearly Augustine understood economics, an activity of the earthly city, in relation to his pessimistic, realistic view of human nature as mired in sin.” M. Ellingsen, *Social Ethics: The Two Cities*, [in:] *idem, The Richness of Augustine. His Contextual and Pastoral Theology*, Louisville – Kentucky 2005, pp. 133–141, 137.

¹⁹ According to R. Martin, Augustine defines the commonwealth according to common agreement which results in tranquillity of order. R. Martin, *The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy*, “Journal of the History of Ideas” 33 (1972), pp. 195–216. Cf. G. J. Lavere, *The Problem of the Common Good in Saint Augustine's Civitas Terrena*, “Augustinian Studies” 14 (1983), pp. 1–10. Note, though, the theological sense in which Augustine identifies the common good with God. See Augustinus, *ep.* 137.5.17, *idem, De doctrina Christiana* 1.5.5.

²⁰ Augustine does not deny the real value of the earthly city, since it is a part of God's provident plan. E. Teselle, *Civic Vision in Augustine's 'City of God'*, “Thought” 62 (1987), pp. 268–280.

²¹ Cf. M. Versfeld, *A Guide to the City of God*, New York 1958.

²² *Civ.* 19.17, CCL 48:685. “This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessaries of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven; for this alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. When we shall have reached that peace, this mortal life shall give place to one that is eternal, and our body shall be no more this animal body which by its corruption weighs down the soul, but a spiritual body feeling no want, and in all its members subjected to the will. In its pilgrim state the

even the most violent individuals and communities rely upon in their war-like behaviour. Temporary peace is a kind of shadowy reflection of heavenly peace. Thus, while temporary peace does not give real happiness – only the peace of the heavenly city does – and is ultimately a form of consolation for earthly misery, Augustine does consider it a *bonum*.²³ Christian rejection of pagan religion and philosophy therefore does not result in anarchy. Christians are obedient citizens who do not withdraw from their civil duties (they can, for instance, serve in the army²⁴), and they take their civil

heavenly city possesses this peace by faith; and by this faith it lives righteously when it refers to the attainment of that peace every good action towards God and man; for the life of the city is a social life.” “Haec ergo caelestis civitas dum peregrinatur in terra, ex omnibus gentibus cives euocat atque in omnibus linguis peregrinam colligit societatem, non curans quidquid in moribus legibus institutisque diuersum est, quibus pax terrena uel conquiritur uel tenetur, nihil eorum rescindens uel destruens, immo etiam seruans ac sequens, quod licet diuersum in diuersis nationibus, ad unum tamen eundemque finem terrena pacis intenditur, si religionem, qua unus summus et uerus deus colendus docetur, non impedit. Utitur ergo etiam caelestis civitas in hac sua peregrinatione pace terrena et de rebus ad mortalem hominum naturam pertinentibus humanarum uoluntatum compositionem, quantum salua pietate ac religione conceditur, tuetur atque appetit eamque terrenam pacem refert ad caelestem pacem, quae uere ita pax est, ut rationalis dumtaxat creaturae sola pax habenda atque dicenda sit, ordinatissima scilicet et concordissima societas fruendi deo et inuicem in deo; quo cum uentum erit, non erit uita mortalis, sed plane certeque uitalis, nec corpus animale, quod, dum, corrumpitur, adgrauat animam, sed spiritale sine ulla indigentia ex omni parte subditum uoluntati. hanc pacem, dum peregrinatur in fide, habet atque ex hac fide iuste uiuit, cum ad illam pacem adipiscendam refert quidquid bonarum actionum gerit erga deum et proximum, quoniam uita civitatis utique socialis est.”

²³ “If true justice resides only in the city of God, no historical state, with its necessarily limited perspectives and interests, can possess it. Augustine proposes an alternative definition, based on the notion of a common purpose and shared loyalties or pursuits, without reference to an idea of justice: ‘populus est coetus multitudinis rationalis rerum quas diligit concordii communionem sociatus’ (*Civ.* 19.24). But if this definition is value-free, Augustine does not wish to assert that the state is an autonomous mechanism, founded on legalistic formalism. He subscribes to the Roman ideal of ‘concordia’ (*Civ.*, 19.13): the state’s concerns have a relative value to the degree to which ‘pax’ or ‘ordo’ is realized in it (*Civ.*, 19.13; 17.26), even if it is ‘pax Babylonis’ that is realized (*Civ.* 19.26). But Augustine offers no programme for the Christianization of political institutions.” G. J. P. O’Daly, *Civitate dei*, p. 996.

²⁴ According to Augustine, Christians are allowed to enter the military and even kill in military service: *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos* 64; *Contra Faustum* 22.74–75; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 118; 124.7; *sermo* 31.1; *Civ.* 1.21; *ep.* 47.5; *ep.* 138.15; *ep.* 189.4–6; *sermo* 302.15. For more source material and further reading about Augustine’s thinking on just war in general (as a tragic necessity or a ‘lesser evil’, with the restoration of peace/justice as the only cause and intention, waged by a legitimate authority) and on his acceptance of Christians in military service (within the framework of his concern for social order), see: M.-Fr. Berrouard, *Bellum*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 3/4, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 1990, pp. 638–645; T. J. Weissenberg, *Die Frie-*

responsibilities seriously (e.g., the office of *audientia episcopalis*: bishops serve as civil judges²⁵).

While the two cities are mutually exclusive in their eschatological orientation, the boundaries of their present social manifestations remain obscure. Against the Donatists, the bishop of Hippo stresses that the visible Church has among its members citizens of the city of the devil. The Church is a 'mixed body'.²⁶ Conversely, the Roman Empire includes many Christians – and even Christian emperors. These overlapping boundaries have resulted in scholarly debate over whether Christians may have double citizenship, as citizens of both the earthly and heavenly cities. One reading suggests the Christian has to balance human concerns (earthly polity) with the desire to surpass these human concerns.²⁷ The Roman Empire that persecuted the Christians is an incarnation of the earthly city, but the earthly city is much broader than one specific political state and actually designates everything that does not belong to the eternal city. *Mutatis mutandis*, the spiritual city does not coincide with the earthly Church, but with the heavenly Church

denslehre des Augustinus. Theologische Grundlagen und ethische Entfaltung, Stuttgart 2005; Ph. Wynn, *Augustine on War & Military Service*, Minneapolis 2013.

²⁵ S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, writes: "The Christian is the most loyal and reliable observer of the State's laws because he does not regard them as a goal, and adheres to them only for higher ends than those of the State; the Christian practises civic virtues to the benefit of the earthly city, but in doing so he has in view the divine city, to which he aspires [*Ep.* 138.17, to Marcellinus]." p. 395.

²⁶ The rigorous and elitist Donatists removed anyone who sinned immediately from the Church, so as to avoid the further infection of sin. They saw the Church as an alternative society, a refuge for the saints, "a closed garden, a sealed fountain" (Song 4:12), to be "without stain or blemish" (Eph 5:27). Augustine answered that the Church on earth is a "mixed body–*corpus permixtum*," containing both saints and sinners, and that there is a difference between *ecclesia quae nunc est* and *ecclesia qualis futura est*. Only the heavenly Church will be without sinners. Here in the earthly Church, we have to tolerate and forgive sinners. Moreover, all Christians are sinners during this earthly existence. For source material and further reading concerning Augustine's anti-Donatist ecclesiology, see E. Lamirande, *Corpus permixtum*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* II, 1/2, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 1996, pp. 21–22; *idem*, *Ecclesia*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* II, 5/6, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 2001, pp. 687–720.

²⁷ R. J. Dougherty, *Christian and Citizen: The Tension in St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei*, [in:] *Collectanea Augustiniana*, J. C. Schnaubelt, F. Van Fleteren (eds.), New York 1990, pp. 205–224. "The sphere of politics is relative and restricted; within its restricted area, it is autonomous; but in its very autonomy it is a matter of deep concern to the citizen of the heavenly city. The new emphasis is part of Augustine's most mature reflection on the secular components of human life and flows from his understanding of the *saeculum*, not as a no-man's land between the two cities, but as their temporal life in their interwoven, perplexed and only eschatologically separable reality." R. Markus, *Saeculum. History and Society in the Theology of Augustine*, Cambridge e.a. 1970, p. 71.

which is prepared by the earthly Church.²⁸ As such, being a good and obedient citizen of a human state should not exclude heavenly citizenship.²⁹ An opposing reading of *De civitate Dei* stresses the centrality of Augustine's image of the heavenly city as a pilgrim in this world.³⁰ Though Christians may at various points assume high, even supreme office, in the earthly city, they nevertheless remain aliens or strangers in a foreign land, longing for their final return to the *patria* where they will be united with God. As citizens of the heavenly city, Christians can only be sojourners in the earthly.

Pagan Virtue and Rome's *Mores*

Augustine's judgment of Rome's moral character is generally harsh yet also reveals moments of qualified approval. Augustine does not articulate a developed theology of pagan virtues but he does identify critical norms according to which the moral behavior of non-Christian peoples should be evaluated.³¹

²⁸ On this reading, the state should not be identified with the earthly city, nor should the Church be identified with the City of God. Rather both state and Church stand for the respective cities through 'agent representation.' R. Martin, *The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy*.

²⁹ Augustine recognizes the merits of the Roman Empire, integrating various peoples and at the same time maintaining self-government. He however regrets that this unification was the result of a cruel imperialism, and that it took a long time to grant the equality of all inhabitants of the Empire (until the edict of Caracalla). C. Lepelley, *Civis, civitas*, [in:] *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 5/6, C. Mayer, K. H. Chelius (eds.), Basel 1992, pp. 942–957, here: 946. "What distinguishes this conception of the citizen most notably from classical writers on this topic is precisely the universality of citizenship in Augustine's view, in contrast to the ancient view which intimately connected the citizen and the particular political order. As Christianity had broken the horizons of the Roman political world by its rejection of the Roman gods, so the differentiation between the two cities transcends considerations of political entities – Rome, whether in its republican or imperial form, is not the sole embodiment of the city of man, for the two cities are more boundless." R. J. Dougherty, *Citizen*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages*, A. Fitzgerald (ed.), pp. 194–196, here: p. 194.

³⁰ G. W. Lee, *Republics and Their Loves: Rereading City of God* 19, "Modern Theology" 27 (2011), pp. 533–81. For a comprehensive survey of passages on the theme of pilgrimage, see J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, pp. 131–142.

³¹ The problem of *Les vertus des païens* within the Augustine research was brought to the foreground by the study of J. Wang Tch'ang Tche. He observes: "A partir de la controverse pélagienne, le langage de saint Augustin au sujet des 'vertus' des païens, se fait donc de plus en plus net, même quand il en parle dans ses prédications populaires. Il reconnaît bien que parmi les païens, il y en a, et même beaucoup, qui paraissent bons et honnêtes, fidèles observateurs de la loi naturelle. Mais, puisqu'ils se trouvent en dehors du bercail du Christ, ils accomplissent ces œuvres sans savoir à quelle fin les rapporter. Soit qu'ils ignorent par aveuglement, soit qu'il méprisent par orgueil la fin véritable qui est la vie éternelle et qui ne se réalise que dans le Christ, il est toujours clair que leurs œuvres n'ont

The brunt of Augustine's evaluation of Rome is found in *De civitate Dei* 1–10, which presents a narrative description of the Empire's defining vices: pride, violence, idolatry, sexual immorality, fear of death, and lust for temporal goods. For Augustine, these failings are not just secondary to Rome's history but reflect the driving impulses that propelled its rise to power. Thus, Rome's story might have begun with an understandable desire for liberty coupled with a concern to defend the city against outside attack. Yet this self-protective reflex quickly devolved into a relentless quest to gain more territory by attacking people groups that had not first provoked Rome.³² After Rome vanquished all its major foreign enemies, it turned its attention within, as Romans turned against each other, the elite oppressed the poor, and citizens inflicted worse damage against their fellow citizens than any foreign enemy had against the Romans.³³ Augustine characterizes Rome's raging desire for rule as a manifestation of pride, a point he flags from the opening chapter of his treatise.³⁴

aucune valeur véritable ni ne peuvent être regardées comme de vraies vertus [Augustinus, *Tractatus in Euangelium Ioannis* xlv, 2: XXXV, 720].” J. T. T. Wang, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens*, Paris 1938, p. 116. For recent treatments of Augustine's position on pagan virtues, see R. Dodaro, *Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God*, [in:] *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin: africanité et universalité; Actes du colloque international, Alger-Annaba, 1–7 avril 2001*, P.-Y. Fux, J. –M. Roessli, O. Wermelinger, (eds.), Fribourg, Switzerland 2003, pp. 287–305; A. Dupont, *Augustine's Attitude Towards the 'Religious Other'*, “Louvain Studies” 37/2–3 (2013), pp. 129–142; B. Gaul, *Augustine on the 'Virtues of the Pagans'*, “Augustinian Studies” 40 (2009), pp. 233–249; B. Harding, *Augustine and Roman Virtue*, London–New York 2008; T. H. Irwin, *Splendid Vices? Augustine for and against Pagan Virtues*, “Medieval Philosophy and Theology” 8 (1999), pp. 105–127; M. Lamberigts, *Julian of Aclanum on Natural Virtues and Rom.* 2, 14, “Augustiniana” 58 (2008), pp. 127–140; R. Rieks, *Konstanten paganer Ethik bei Augustinus*, [in:] *Von Athena nach Bagdad. Zur Rezeption griechischer Philosophie von der Spätantike bis zum Islam*, P. Bruns (ed.), Bonn 2003, pp. 92–110; J. Ruiz Pascual, *San Agustín y la salvación de los gentiles*, “Augustinus” 38 (1993), pp. 379–430; J. L. Swift, *Pagan and Christian Heroes in Augustine's City of God*, “Augustinianum” 27 (1986), pp. 509–522; Ch. Tornau, *Does Augustine Accept Pagan Virtue? The Place of Book 5 in the Argument of the City of God*, [in:] *Studia Patristica 43. Papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, F. Young, M. Edwards, P. Parvis (eds.), Leuven e.a. 2006, pp. 263–275; J. Wetzel, *Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Milbank's Augustine*, “Journal of Religious Ethics” 32 (2004), pp. 271–300.

³² *Civ.* 3.10; 5.12. Augustine cites Ninus of Assyria as the first ruler to embody this imperialist impulse. See *Civ.* 4.6.

³³ *Civ.* 3.23–30.

³⁴ *Civ.* 1.praef, CCL 47:1. “For the king and founder of the city of which we are going to speak has made known, in the Scripture of his people, a provision of divine law which asserts, *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble* (Jas 4:6; 1Pet 5:5). This belongs to God alone, but the inflated spirit of human pride strives to claim it for itself and loves to have the same thing said in its own praise, ‘To spare the conquered and subdue the proud’

As Augustine suggests, Rome's vices are intimately interrelated. Rome's arrogance and lust for domination correspond ironically with its desperate fear of death and a deep-seated insecurity about securing earthly goods. These national characteristics, in turn, stimulated Rome's idolatry and sexual immorality.³⁵ The rapid growth of Rome's vast military apparatus was driven by a fear of annihilation by foreign threats, and Rome's liberal and haphazard production of the gods reflected its restless worries about procuring physical goods and warding off physical suffering. In the mean time, indulgence in material luxury, the shows, and brazen sexual offenses provided a welcome distraction from Rome's anxieties, soothing its misgivings that such carnal pleasures might have no end beyond this earthly life. For Augustine, these pathologies not only define Rome's history and character, but they ultimately and organically emerge from one basic root: Rome's lust for earthly goods. Rome is far from the only community with such vices, but its size, fame, and distillation of disordered social life secure its status for Augustine as the paradigmatic instance of the earthly city.³⁶

For Augustine, the ultimate determinant of a people's moral character is what that community loves. If a people is "a multitude of rational beings joined together by common agreement on the objects of their love," then "to discover the character of any people we should take a close look at what it loves [...] and it is clear that, the better the objects of its love, the better the people, and the worse the objects of its love, the worse the people."³⁷

(Vergilius, *Aeneis* 6,853). That is why, when the plan of this work requires it and as the opportunity arises, I must also speak of the earthly city – the city which, when it seeks dominance, even though whole peoples are its slaves, is itself under the dominion of its very lust for domination." "Rex enim et conditor civitatis huius, de qua loqui instituiamus, in scriptura populi sui sententiam diuinae legis aperuit, qua dictum est: deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam [Iac 4,6; 1 Pt 5,5]. Hoc uero, quod dei est, superbae quoque animae spiritus inflatus adfectat amatque sibi in laudibus dici: parcere subiectis et debellare superbos [Verg. Aen. 6,853]. Vnde etiam de terrena civitate, quae cum dominari adpetit, etsi populi seruiant, ipsa ei dominandi libido dominatur ..."

³⁵ On this matter, see especially R. Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 32–43.

³⁶ Note in this regard O. O'Donovan's judgment: "That Augustine's two cities are moral communities, there can be no doubt; yet the history of the earthly city is supremely that of the Babylonian and Roman empires, and the history of the heavenly city is that of the faithful in Israel and of the church." *Idem*, *The Political Thought of City of God* 19, [in:] O. O'Donovan, J. L. O'Donovan (eds.), *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present*, Grand Rapids, MI 2004, pp. 56–57, substantially revised from "Augustine's *City of God* XIX and Western Political Thought."

³⁷ *Civ.* 19.24, CCL 48:695. "Si autem populus non isto, sed alio definiatur modo, uelut si dicatur; populus est coetus multitudinis rationalis rerum quas diligit concordi communionem sociatus, profecto, ut uideatur qualis quisque populus sit, illa sunt intuenda, quae diligit.

Augustine's narration of Rome's history as a degenerating series of external and internal wars reveals the quality of Rome's character, and the city's basic refusal to submit to God's rule necessarily results in the absence of true justice in the city's individual members.³⁸

For, when it serves God, the soul rules the body rightly, and in the soul itself the reason that is subject to God as Lord rightly rules sensual desire and the other vices. When a person does not serve God, then, what justice are we to think there is in him? For, when the soul does not serve God, it can by no means rule the vices justly. And, if there is no justice in such a person, it is beyond doubt that there is no justice in a human gathering that is made up of such persons.³⁹

In general, Augustine considers the moral character of a city to be identical with the moral character of the citizens who compose that community.⁴⁰ Pagan Rome was impious because its individual citizens did not worship God. Yet Augustine also acknowledges variegated levels of moral responsibility and guilt between different levels of society as well as between the human and angelic realms. It was the gods (or rather demons, as Augustine identifies them) who established the theatrical shows in response to the people's prayers for the end of a bodily pestilence, thus establishing a spiritual evil far worse than the physical one.⁴¹ Indeed, the gods consistently baptize immorality with religious ritual to seduce the people by promise of material reward to the destruction of their souls.⁴² The educated elite are also complicit, as they know full well that the gods are of no value for protection from physical harm – not to mention the whole system of the gods is philosophically incoherent – yet they nevertheless deem it politically or

Quaecumque tamen diligit, si coetus est multitudinis non pecorum, sed rationalium creaturarum et eorum quae diligit concordi communione sociatus est, non absurde populus nuncupatur; tanto utique melior, quanto in melioribus, tantoque deterior, quanto est in deterioribus concors.”

³⁸ *Civ.* 19.21; 19.24.

³⁹ *Civ.* 19.21, CCL 48:688–689. “Seruiens autem deo animus recte imperat corpori, inque ipso animo ratio deo domino subdita recte imperat libidini uitiisque ceteris. Quapropter ubi homo deo non seruit, quid in eo putandum est esse iustitiae? Quando quidem deo non seruiens nullo modo potest iuste animus corpori aut humana ratio uitiis imperare. Et si in homine tali non est ulla iustitia, procul dubio nec in hominum coetu, qui ex hominibus talibus constat. Non est hic ergo iuris ille consensus, qui hominum multitudinem populum facit, cuius res dicitur esse res publica.”

⁴⁰ *Civ.* 1.15; 4.3; 19.21; 19.23; 19.24. R. Dodaro, *Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God*, p. 291. See also R. Markus, *Saeculum*, pp. 149–50.

⁴¹ *Civ.* 1.31–32; 2.8. For a similar pattern, see also *Civ.* 2.27; 4.26; 8.13.

⁴² *Civ.* 2.10.

personally expedient to fake ignorance and perpetuate lies about the gods for the regulation of popular behavior.⁴³ Still, Augustine does not simply excuse the masses as victims of manipulation (though he blames them less than the elite), for they would not so easily have been deceived had they not already been inordinately disposed toward the enticements the demons offered.⁴⁴ For Augustine, it seems, demons do not act with operative efficacy upon inner motivational structures; they rather exploit preexisting fears and desires, seducing the people by signs and suggestions to abandon the good by their own volition.⁴⁵

Further complicating Augustine's depiction of Rome's *mores* are his adulatory remarks concerning certain figures of Roman lore. Marcus Regulus, for instance, figures prominently at various points in *De civitate Dei* as an example of heroic sacrifice for valuing fidelity to his country and his word more than his own life.⁴⁶ In one striking passage that perhaps best displays Augustine's Roman pride, he recounts a long string of Roman figures who demonstrated remarkable courage and loyalty to the state, even at the expense of their families and wellbeing.⁴⁷ While the argument of this chapter is from the lesser to the greater – if pagans will perform such feats for the sake of an earthly land, how much more should Christians for the sake of their heavenly *patria*? – the strength of Augustine's remarks depends on his sincere (if mixed) admiration for the figures he describes. Of a similar piece is Augustine's comparison between Romans who sought virtue for its own sake and then received glory, and those who sought virtue for the sake of glory and were thus not virtuous at all.⁴⁸ In that regard, for instance, Marcus Cato compares favorably to Gaius Caesar, as do the heroes of Rome's ancient past who receive Cato's praise. Yet Cato also sought honors he should not have, his virtuous predecessors represented only a small exception to an immoral majority, and these few good men were good only "in their own way."⁴⁹

While Augustine's diverse judgments on individual Romans are at points difficult to harmonize, his most programmatic remarks deny the possibility of true virtue apart from Christ while also acknowledging some benefits to Rome's *ersatz* virtue. Augustine's explanation for why God allowed

⁴³ *Civ.* 2.3; 3.4; 4.1; 4.27; 4.29; 4.30; 4.31; 4.32; 6. *Praefatio*; 6.1 *inter alia*. See also Augustine's extended discussion of Varro in this regard: *Civ.* 6.2–9.

⁴⁴ *Civ.* 4.1; 4.32; 6. *Praefatio*; 7.18; 7.21; 7.22.

⁴⁵ *Civ.* 3.10; 6.4.

⁴⁶ *Civ.* 1.15; 1.24; 2.23; 3.18; 3.20; 5.18.

⁴⁷ *Civ.* 5.18.

⁴⁸ *Civ.* 5.12–13.

⁴⁹ *Civ.* 5.12.

the Roman Empire to rise in power depends critically on this distinction.⁵⁰ Rome's defining characteristic was a lust for glory. Lust for glory sometimes degenerates into lust for domination but not always,⁵¹ and in Rome's case, the desire for human praise often resulted in great feats of apparent virtue. Even if such love for honor was a vice, it at least checked other, more obvious vices that characterized the eastern empires that preceded Rome (especially Assyria/Babylon). In that regard, Rome's rise to power brought benefit to all the peoples under its rule and even served as a kind of prefiguration of the virtue that would come with Christ.⁵² Still, Augustine establishes a clear distinction between apparent virtue and real virtue, which must be founded in proper worship. Those who do not worship God cannot exercise genuine control of their body, to borrow Cicero's language, such that whatever ostensible righteousness they display must really be taken as vice.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Civ.* 5.12–13.

⁵¹ *Civ.* 5.19.

⁵² *Civ.* 5.18, CCL 47:154. "It is thanks to that empire — so widespread, so long-lasting, so famous and glorious for the virtues of men such as those I have named — that those men received the reward that they sought in their efforts; and it is thanks to that empire that we have their examples set before us as a necessary admonition. If, for the sake of the most glorious city of God, we do not hold fast to the virtues of which they held to a kind of likeness for the sake of no more than the glory of the earthly city, we should be pierced with shame." "Proinde per illud imperium tam latum tamque diuturnum uirorumque tantorum uirtutibus praeclarum atque gloriosum et illorum intentioni merces quam quaerebant est reddita, et nobis proposita necessariae commotionis exempla, ut, si uirtutes, quarum istae utcumque sunt similes, quas isti pro civitatis terrenae gloria tenuerunt, pro dei gloriosissima civitate non tenuerimus, pudore pungamur; si tenuerimus, superbia non extollamur [...]"

⁵³ *Civ.* 19.25, CCL 48:696. "For, no matter how laudably the soul may appear to rule the body and reason the vices, if the soul and reason do not themselves serve God as God himself has taught that he is to be served, they do not rule the body and the vices rightly at all. What kind of ruler of the body and the vices can the mind be if it does not know the true God and, instead of being subject to his rule, is prostitute to the corrupting influence of the most vicious demons? In fact the very virtues which the mind imagines that it has, and by which it rules the body and the vices for the sake of gaining or keeping whatever is the object of its desire, are themselves vices, and not virtues at all, if the mind does not direct them to God. Some people suppose that the virtues are true and authentic when they are directed to themselves alone and are not sought for the sake of anything beyond themselves. But even then they are puffed and proud, and so they are not to be counted as virtues but rather as vices." "Quamlibet enim uideatur animus corpori et ratio uitibus laudabiliter imperare, si deo animus et ratio ipsa non seruit, sicut sibi esse seruiendum ipse deus praecepit, nullo modo corpori uitibusque recte imperat. Nam qualis corporis atque uitiorum potest esse mens domina ueri dei nescia nec eius imperio subiugata, sed uitiosis-simis daemonibus corrumpentibus prostituta? Proinde uirtutes, quas habere sibi uidetur, per quas imperat corpori et uitibus, ad quodlibet adipiscendum uel tenendum rettulerit nisi ad deum, etiam ipsae uitia sunt potius quam uirtutes. Nam licet a quibusdam tunc

Christians in the Earthly City

Augustine defines citizenship in the heavenly or earthly cities according to the individual's orientation toward God or self, but he also recognizes that citizens of the heavenly city can be active participants in a non-Christian society. One way to resolve the scholarly debate on double citizenship, then, is to suggest that Christians cannot by theological definition be citizens of the earthly city, whose paradigmatic instance is Rome, but many Christians certainly are by legal definition citizens of the Roman Empire and even occupy high imperial office. Indeed, such rulers have a moral obligation to exercise their authority for the good of the earthly city, though their governance must accord with the true virtues of the heavenly city, which is what will best serve citizens of the earthly city anyway.

One of the most suggestive but least noticed indicators of Augustine's position on Christian rulers in *De civitate Dei* is his dedication of the work to his "most beloved son, Marcellinus."⁵⁴ Marcellinus would fall victim to a Donatist plot and be executed only years after Augustine began his work,⁵⁵ but not before Marcellinus ruled over the Conference of Carthage in 411 that marked Augustine's signature political triumph over his greatest ecclesial foes. Pious, theologically curious, and committed to enforcing orthodoxy, Marcellinus represented a "new generation of Catholic politicians."⁵⁶ The series of letters Augustine wrote him leading to the Carthaginian Conference and after demonstrate his concern to remind Marcellinus of his Christian (read: 'Catholic') obligations and Augustine's basic presumption that he as a bishop enjoyed spiritual authority over his Christian brother.⁵⁷ Marcellinus' swift decision against the Donatists clearly met Augustine's approbation, and there is great symbolic import in Augustine's choice to

uerae atque honestae putentur esse uirtutes, cum referuntur ad se ipsas nec propter aliud expetuntur: etiam tunc inflatae ac superbae sunt, ideo non uirtutes, sed uitia iudicanda sunt." See also 5.15, 5.19. According to J. Herdt, Augustine considers 'pagan virtues' an impossibility because even pagan sages and heroes are "finally incapable of recognizing their own radical dependency on God in a way that opens them up to compassionate love of the world." See: *idem, The Theater of the Virtues: Augustine's Critique of Pagan Mimesis*, [in:] J. Wetzel (ed.), *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 111–129. Quotation from p. 128.

⁵⁴ *Civ.* 1. *praefatio*, CCL 47:1. "Fili carissime Marcelline." For further literature on Marcellinus, see V. H. Drecoll, *Marcellinus, Flavius, Augustinus-Lexikon* III, 7–8, C. Mayer (ed.), Basel 2011, pp. 1160–1165.

⁵⁵ Augustine's reaction to Marcellinus' death can be seen in *ep.* 151. See Augustine's praise of Marcellinus' life in *ep.* 151.8–9.

⁵⁶ P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 290.

⁵⁷ See especially Augustine, *epp.* 128; 129; 133; 138; 139.

dedicate his most significant work of political theology to this Christian statesman.

Augustine's more extended remarks in *De civitate Dei* on Christian emperors elucidate his position on Christian participation in broader society. Constantine receives commendation for rejecting idolatry and worshipping the one true God, which won him supreme power, military victory, a long life, and sons to succeed him.⁵⁸ Theodosius earns even greater praise for his displays of Christian fidelity. When Theodosius crushed his predecessor Eugenius' army, he won "more by prayer than by sword" as miraculous winds hurled enemy soldiers' javelins from their hands back at their own bodies. Then, as emperor, Theodosius destroyed idols, showed mercy to his political enemies, and strengthened the Church in its struggle against heresy. Yet his greatest moment of piety occurred when he submitted to the authority of bishops (especially Ambrose, though he is not named) who rebuked him for harsh treatment against the Thessalonians.⁵⁹ As Augustine describes what transpired, "Theodosius took more joy in being a member of the Church than in ruling the world,"⁶⁰ and his display of penitential humility so moved the people that they "felt more grief at seeing the imperial majesty lying prostrate than they felt fear of the imperial wrath against sin."⁶¹

Despite the physical blessings God granted rulers like Constantine and Theodosius, Augustine insists that Christian fidelity does not always result in material reward. Jovian enjoyed only a brief reign, even shorter than the apostate Julian's, and Gratian, also a faithful Christian, was killed by a usurper. For Augustine, such moments of discontinuity between virtue and material blessing result from God's intentional design, lest anyone become a Christian for earthly gain. Moreover, the happiness of rulers does not derive from earthly matters like the length of the rulers' reigns, their military power, or the succession of their sons. "Rather, we call Christian emperors happy if they rule justly"⁶² – through personal virtue, merciful treatment of wrongdoers, and the promotion of Christian worship, as Augustine's 'mirror for princes' explains. Such conceptions of the Christian ruler draw

⁵⁸ *Civ.* 5.25.

⁵⁹ See Ambrose, *ep.* 51, and Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 24.

⁶⁰ *Civ.* 5.26, CCL 47:162. "[...] cuius ecclesiae se membrum esse magis quam in terris regnare gaudebat."

⁶¹ *Civ.* 5.26, CCL 47:162. "Quid autem fuit eius religiosa humilitate mirabilius, quando in Thessalonicensium grauissimum scelus, cui iam episcopis intercedentibus promiserat indulgentiam, tumultu quorundam, qui ei cohaerebant, uindicare compulsus est et ecclesiastica coercitus disciplina sic egit paenitentiam, ut imperatoriam celsitudinem pro illo populus orans magis fleret uidendo prostratam, quam peccando timeret iratam?"

⁶² *Civ.* 5.24, CCL 47:160. "[...] sed felices eos dicimus, si iuste imperant [...]".

directly from Christian Scripture and not just general conceptions of Roman virtue.⁶³ Passages like the Sermon on the Mount are relevant, though they must be interpreted carefully,⁶⁴ and their admonitions toward mercy bear not only on the individual piety of private citizens but also on the behavior of public officials as they exercise public office.⁶⁵ It is good when Christian rulers enjoy wide reign for a long duration, for their mode of governance is favorable for all, Christians and non-Christians alike. Indeed, the primary beneficiary of the Christian's political success is not the ruler himself, but the people under his rule.⁶⁶ For the ruler's integrity already secures his own eternal reward, while the advantages of his rule benefit broader society even in temporal ways.

Just as non-Christians benefit from effective Christian governance over temporal matters, Christians benefit from the temporal goods of the earthly city. God has granted humanity certain goods necessary for this life – human society, temporal peace, bodily health, food, water, clothes, medicine, and so forth. He also stipulated that those who use these gifts rightly would gain eternal life while those who do not would not receive eternal goods and would lose temporal ones.⁶⁷ Christians thus share with non-Christians a basic dependence on temporal things and make use of the earthly city's goods while they proceed along their pilgrimage in this life. They concomitantly obey those laws of the earthly city which regulate this mortal life without prejudice toward the different customs or institutions by which various nations administer their affairs. Nevertheless, the heavenly city uses the goods of the earthly city toward radically different, eternal ends,

⁶³ R. Dodaro, *Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God*.

⁶⁴ Augustinus, *ep.* 138.2.9–3.15.

⁶⁵ This rule will in other contexts become an important plank of Augustine's defense of religious coercion. See *ep.* 185.19, CSEL 57:160. "How, then, do kings serve the Lord with fear except by forbidding and punishing with religious severity actions done against the Lord's commandments? For he serves in one way because he is a man, and he serves in another way because he is king. For, because he is a man, he serves him by living a life of faith, but, because he is also a king, he serves him by upholding with appropriate force laws that command what is just and forbid what is unjust." "Quo modo ergo reges domino seruiunt in timore nisi ea, quae contra iussa domini fiunt, religiosa seueritate prohibendo atque plectendo? Aliter enim seruit, quia homo est, aliter, quia etiam rex est; quia homo est enim, seruit uiuendo fideliter, quia uero etiam rex est, seruit leges iusta praecipientes et contraria prohibentes conuenienti uigore sanciendo [...]." For extensive source material and more discussion of Augustine's (changing) position on religious coercion, see M. A. Gaumer, A. Dupont, *Donatist North Africa and the Beginning of Religious Coercion by Christians: A New Analysis*, "La Ciudad de Dios. Revista Agustiniana" 223/2 (2010), pp. 445–466.

⁶⁶ *Civ.* 4.3.

⁶⁷ *Civ.* 19.13.

and it rejects entirely the laws of the earthly city concerning religion, even at the risk of hatred and persecution. Thus, while Christians can in one sense be good citizens of broader society,⁶⁸ their fundamental mode of existence remains that of pilgrimage, for their ultimate hope is for heavenly and not just earthly peace.⁶⁹

Since Augustine does not identify the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity as the culmination of God's purposes in redemptive history, he betrays no hope in a Christian state, a *civitas terrena christiana* that would oversee both the civic and ecclesial affairs of this current existence.⁷⁰ The earthly city is a kind of given, a permanent feature of the postlapsarian world until Christ's final return. All humanity fell in Adam and Eve's sin, and God has called only a righteous minority to be a new community characterized by love for Himself.⁷¹ Since Christians have no place to escape, they must live among non-Christians in the earthly city and cooperate with them to promote earthly goods. Nevertheless, Augustine does not favor any one particular political arrangement over others, nor does he advance arguments that link the success of the state to the growth of Christianity.⁷² For Augustine, it is a blessing when rulers become Christian and advance Christian ends, but this condition cannot be taken for granted and does not fundamentally alter Christians' identity as pilgrims in the earthly city. For no society is truly just unless each receives his or her due, and this certainly entails God's reception of proper worship. This is not to suggest that Christians have no interest in

⁶⁸ *Idem*, *De vera religione* 26.48–49: the 'new' or 'interior' man lives in a good way in earthly society by transcending his desires; *en. Ps.* 68.1; *Civ.* 19.17: because both Christians and non-Christians are mortal, they both need the earthly city, and Christians must accept a *concordia* with the earthly city on things pertinent to mortal life. Christians cannot neglect earthly peace and collaboration but in their service to 'Babylon' they must not become distracted by Babylonian pleasure; *Civ.* 19.26: Christians are to make use of the earthly peace of Babylon, though they are set free from Babylon by faith; *Contra Faustum* 12.36; *De catechizandis rudibus* 21.37: Christians should obey and pray for their temporal rulers.

⁶⁹ *Idem*, *En. Ps.* 148.4.

⁷⁰ Cf. H.-I. Marrou's explanation that we should not read *De civitate Dei* as a plea for a 'Christian Political State' as a kind of 'third city', a 'good earthly city' between the 'diabolic earthly city' and the 'heavenly city.' There are only two cities, and Christians have to work at temporal peace in the earthly city. H.-I. Marrou, *Civitas Dei, civitas terrena: num tertium quid?*, [in:] *idem* (ed.), *Christiana tempora. Mélanges d'histoire, d'archéologie, d'épigraphie et de patristique*, Rome 1978, pp. 415–423.

⁷¹ *Civ.* 12.23. The hostility Christians would face at the hands of the earthly city was also prefigured in Abel's death at the hands of Cain. *Civ.* 15.1; 15.5.

⁷² As Fortin has argued, Augustine's theology does not seek to legitimate the existing political order but orients Christianity to a trans-political or other worldly aim. E. L. Fortin, *Political Idealism and Christianity in the Thought of St. Augustine*, Pennsylvania 1972.

temporal goods or that religion and politics are completely opposed. Still, the primary locus of proper worship is the Church, which is the citizens of the heavenly city currently living on earth, though there are also citizens of the earthly city within its visible borders.

This final point suggests an important point of common ground between Church and world: just as Christians cannot escape from the world to the Church, so also can they not escape the world within the Church. For as Augustine's anti-Donatist writings make clear, sinners will always be intermingled among the faithful within the visible Church until Christ's final return. Thus the Christian's task in both the Church and the world is the same: to endure.⁷³

Politics and the Fall

Augustine is not particularly positive about politics. The political state is for him a coercive corrective to the self-love and will to dominate others (*libido dominandi*) that resulted from the fall in paradise. After Adam and Eve's sin, humanity opted against love for God and altruism; and in favour of egoism and the will to dominate. The political state was created in order to 'control' the latter egocentric inclination, to make a relatively just and righteous order possible for earthly society. In this sense, politics is not 'natural': it did not belong to God's original creation but is a consequence of the wounded nature which resulted from humanity's primordial sin. Only the predestined receive divine healing and escape by God's grace from self-love. These convictions are naturally incompatible with the attribution of significant ethical significance to the political state, which is primarily a remedy against human failure and not the highest expression of human capacities. Order in society is imposed to channel the disorder caused by original sin. Moreover, the highest good cannot be achieved in this life and always requires God's grace. True justice is not possible without God but only a 'derivative' equity – consensus, which is not the absence but rather suppression of disagreement. Politics is however not only a negative story according to Augustine's nuanced position. Although infralapsarian politics will not reach (true) heavenly peace, a relative earthly peace is possible and some orders can be more just than others. Indeed, the latter accords with God's will.⁷⁴

⁷³ For references, see footnote 26 in this article.

⁷⁴ *Civ.* 12.28, CCL 48:384: "Nihil enim est quam hoc genus tam discordiosum uitio, tam sociale natura." As consequence of humanity's vice, politics are necessary to establish *concordia*; *Civ.* 14.15: God did not create humans to have dominion over other humans, but only over beasts; *Civ.* 19.14–15: God created the first humans good, as slaves neither to sin

How did Augustine conceive of 'human politics' within the framework of the two cities? A qualified 'political realism' seems to answer this question. Augustine's political thinking was innovative in his time. First, he replaces the Greek *polis* – the best possible human community according to Greek philosophers – with *civitas Dei*, which rendered questions about the best form of political governance rather irrelevant in Augustine's eyes.⁷⁵ Second, Augustine breaks from classical political theory, which itself departed from a solely rational concept of the state (political idealism), by recognizing the concrete embeddedness of the state and the specific reality of the human situation.⁷⁶ Robert Markus has pointed out that since humanity is not able

nor to other people. These paragraphs deal with 'natural order,' and Augustine explains that 'slavery' and 'political states' are not 'natural', but consequences of (original) sin.

⁷⁵ "While the polis (in Aristotle, for example) is the representation of the best form of human community, and though never present in its perfected form but represented in a variety of forms, for Augustine the polis is now the city of God (*ep.* 91.1; *en. Ps.* 61.6). The community of the saints is the model to be followed, and thus the question of the best regime, perhaps the most significant political question for the Greeks, becomes relatively unimportant in the Augustinian scheme (*Civ.* 2.21; see 5.26 on Theodosius). Human beings are seen first as fellow pilgrim members of the city of God, not as fellow citizens of a particular political order, and thus Augustine depreciates the ancient conception of the city, partially because of its own comprehensive claim on the lives of the citizens. And yet, though there is a new emphasis on the universality of human communities, Augustine's teaching does not prevent him from recognizing that men can also expend more energy and care for those closest to them than for those who are more distant (Augustinus, *Civ.* 19.4; *De doctrina Christiana* 1.28.29; see Gal. 6:10)." R. J. Dougherty, *Citizen*, p. 195. There is discussion among scholars about whether Augustine considered the 'state' a necessary evil (against sin), or a good because it aims at peace and participates in God's providence. D. X. Burt, for example, thinks that in Augustine's vision the political state is not the result of sin, but a gift of nature. Augustine does not want to destroy the political state, but to purify it. D. X. Burt, *St. Augustine's Evaluation of Civil Society*, "Augustinianum" 3 (1963), pp. 87–94. In *Saeculum*, however, R. A. Markus argues that social existence is natural, but the state is a result of sin. For earlier Christian approaches to these matters, see M. J. Hollerich, *Eusebius of Caesarea's Commentary on Isaiah*, Oxford 1999, pp. 103–130, and P. Garnsey, *Lactantius and Augustine*, [in:] *Representations of Empire: Rome and the Mediterranean World*, A. K. Bowman, H. M. Cotton, M. Goodman, S. Price (eds.), Oxford 2002, pp. 153–179.

⁷⁶ According to M. Hollingworth, Augustine stresses the limitations of man as rational creature. The citizens of the pilgrim city live in this world, but do not belong to it. They are independent because they love God and are willing to die to their old lives in this world. Human happiness does not come from this world. "The languages of perfection, the certainties of virtuous action, come from another place; at any rate, they could not have been composed as reflections upon this world. The Christian citizen, better still the Christian ruler, is not encumbered with the prospect of describing his activities in their terms. The advantage of Christianity for the state is, in Augustine's opinion, an unexpected flexibility and freedom of movement." M. Hollingworth, *The Pilgrim City. St. Augustine of Hippo and his Innovation in Political Thought*, London 2010, p. 208.

to establish its transcendental happiness, human politics should be aimed at concrete earthly objectives. “The realities of the *saeculum* must be spoken of in historical or political, not in theological, terms.”⁷⁷ As such, Augustine’s political project is more realistic than utopian. Political activity does not satisfy all human aims. Love, the energy that drives human activity, will not find its final object of desire in the political sphere.⁷⁸ Augustine’s ‘political realism’ is based on his lack of faith in the *civitas terrena*’s ability to accomplish its task.⁷⁹ This realism does not fund a purely pragmatic approach to politics whereby one might justify sinful actions for the sake of some ‘greater good.’ Yet *De civitate Dei* is decidedly not an utopian writing; it rather opposes all forms of utopia.⁸⁰ Augustine does not hope for an ideal *polis* achieved by the use of *ratio*, but begins with social reality and human self-interest. The danger of self-interest threatens human society and should be corrected by love for God. Thus, Augustine’s criterion for virtuous politics is not reason but love.⁸¹

⁷⁷ R. Markus, *Saeculum*, 103: “In the last resort man’s destiny is not within his control. Not even in society can men work out their salvation. And this being so, as the functions, institutions and the quality of a society cannot be assessed in terms of the ultimates of human destiny, then the relevant language of politics must move in a more limited sphere, the sphere of the needs which social life exists to satisfy. Augustine’s repudiation of the classical ‘politics of perfection’ prepared the ground for a political theory which he never in fact elaborated beyond the bare indications that its realm is that in which the two ‘cities’ overlap. But he saw the direction and indicated it clearly. The realities of the *saeculum* must be spoken of in historical or political, not in theological, terms.” Markus seems to have backtracked on this position somewhat in *Christianity and the Secular*, Notre Dame 2006, pp. 59–66.

⁷⁸ P. Brown, *Saint Augustine and Political Society*, [in:] *The City of God. A Collection of Critical Essays*, D. F. Donnelly (ed.), New York e.a. 1995, pp. 17–35.

⁷⁹ The political life itself can never be fully just. H. Deane, *Augustine and the State: The Return of Order Upon Disorder*, [in:] D. F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God*, pp. 51–73. G. J. Lavere labels Augustine’s thinking political realism because Augustine seems to him to consider the political state a necessary evil against civil war, a chronic condition of that period. G. J. Lavere, *The Political Realism of Saint Augustine*, “Augustinian Studies” 11 (1980), pp. 135–144.

⁸⁰ D. F. Donnelly, *The City of God and Utopia: A Revaluation*, “Augustinian Studies” 8 (1977), pp. 111–123; *idem*, *Reconsidering the Ideal: The City of God and Utopian Speculation*, [in:] *The City of God*, *idem*, (ed.), pp. 199–211. Cf. R. R. Barr, *The Two Cities in Saint Augustine*, “Laval theologique et philosophique” 18 (1962), pp. 211–229: *Civitas Dei* is not an utopic future political or social community, but refers to the mystical union of all good people. On ‘political augustinianism’, see J. Jehasse, A. McKenna (eds.), *Religion et Politique. Les avatars de l’augustinisme*, Saint-Étienne, 1998.

⁸¹ R. Niebuhr, *Augustine’s Political Realism*, [in:] D. F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God*, pp. 119–134. Against Cicero’s definition, Augustine presents not justice but love as the bond of society. Cf. D. J. Macquene, *The Origin and Dynamics of Society and the State according to St. Augustine*, “Augustinian Studies” 4 (1973), pp. 73–101.

Augustine described politics in terms of the *ordo amoris*. Politics is not only about maintaining peace and security, but also maintaining a good earthly life (which is subordinate to life in the divine city, but nevertheless good). As such, Augustine acknowledges the concrete achievements of earthly political orders while at the same time indicating their contingency, their partial and historical character. The deepest human longings cannot be satisfied in and by the political life. John von Heyking perceives Augustine's political thought – which he takes to promote the civic attitude of gratitude and to remind us that nothing in the *saeculum* can ultimately satisfy human longings – as an antidote to certain extreme consequences of contemporary liberalism. “Human beings are permanently caught in the tragic situation of longing for true happiness, but they face the mysterious impossibility of not being fully capable of attaining it. This does not mean that political activity is fruitless; it means only that the fruition of our greatest longings lays elsewhere, an insight achieved only by thinking and acting in the world, and by discovering that such longing reorients our being in the world. Between our political activities and that fruition, we long and live in hope.”⁸²

Recent scholarship has witnessed growing interest in exploring the contemporary implications of Augustine's political vision, beyond the historical study of Augustine's thought in the original context. Though this conversation has roots in France from almost a century ago,⁸³ it has burgeoned in both Catholic and Protestant English-language scholarship over the last forty years. Seminal in this regard was the work of Robert Markus, whose *Saeculum* presented Augustine's political thought as an argument for a neutral public sphere that could accommodate a plurality of positions on ultimate ends, a kind of incipient political liberalism. While subsequent discussion has challenged a number of Markus' positions,⁸⁴ his work continues to exercise a determining effect on the contours of contemporary scholarship. Three clusters of related issues characterize contemporary discussion.

⁸² J. Von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World*, Columbia & London 2001, p. 261.

⁸³ For a recent history of Augustinian political thought, see Michael J. S. Bruno, *Political Augustinianism: Modern Interpretations of Augustine's Political Thought*, Minneapolis, 2014.

⁸⁴ Markus himself has issued some revisions, though his core positions remain substantially unchanged. See *Christianity and the Secular*. See J. Wetzel (ed.), *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge 2012, for a series of essays Wetzel describes as “post Markus” (p. 4).

The first is the degree of pessimism in Augustine's assessment of the possibilities of political change.⁸⁵ Peter Kaufman's *Incorrectly Political* represents the more pessimistic strain among Augustine's contemporary interpreters, arguing that Augustine harbored no serious hope for sustained political change despite occasional moments when he wished theological and political goals might align.⁸⁶ Augustine sought to use earthly government, as he did in supporting the coercion of the Donatists, but not to improve it in any fundamental way. Other scholars who stress this pessimistic note in Augustine, albeit in different ways, include John Milbank,⁸⁷ Charles Mathewes,⁸⁸ and Miles Hollingworth.⁸⁹ Markus' presentation of the *saeculum* as a place Christians and non-Christians share offers a rather different assessment of the possibilities of political change. For Markus, the cities are basically invisible realities,⁹⁰ and the impossibility of drawing clear lines between the two cities means that Christians operate as members of both.⁹¹ This means Christians have a vested interest in the affairs of the earthly city and should seek the improvement of earthly affairs, even as they eschew triumphalist, eschatological expectations. Jean Bethke Elshtain displays similar optimism by acknowledging Augustine's anti-utopianism while stressing his affirmation of civic engagement and love for the world.⁹² Christians recognize the tragedies of social existence, but they can still "strive to maintain or to create

⁸⁵ "The tenor of his thinking on politics is one of deep psychological instability and of societal insecurity. The main instruments which make the pilgrimage to the Heavenly City possible are those of various kinds of violence: minimal justice, coercion, compulsion, obedience even against one's will, and the often cruel 'necessities' of governing. No 'respect for common goals' nor his insistence on not harming anyone in the state common to all, nor even his stated delight in the beauty and wonder of transitory things, can obscure the overriding fact of the utter brokenness of this world in every possible way." A. Vanderjacht, *Political Thought*, p. 1569.

⁸⁶ P. I. Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More*, Notre Dame, IN 2007.

⁸⁷ J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. Oxford 2006.

⁸⁸ Ch. Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, Cambridge 2007, and *idem*, *The Republic of Grace: Augustinian Thoughts for Dark Times*, Grand Rapids, MI 2010.

⁸⁹ M. Hollingworth, *The Pilgrim City*.

⁹⁰ Though see R. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, p. 42 footnote 27 for an acknowledgement that his earlier presentation of the Church was too individualist.

⁹¹ "For the citizen of the heavenly city, concern for the *saeculum* is the temporal dimension of his concern for the eternal city [...]. In Book XIX of the *City of God* [Augustine] set about the task of defining a secular sphere in which it was possible for a Christian to think of himself as a member of a temporally limited society." R. Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 102.

⁹² J.B. Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, Notre Dame 1995: "If Augustine is a thorn in the side of those who would cure the universe once and for all, he similarly torments critics who disdain any project of human community, or justice, or possibility" p. 91.

an order that approximates justice, to prevent the worst from happening, and to resist the seductive lure of imperial grandiosity.⁹³ Von Heyking perhaps pushes this optimism the furthest in his suggestion that politics is for Augustine not just a natural good but a mechanism for satisfying humanity's longing for wholeness (even if not completely) and indeed humanity's highest practical activity.⁹⁴

A second area of discussion concerns Augustine's posture toward independent non-Christian political orders. For Markus, Augustine's *saeculum* offers a neutral space that can embrace those with different conceptions of the ultimate good in the shared pursuit of penultimate goods. As Markus has clarified, this is not to suggest that Augustine would restrict the scope of public authority to material matters with no reference to moral or spiritual concerns.⁹⁵ Augustine does think society can engage in corporate reflection on the common good. Yet Augustine's eschatology prevents him from conceiving the possibility that society would arrive at a consensus on religious matters, and he therefore commends the *saeculum* as a place where Christians may seek consensus with those of other religious commitments on what goals are worth pursuing.⁹⁶ John Milbank presents almost the complete opposite interpretation, arguing that the *civitas terrena* is for Augustine not the 'state' but the representation of "an entire pagan mode of practice, stretching back to Babylon,"⁹⁷ whose ends are not just finite goods but "unconditionally bad ends."⁹⁸ Augustine had no interest "laying down 'Christian' norms for an area which was intrinsically sinful,"⁹⁹ and the scope of his interest in the earthly city extended no further than Christian use of the earthly city's coercive mechanisms for ultimate and heavenly peace. Oliver O'Donovan's position may be taken as a kind of middle ground between Markus' and Milbank's views.¹⁰⁰ While O'Donovan rejects Markus'

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

⁹⁴ J. Von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World*, pp. 3–5.

⁹⁵ R. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, pp. 50–51.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 64–65. Markus relies here on O. O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community*, Grand Rapids, MI 2002, p. 21.

⁹⁷ J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 410. For a helpful discussion of the differences between Markus and Milbank, see M. J. Hollerich, *John Milbank, Augustine, and the 'Secular'*, [in:] *History, Apocalypse and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine's City of God*, M. Vessey, K. Pollmann, A. D. Fitzgerald (eds.), Bowling Green, OH 1999, pp. 311–326.

⁹⁸ J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 411. Italics his.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁰ O. O'Donovan, *The Political Thought of City of God* 19; *idem*, *Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*, Cambridge 1996; *idem*, *Common Objects of Love*.

depiction of the *saeculum* as neutral,¹⁰¹ he nevertheless thinks Augustine approved the persistence of an earthly political order for the sake of securing temporal goods by virtue of an earthly peace both Christians and non-Christians could pursue. This perspective funds O'Donovan's support for a qualified Christendom, characterized not by the Church's seizure of political power but by the submission of earthly kings to the gospel.¹⁰² The state is not to pursue the Church's mission but should indeed facilitate it while presiding over the administration of earthly affairs with modesty and minimalism before Christ's victorious rule.¹⁰³

A final area of growing interest concerns the possibility of positive Christian participation in the public sphere. Drawing especially on Augustine's letters, Robert Dodaro has defended Augustine's interest in the Christian statesman, a figure who self-consciously administers earthly affairs with an orientation toward eternal ends.¹⁰⁴ For Dodaro, this responsibility does not reduce to the negotiation of competing ecclesial and political commitments. The Christian statesman rather precipitates a theological transformation of the political virtues in ways that advance Christian goals while also serving the temporal interests of the earthly city.¹⁰⁵ Mathewes also encourages the Christian's positive participation in public life by presenting Christian participation in public life as an ascetic exercise in spiritual formation.¹⁰⁶ His project is less concerned with what the public sphere should look like than developing the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love through a robust and particularist understanding of Christian citizenship.¹⁰⁷ And finally, Eric Gregory advocates an Augustinian civic liberalism according to which Christians may engage in a public ethical conversation about human

¹⁰¹ *Idem*, *The Political Thought of City of God* 19: "The earthly city is not a neutral meeting space, a 'naked public square.' Here the difference between Augustine and modern secularism emerges at its sharpest, and it is the single weakness of Markus' fine book to have obscured this difference" (p. 58). "There is no true *tertium quid* between the two cities, no neutral space on which they meet as equal partners" (p. 59).

¹⁰² *Idem*, *Desire of the Nations*, pp. 195, 215–16.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, pp. 217–19, 233.

¹⁰⁴ R. Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*; *idem*, *Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God*.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*, *Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God*, p. 297: "Augustine is not suggesting that the transformation of these virtues, which occurs once God alone is desired, would result in the neglect by public officials of the pursuit of social goods, such as peace and security. Instead, he holds that these virtues, once understood in terms of the heavenly city, alter expectations about the substance of the peace and security which ought to characterize the earthly city."

¹⁰⁶ Ch. Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, 26.

flourishing.¹⁰⁸ In this proposal, Gregory goes beyond standard Augustinian warnings against utopianism; he suggests Augustinian Christians should positively seek social goods in the promotion of fairer, freer, and more egalitarian political communities.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

De civitate Dei presents a developed depiction of humanity as divided between the company of the angels and the company of the demons yet nevertheless forced to endure life together during the ambiguities of this temporal existence. The complexities of this shared existence have given rise to interpretations of Augustine's work of exceptional variety, from a theocratic understanding of civic government as the coercive instrument of the Church to secularist presentations of a state that demands Christian loyalty no less than the community of the faithful does. This paper has demonstrated the centrality of the two cities framework to Augustine's social and political thought and signaled some of the key *loci* of hermeneutical discrepancy. Augustine's great work will stimulate new appropriations in new contexts, though naturally, some more plausibly carry forth Augustine's vision than others. What cannot be disputed is the generative character of Augustine's great work, a source of inspiration for citizens, rulers, and pilgrims alike.



GREGORY W. LEE – Assistant Professor of Theology at Wheaton College and Senior Fellow of The Wheaton Center for Early Christian Studies (IL USA). He is author of *Today When You Hear His Voice: Scripture, the Covenants, and the People of God* (Eerdmans, 2016) and co-editor of *Christian Political Witness* (IVP Academic, 2014). His current research focuses on Augustine's ecclesiology and political theology.

ANTHONY DUPONT – Research Professor in Christian Antiquity and member of the Research Unit History of Church and Theology at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven (Belgium). The main focus of his research concerns the interrelated topics of divine grace and human freedom in the writings of Augustine of Hippo, and in particular in his *sermones ad populum* (sermons to the people), on which he published two monographs (Brill's Series in Church History, Brill 2011; Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, Brill 2014) and several articles. Currently he studies the development of the doctrine of sin and grace in North African theology. For more information, see: <https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/researchers/Dupont/>

¹⁰⁸E. Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship*, Chicago 2008.

¹⁰⁹*Ibidem*, pp. 8–10.