

Living in Two Cities
Lessons for the church today from
Augustine's City of God

Deborah Broome

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Theology
At the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand

November 2014

Abstract

Reading Augustine's *City of God* through the lens of public theology, as well as in conversation with some of his leading commentators, provides an opportunity to discover how Augustine's account of the two Cities (the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*) might inform the role of Christians in contemporary New Zealand, those who are living both as citizens in temporal society (the secular realm) and members of an alternative, Christian, society. There are parallels between Augustine's society and our own which make a reading of *City of God* instructive for the Church today. The occasion of Augustine's writing of *City of God* is briefly discussed, as is the theme of the two cities in the Bible and elsewhere in ancient literature. Attention is given to the nature of public theology and significant issues which public theologians must address, including the location of the debate (a secular public square), the language used, and the right to speak. A key notion is 'seeking the welfare of the city'. Augustine is considered as public theologian and as apologist.

The structure of *City of God* is analysed, key themes considered, and a précis offered which focuses on Augustine's treatment of the two cities throughout the work. The nature of the City of God and the Earthly City are examined, in discussion with major commentators: the cities are societies defined by their members and by what their members love. The Church is not the City of God, but is rather a sign and an anticipation of it. Likewise, the Earthly City is not Rome, nor the State. The two cities are interwoven and intermixed, *perplexae* and *permixtae* with one another, and interact in this present age, in the *saeculum*. Central to Augustine's thinking is that members of the City of God on pilgrimage in the world should not withdraw from that world but be involved in its society and institutions.

Ways in which Christian communities might engage with the surrounding culture are examined, including the idea of work as loving service; and a number of lessons for the Church today are drawn. Dealing with 'the other' and encountering diversity are important issues. The relationship between the Church and the State is considered, as is the nature of the Church as public space in its own right. A deeper relationship between Christian faith and public engagement is encouraged. Central to the application of *City of God* to our current setting is the idea of the citizens of the *civitas Dei* on pilgrimage, and what it means to be part of a pilgrim city. Viewing *City of God* through an eschatological lens is crucial. A major conclusion is that 'living in two cities' is not merely a description of what it feels like for Christians today: it is an indication of how our life is actually meant to be.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help and advice of my supervisor, Dr Christopher Holmes: Chris, thank you for your guidance and for your faith in me and in this project.

This thesis was completed during a period of Study Leave as Visiting Scholar at the College of St John the Evangelist, Auckland. Thank you to the Principal / Manakura, the Rev'd Canon Tony Gerritsen, and to the St John's College Trust Board for making this possible, and to the faculty, staff and students of the College community for making me so welcome. Thank you also to a number of my clerical colleagues in the Diocese of Wellington and to the Wardens and Vestry of St Anne's Northland-Wilton for ensuring that the mission and ministry of the parish continued in my absence.

As a distance student, I am particularly grateful to the staff of both the University of Otago Library in Dunedin and to the John Kinder Theological Library at St John's for their assistance. To the Kinder staff especially: thank you for your friendship and for all the coffee.

Finally, thank you to my husband, the Rev'd Alister Hendery, for your love and support. The writing of this thesis coincided with the final stages of the preparation of your book *Earthed in Hope* on Dying, Death and Funerals. If Augustine is the other man in my life, Death is the other woman in yours: together we, and they, make a good combination.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY	1
The world of Augustine: church and society in the Later Roman Empire	2
A changing world	4
The Sack of Rome	5
<i>City of God</i> : the occasion of its writing	7
The theme of the two cities	9
Parallels with the present age	15
2 PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS	20
The Nature of Public Theology	20
Seeking the welfare of the city	21
Christian tradition and scripture	23
A secular public square	25
Context	27
Claiming the right to speak	29
The language of the discourse	30
A mixed audience	32
The nature of apologetics	33
Augustine as an apologist	36
Augustine's audience	37
Augustine as public theologian	38
3 KEY SECTIONS OF <i>CITY OF GOD</i>	41
The Structure of <i>City</i>	41

Book I	42
Book II	44
Book III	45
Book IV	45
Book V	46
Book VI	48
Book VII	48
Book VIII	48
Book IX	49
Book X	49
Book XI	50
Book XII	51
Book XIII	52
Book XIV	52
Book XV	54
Book XVI	56
Book XVII	57
Book XVIII	59
Book XIX	61
Book XX	64
Book XXI	65
Book XXII	65
Key themes	66
Foundational distinctions between the two cities	68
4 SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS	70
Introduction	70
What are the Cities?	71
What does Augustine mean by the 'City of God'?	75
What does Augustine mean by the 'Earthly City'?	81

How do the Cities interact?	88
Living in the <i>Saeculum</i>	93
5 LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY	97
Introduction	97
Engagement with the culture	98
Work as loving service	99
Seeking the welfare of the city	101
Dealing with 'the other'	103
Engaging with diversity	106
The Church and the State	107
Christian faith and public engagement	110
More than an interest group	114
The Church's identity	117
Living as the pilgrim city	121
The eschatological lens	124
6 CONCLUSION	127
BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY

Here, my dear Marcellinus, is the fulfilment of my promise, a book in which I have taken upon myself the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of that City. I treat of it both as it exists in this world of time, a stranger among the ungodly, living my faith, and as it stands in the security of its everlasting seat. ... The task is long and arduous; but God is our helper.¹

Augustine of Hippo's *magnum opus et arduum* took him many years – *City of God* was published in intervals in the period 413-427, during which Augustine (354-430 CE) was frequently in ill-health.² It was, as the preface notes, a work promised to the tribune Flavius Marcellinus, the imperial commissioner who was to preside over the Donatist conference, and who was seeking arguments which might help him convert Volusianus, proconsul of Africa. One of Volusianus' objections to Christianity was its alleged undermining of the Roman empire.³ Augustine's *City of God* was thus a continuation (Brown calls it 'the last round in a long drama') of an ongoing debate between Christians and pagans in the later stages of the Roman empire.⁴

Augustine's writings have been influential throughout Christian history but are perhaps less read by those commenting on the state of the present Church than by those seeking an insight into the past. There are, however, parallels between the Roman society of Augustine's day (the fading days of the Roman Empire) and our own society which mean that a reading of *City of God* might be instructive for the Church today, in the Western world and in particular for the Church within Aotearoa New Zealand. Reading *City* through the lens of public theology as well as in conversation with Augustine's usual

¹ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*. trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003 ed.) (Hereafter, *City*), I Preface.

² See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, 1967), 285 for Augustine's health, and Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34-35 for years of publication.

³ See *City*, I. Pref n.1 and O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 32.

⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 300.

commentators provides an opportunity to discover how Augustine's account of the two Cities (the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*) might inform the role of Christians in contemporary New Zealand as both citizens in temporal society and members of an alternative society.

The world of Augustine: church and society in the Later Roman Empire

What was the world in which Augustine, Marcellinus, and Volusianus lived, and in which *City of God* was written? What were church and society like in the late Roman Empire, and how did the church and the old pagan traditions intersect with one another?

Christianity was no longer a persecuted sect – far from it. Since the conversion of Constantine and, still more, since the reigns of Gratian and Theodosius I (379-95), Christianity was growing in wealth, prestige, power and influence in public affairs. Under Theodosius, a succession of edicts saw what Markus has called 'the "establishment" of Christianity by legislation'.⁵ An edict on the Profession of the Catholic Faith (380) decreed that all of Theodosius' subjects should adhere to the faith brought by the apostle Peter to Rome and that the others ('whom We judge demented and insane') were deemed heretics and their meeting places not dignified by the name of churches. A further Edict of 391 effectively prohibited paganism, while one the following year provided for fines (ten pounds of gold each) for the punishment of heretics. In 386 law suits were proscribed on Sundays, and 'If any person should turn aside from the inspiration and ritual of holy religion, he shall be adjudged not only infamous but also sacrilegious'.⁶ Augustine rejoiced in these developments: 'the whole world is by now Christ's choir, and as Christ's choir it sings harmoniously from east to west'.⁷ Augustine's mentor Ambrose famously forced Emperor Theodosius I to do penance for his action in massacring rioters in Thessalonica, and (by contrast) made him cancel an order compensating a Jewish

⁵ Robert A. Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 123.

⁶ *Codex Theodosianus*, XVI.1.2 (380), *Cod. Theod.* XVI.10.10, *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.21 (392), *Cod. Theod.* VIII.8.3 (386) in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*, ed. J Stevenson, new edition revised by WHC Frend (London: SPCK, 1966), 150-51.

⁷ Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos (Expositions of the Psalms)* 149.7, 121-150 III/20 *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Maria Boulding, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2004), 492-507, at 498.

community in Mesopotamia whose synagogue had been burned down by militant Christians.⁸ Clearly a bishop had some power – but these were *tempora christiana*, Christian times.

The later Roman Empire was an increasingly top-heavy society, with an enlarged army and bureaucracy, and with the later emperors patronising an established church ‘that absorbed men and wealth like a sponge’.⁹ An edict in November 408 permitted only Catholics to serve in the imperial palace ‘so that no person who disagrees with Us in faith and in religion shall be associated with Us in any way’.¹⁰

Christianity was the established religion, but what is clear from the Edict of 380 was that the Church was not united: controversies abounded, with Catholics pitted against, variously, Arians, Donatists, Manicheans, and Pelagians. Brown speaks of ‘the pamphlet-warfare so common in the Early Church’ as bishops and theologians argued vociferously with one another.¹¹ Although Thagaste, where Augustine was born, was a Catholic stronghold, the Donatist church was the dominant one in Numidia, and as Bishop of Hippo he caricatured the views of the Donatist bishops in his pamphlets.¹² Marcellinus, a lay man, was sent by the emperor Honorius to Carthage in 410 to supervise a conference tasked with settling the dispute between Catholics and Donatists.

Significantly, although the Church was tolerated, legal, and supported by the imperial authorities, it was by no means universally accepted. The Christian aristocracy of service, in the imperial courts and in the huge system of provincial administration, existed alongside the senatorial aristocracy of birth.¹³ It was this old senatorial aristocracy in particular who saw themselves as guarding the traditional Roman values, who feared and

⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2009), 300.

⁹ Peter Brown, “The Later Roman Empire” in *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 67.

¹⁰ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.42, issued by Honorius and Theodosius II. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 154. Seven years later a further edict (*Cod. Theod.* XVI.10.21) barred pagans from military and civil service. *Ibid.*

¹¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 306. He notes that Augustine’s disputes with fellow Christians rarely rose above this level.

¹² *Ibid.*, 211-12.

¹³ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 90.

distrusted Christianity, and who tried to uphold the traditional pagan religion as well as the literary culture of the upper classes.¹⁴ These were ‘the Romans of Rome’ who claimed to represent, in the cultural, political, social, and religious life of the late empire, what one of their number referred to as ‘the better part of the human race’.¹⁵ They stood for the past, for the preservation of Roman classical culture, and for the continuation of the Roman Senate.

Volusianus, the proconsul of Africa whom Marcellinus wanted to convert, is an interesting case. He was in his thirties, born after the official suppression of paganism, to an old Roman family which included a pagan father but where his mother, sister, and niece were Christians. For Volusianus and his circle of deeply religious pagans Christianity appeared, notes Brown, ‘as it appears to many today, as a religion out of joint with the natural assumptions of a whole culture’.¹⁶

It was not, however, only the Roman senatorial aristocracy who held on to old pagan ways: even in heavily Christianised Roman North Africa paganism had not died. Church councils at Carthage despatched protests to the imperial court in Ravenna in 407 and 408 protesting (amongst other issues) the murder of bishops by pagans. In 408 an illegal pagan religious procession led to a riot and the looting of Christian property and the stoning of a church.¹⁷

A changing world

But – in spite of what the old senatorial class which strongly identified with their inherited classical tradition and with the myth of Eternal Rome – liked to think, the Roman Empire was fading. The world was changing, and society was changing with it, whether they wished to or not. For one thing, the Roman Empire was no longer centred on Rome.

¹⁴ Robert A. Markus, “Life, Culture and Controversies of Augustine”, in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, General ed. Allan D Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition), 498-504, at 502.

¹⁵ Symmachus, *Epistulae* i.52, quoted in Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 90. See also Peter Brown, *Religion and Society*, 161.

¹⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 298-300.

¹⁷ O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God*, 30.

Under Diocletian the Empire had been separated into two halves: the Greek-speaking Eastern half and the Latin-speaking Western half, with numerous centres of government in the imperial residences near the frontiers: Trier, Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, and Nicomedia. This division was strengthened with the founding of Constantinople in 330: a new capital, a 'second Rome'.¹⁸ Augustine, when bishop, looked to Ravenna whence the laws issued by Catholic Emperors to protect the church from heretics, not to Rome.¹⁹ Brown notes the way the externals of traditional Roman life were strenuously maintained even while everything was changing: clothes, mosaics, beliefs.²⁰

For Augustine and his contemporaries the age in which they lived was one of rapid and dramatic change, as the Roman Empire declined around them. When Augustine was born it was into a secure province, very much part of the greater Roman world, but by his death the perpetual warfare and threats from barbarian incursions had taken their toll. Huns had invaded across the Danube in 395, and three times (401-2, 405-6, 408-10) groups of Visigoths had attempted an invasion of Italy itself.²¹ Inflation was rampant, making life for the poor very difficult, and the rich sought to defend themselves by the accumulation of property. It was not just beggars and impoverished tenant farmers that were finding things difficult: in 401 African bishops appealed to the emperor to provide an official for each city to protect the rights of the poor, with most of those whose cases were taken up being small landowners or merchants at risk from the actions of wealthier and more influential citizens.²²

The Sack of Rome

Then, on 24 August 410, a Visigoth army led by Alaric sacked Rome. Three days of pillage and slaughter ensued, buildings were destroyed and women raped, until the Goths departed with prisoners, hostages and plunder. The shock was huge, and as much

¹⁸ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 90.

¹⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 289.

²⁰ Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine*, 11-13.

²¹ Jeremy Williams, "Barbarian Invasions", in *Augustine through the Ages*, 92-94.

²² Robert Dodaro, "Church and State", in *Augustine through the Ages*, 176-184, at 179.

psychological as it was material.²³ Pelagius (who had been in Rome at the time) was horror-stricken: 'Rome, the mistress of the world, shivered, crushed with fear, at the sound of the blaring trumpets and the howling of the Goths. ... Everyone was mingled together and shaken with fear; every household had its grief and an all-pervading terror gripped us. ... The same spectre of death stalked before us all'.²⁴ Jerome was anguished: 'Rome was besieged ... The city which had taken the whole world was itself taken'. He compared the sack of Rome to the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and (citing Vergil's *Aeneid*) to the fall of Troy. 'The whole world perished in one City'.²⁵

Augustine's response was more measured: 'All the devastation, the butchery, the plundering, the conflagrations, and all the anguish which accompanied the recent disaster at Rome were in accordance with the general practice of warfare. But ... the savagery of the barbarians took on such an aspect of gentleness that the largest basilicas were selected and set aside to be filled with people to be spared by the enemy'.²⁶ It could, indeed, have been worse. The invaders withdrew after three days.²⁷ Brown comments on Alaric (a heretic Arian rather than a pagan) 'compared with other barbarians, he was almost an Elder Statesman' who had lived most of his life within the Roman Empire. Over the next few years politicians would come to judge Alaric and his Goths as ambitious blackmailers rather than conquerors.²⁸ At the time, however, the Roman populace and people elsewhere in the Empire were severely rattled and refugees poured out of the city, seeking safety in Augustine's Africa.

The key consequence of the Sack of Rome was its psychological affect: it was, in a sense, Rome's '9/11' where the number of deaths (2977) was far outweighed by the shock and

²³ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 28.

²⁴ Pelagius, *Ep ad Demetriadem*, 30. Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 287.

²⁵ Jerome, Ep. 127, 11 and 12. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 201. Preface to Commentary on Ezekiel (I Pref, PL25:16), quoted in Richard J. Dougherty, "Fall of Rome" in *Augustine through the Ages*, 352-53.

²⁶ *City*, I.7

²⁷ The famine which Jerome alleges ('it fell by famine before it fell by the sword' Ep. 127, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 201) must therefore have been an overstatement, or possibly a reference to earlier instances of the Goths besieging the city and starving its inhabitants into cannibalism. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 286.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the feelings of vulnerability generated by the first attacks on American soil since Pearl Harbour. Though Rome was no longer the political capital of the Empire, it still symbolised a whole civilised way of life: when it was attacked, that security disappeared. 'If Rome can perish, what can be safe?'²⁹

Much of the psychological upheaval was religious. The devastation wrought by Alaric's army was attributed by many pagans to the gods' punishment of the city because it had abandoned the worship of the ancestral gods in favour of the Christian religion. Traditional pagans had accused Christians of withdrawing from public affairs and becoming pacifists, better at praying for their rulers than fighting for them.³⁰ In their turn, Christians questioned God's faithfulness and asked whether Peter, Paul and other martyrs had failed to protect their city. Sermons preached by Augustine in the months that followed address these concerns.³¹

City of God: the occasion of its writing

Alaric's Sack of Rome is seen as the event which prompted Augustine to embark on the long and arduous task of writing *City of God*: 'More than any other single episode the sacking of Rome gave Augustine a reason to write the *City of God*'.³² Certainly Augustine himself towards the end of his life gave, as his motivation for writing, the attempts of pagans to blame Christians for the event:

In the meantime, Rome was devastated by an assault on the part of the Goths acting under King Alaric and by a most destructive invasion. Worshippers of the many false gods, whom we usually call pagans, attempted to impute the devastation to the Christian religion and began to blaspheme against the true

²⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 123.16. Quoted in Brown, *ibid.*, 288. The Sack of Rome is characterised as a 'crushing moral defeat' (Brown, *Religion and Society*, 181) and 'a deep humiliation for Romans proud of their history' (MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 234).

³⁰ See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 291-92. and Ernest L. Fortin, '*Civitate Dei, De*' in *Augustine through the Ages*, 196-202, at 197.

³¹ For example *De excidio urbis Romae* preached shortly afterwards, and other sermons in which Augustine deals with the experience of suffering as part of the human condition. See O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 28-30.

³² G.R. Evans, "Introduction" to *City*, ix-lvii, at ix.

God with more harshness and bitterness than usual. I started to write the books *On the City of God* in answer to their blasphemies and errors.³³

It was not just popular disturbance at the sack of the city, but also objections from cultured and educated pagans like the circles Volusianus moved in, that was of concern. Augustine had received requests to produce something that could speak to their opinions, but he had initially hoped that this could be done by Marcellinus simply circulating his open letters rather than by his embarking on another book.³⁴ Christians too were alarmed by the destruction in Rome and mystified as to why God could have allowed the collapse of a Christian empire. This anxiety however was not new: they had been reacting to the threats and uncertainty of the barbarian invasions for some time. Augustine had been asked by the priest Victorinus in 409 to deal ‘in an extended work’ with the suffering brought about by barbarian invasions.³⁵

While the sack of Rome was ostensibly the event which made Augustine begin writing *City of God*, he had in fact been considering the themes of the work for quite some time earlier than that. There are numerous references in his earlier writings to the idea of the ‘two cities’ – the ‘city of God’ and the human city.³⁶ In late 408 Augustine wrote to Paulinus of Nola envying the latter’s withdrawal from the world and lamenting his own engagement with the business of human concerns: ‘amid a great variety of conduct and amid hidden choices and weaknesses of human beings we work for the benefit of the people, not an earthly and Roman people, but a people of the heavenly Jerusalem’.³⁷ Certainly Augustine’s biographer considers it ‘particularly superficial’ to regard *City of God*

³³ Augustine, *Retractationes, (Revisions) 2.43.1 The Works of Saint Augustine* trans. by Boniface Ramsey, ed. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2010), 148-49, at 148.

³⁴ See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 301-02.

³⁵ Augustine Ep. 111 to Victorinus (probable dating end of 409). *Letters 100-155 The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Roland Teske, ed. Boniface Ramsey, (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 88-94, at 88. Augustine says Victorinus’ letter ‘filled our heart with great sorrow, for such evils deserve lengthy groans and weeping rather than lengthy books’.

³⁶ Richard J. Dougherty cites *de catechizandis rudibus (on the instruction of beginners)* (dated 399) 19.31 and *de Genesi ad litteram (on the literal interpretation of Genesis)* (dated 401-415) 11.15.19-20. See “Fall of Rome” in *Augustine through the Ages*, 352-53, at 352.

³⁷ Augustine, Ep. 95.5 *Letters 1-99 The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Roland Teske, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 415-20, at 418.

as a book about the sack of Rome, believing that Augustine may well have written a book with that without such an event. 'What this sack effected, was to provide Augustine with a specific, challenging audience at Carthage; and in this way the sack of Rome ensured that a book which might have been a work of pure exegesis for fellow Christian scholars ... became a deliberate confrontation with paganism. The *City of God*, itself, is not a 'tract for the times'; it is the careful and premeditated working out, by an old man, of a mounting obsession'.³⁸ Dyson agrees, thinking it reasonable to conjecture that a *City* in some form would have been written even if Rome had not been sacked and even if the correspondence with Marcellinus had not occurred.³⁹

The theme of the two cities

The theme of two cities did not, of course, originate with Augustine, and he was drawing on those who had written before him. Cities are mentioned frequently in the Bible. Indeed, introducing an issue of *Interpretation* devoted to various perspectives on the city, editors Brown and Carroll note, 'The Bible has more to say about urban landscapes than it does about green pastures and still waters. Moreover Scripture uses certain agricultural images to impart a compelling vision of the city and, more broadly, what it means to live in community before God'.⁴⁰ Like the biblical writers, Augustine discusses actual cities (as historical and geographical entities) and also uses them as imagery to consider human community both under God and not under God.

Brown and Carroll write of Scripture's 'compelling vision for the city, as it sets forth Christ, who set his face toward the city'⁴¹ where he would die and rise again, noting, however, that in the Bible cities are depicted both positively and negatively. In Genesis 11 the people of Babel build a city and a tower as an act of rebellion against God's wish that humankind be scattered and 'fill the earth': they build in order to 'make a name for

³⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 311.

³⁹ R.W. Dyson, introduction to *Augustine The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), x-xxix at xiii.

⁴⁰ William P. Brown and John T. Carroll, "The Garden and the Plaza: Biblical Images of the City" in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* (Jan 2000), 3-11, at 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

ourselves' and avoid this scattering. But God confuses their languages, disperses them throughout the earth 'and they left off building the city'. (Gen 11:1-11, NRSV) The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are also seen in a negative light, condemned for a variety of sins: explicitly for pride and not aiding the poor and needy, implicitly for sexual violence (Ezek 16:48-50, Gen 18-19). The Hebrew people had no cause to love cities, especially after their sufferings in constructing Pithom and Rameses under Pharaoh (Exod 1:11). Babylon, the international power and the city that gives it its name, spelled disaster for the people of Israel. Exile in a foreign land was catastrophic as they were taken away from the land and the temple, which is why Jeremiah's advice to 'build houses and live in them ... seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf' is so counter-cultural. (Jer 29:5,7)

The Assyrian city of Nineveh is seen negatively through the eyes of the prophet Jonah, who turns and runs in the opposite direction rather than go there, but described positively by God ('And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city' Jonah 4:11). In the book of Jonah all the inhabitants of Nineveh, from the king down to the animals, spectacularly repent: this city may be viewed as a sign of hope.⁴²

And then there is Jerusalem. In words attributed to Rabbi Abraham Heschel, 'God has an address'. Jerusalem, also known as Zion, was the city the people believed was established by God, the capital of Israel and the site of the temple. Over and over it is celebrated in the poetry of the nation:

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. ...
As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts,
in the city of our God, which God establishes for ever. (Ps 48:1,8)

Jerusalem is the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High, and glorious things are spoken of it. (Ps 46:4, Ps 87:3) Significantly, it is these psalms that are quoted by

⁴² There is no historical record of any such act of repentance by any Assyrian city – but then the book of Jonah is more fable or 'comic legend' than historical writing. See John J Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 271-72.

Augustine in his discussion of the City of God ‘of which we are treating’: ‘From such testimonies ... we have learnt that there is a City of God’.⁴³ This is what gave Augustine’s work its title: the Latin translations of the Bible use *civitas dei* to translate the Septuagint’s *πολις του θεου*, and he was clear that, although the book discusses both cities, it is named for the ‘better’ city, the City of God.⁴⁴

Jerusalem was the centre of Israel’s worship, and the place of pilgrimage for all the people. God had established Jerusalem and God would protect it: in the songs of Israel and the imagery of its leaders God and Zion were connected to one another. ‘Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain’. (Ps 127: 1) The actual (geographical) city and the imagery of Jerusalem / Zion as the dwelling place of God blended with one another in the words of some of the prophets as they articulated an eschatological hope, even while the situation in the capital and the actions of its leaders were sliding downhill to the catastrophe of the Exile:

In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isa 2:2-4, cf Mic 4:1-3)

In the Gospels, Jerusalem is a dangerous place. It is the place where Herod lives, the destination towards which Jesus sets his face (Luke 9:51), the city which kills the prophets

⁴³ *City*, XI.1.

⁴⁴ *Retractationes*, 2.43.

and stones those who are sent to it (Luke 13:34), yet it is also the site of the resurrection, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Broadly speaking, in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Gospels and Acts, the cities mentioned are actual geographical entities, places that can be located on a map. Elsewhere in the New Testament, in the letters and especially in Revelation, the cities are metaphors, images for a greater but unseen reality. The writer to the Hebrews draws on Jerusalem as both a real place (though one far in the future for Abraham) and a heavenly goal:

For he [Abraham] looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ... from one person ... descendants were born... All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them. Heb 11:10-16 (see also Heb 12:22)

Augustine draws on the idea that believers are foreigners on the earth, seeking the heavenly city which is their homeland. Paul and the writer of Ephesians likewise describe the alien status of Christians on earth, whose citizenship is in heaven: being members of God's household along with the saints, they share in a city built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ in the centre. (Phil 3:20, Eph 2:19-22)

It is in Revelation that the image of the two cities, the City of God and the Earthly City, is most explicit. Jerusalem – the new Jerusalem – symbolises the City of God which constitutes the final fulfilment of the hope in which all God's people share. There will be

a new heaven and a new earth: 'And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'. (Rev 21:2) This City of God is identified with the holy people who have conquered and who will be united with God forever as the bride of Christ, the Lamb. In contrast, there is the other city, the city of Babylon – evil, idolatrous, oppressive – which will be destroyed. 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling-place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit'. (Rev 18:2) To the original audience of the book of Revelation, Babylon meant Rome: the 'great whore' (17:1) parodies the feminine images of *Roma Aeterna* and *Dea Roma* and functions as a critique of Rome in particular and Empire in general.⁴⁵

The concept of two opposing cities, sometimes named as Jerusalem and Babylon, sometimes unnamed, was picked up by early Christian writers. The second century *Shepherd of Hermas* develops the idea of the servants of God dwelling 'in a strange land; for your city is far away from this one', contrasting this with 'another city' with opposing values.⁴⁶ The *Epistle to Diognetus* (mid-late second century) refers to Christians dwelling 'in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners'.⁴⁷ Tertullian (160 – c. 225) takes up the Jerusalem-Babylon contrast in *De Corona*, although, as O'Daly notes, he does not develop the theme of the antithesis of the two cities:

From so much as a dwelling in that Babylon of John's Revelation we are called away; much more than from its pomp. But as for you, you are a foreigner in this world, a citizen of Jerusalem, the city above. Our citizenship, the apostle says, is in heaven. You have your own registers, your own calendar; you have

⁴⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 128, 145-46.

⁴⁶ *Shepherd of Hermas*, First Similitude "As in this world we have no abiding city, we ought to seek one to come", trans. by Roberts-Donaldson, see <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd.html>> (28 March 2014). See also O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 54-55 for discussion of *Shepherd*, *Ep to Diognetus* and Tertullian.

⁴⁷ *Epistle to Diognetus*, trans. by Roberts-Donaldson, see <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/diognetus-roberts.html>> (28 March 2014).

nothing to do with the joys of the world; nay, you are called to the very opposite, for "the world shall rejoice, but ye shall mourn".⁴⁸

Another likely source of Augustine's views was the writings of the Donatist Tyconius, which we know Augustine used elsewhere. Tyconius described the Church as the body of Christ, but a body in two parts (*corpus bipertitum*), composed of true and false Christians, and he may also have proposed a system of two cities.⁴⁹ O'Daly suggests that Augustine's mentor Ambrose may have influenced the theme of the two cities, since contrasts between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of sin, and the equation of the *saeculum* with the kingdom of sin and the earthly domain of the devil are common themes in his work. In his commentaries on the Psalms, Ambrose equated the Church with the City of God, and contrasted the earthly city and the heavenly Jerusalem in his letter of guidance to the Church of Vercellae:

consider, dearly beloved, that Jesus suffered outside the gates, and withdraw from this earthly city; for your city is the Jerusalem on high. Live there, that you may say, 'but our community is in heaven'. Jesus went out of the city, that you, going out of this world, may be above the world.⁵⁰

O'Daly examines the Greek philosophical tradition as possible influences on Augustine's use of the 'two cities' theme, noting that Plato's model city in *Republic* is an image or paradigm of an actual city state, which Augustine's is not. The Stoic cosmic city, as one coexisting with actual human communities, parallels what Augustine does in setting Christians' participation in the City of God and in the Earthly City alongside one another. A more easily traced influence, from the references throughout *City of God*, is Cicero's

⁴⁸ Tertullian, *De Corona*, XIII 1-4, <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ter tullian04.html>> (28 March 2014). (Translator not explicitly cited, but it could be Roberts-Donaldson.) O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 55.

⁴⁹ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 57. Augustine cited and criticised Tyconius' work in *De Doctrina Christiana* 3.42-56. See also Markus, "The Latin Fathers" in *Sacred and Secular: Themes in Late Antiquity*, ed. R.A Markus (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 92-122, at 112-13.

⁵⁰ Ambrose, Ep. 63.104, quoted in O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 56.

Republic, in which the author reflects on natural law, right reason and true justice, critiques the Roman Republic, and searches for an ethical concept of the state.⁵¹

Parallels with the present age

It is significant that Brown felt the need to remind his readers that 'Augustine did not write for us, though he can make us forget this'.⁵² Brown sees parallels between the concerns of people in the present day and those of Augustine's contemporaries: mounting tension between their inner and outer life, between their own experiences and the demands of the way of life that their history had handed on to them.

Jean Elshtain also finds similarities between Augustine's age and our own. Part of this, she suggests (writing in 1995) is the 'end of an era' feeling associated with the coming of a new millennium, just as the turn of a new century may have given to Augustine and his contemporaries greater hopes and reservations.⁵³ She sees Augustine speaking to similar concerns that are felt in the present day, though he comes up with different responses: the answer is not 'greater self-esteem' but 'more humility'.⁵⁴

Augustine was living in an age where the church, although part of the established social and political sphere, was not universally well-regarded, as illustrated by the strength of anti-Christian sentiments at the time of the sack of Rome. Moreover the church was spending considerable time and energy arguing with itself about a number of conflicts which must have seemed arcane to the rest of the population. It was also an age of rapid change, both political and economic, with the pain spread unequally between different sections of society. This sounds surprisingly familiar.

⁵¹ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 59-61.

⁵² Brown, *Religion and Society*, 11. Brown goes on to comment that 'Augustine is one of the few thinkers of the Early Church who can be called "contemporary" to ourselves'. Ibid.,26.

⁵³ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

The Church in the Western world today is likewise tolerated, legal and, to a certain extent, supported by the authorities (which, for example, allow tax deductions for donations to churches), but is increasingly becoming less a part of the established social and political sphere. The place of the Church in society is weakening, particularly in this country. While the surrounding culture may still call itself Christian and even, in Aotearoa New Zealand, sing a national anthem entitled 'God defend New Zealand', allegiance to the Christian faith, as recorded by measures such as church attendance, profession of Christian faith, and setting major life-cycle events (birth/baptism, marriage and funerals) within a religious context is declining. The authors of *Mission-shaped church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* have documented the social trends which lie behind the changing context of the church in Britain. They note that 'the Christian story is no longer at the heart of the nation. ... Many people have no identifiable religious interest or expression'.⁵⁵ This phenomenon, generally referred to as 'post-Christendom' (or sometimes, 'the rise of the "nones"' – for those who profess 'no religion'), is not confined to Britain. Alan Roxburgh admits that 'The Church in North America, Western Europe, and Australia is in serious decline. ... Churches in these parts of the world are driven to recapture a lost sense of place and importance in their culture.'⁵⁶ The same situation applies in New Zealand, as the figures from the 2013 Census reflect. In this country the number and proportion of people indicating that they had no religion increased to 41.9 % (up from 34.7% in the 2006 census and 29.6% in 2001). The trend appears likely to continue, as younger people were more likely to indicate they had no religion.⁵⁷ For the first time in nearly fifteen hundred years, 'no one is a Christian because of government compulsion, or in order to qualify for public office or gain favour with the powerful, or because they would lose respectability, social status, and business contacts if they did not go to church'.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Mission-shaped church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context*, Copyright The Archbishops' Council (Brookvale, NSW: Willow Publishing, 2004), 1-15, at 11.

⁵⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 39.

⁵⁷ Statistics New Zealand, 'Religious Affiliation' statistics. See <<http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/religion.aspx>> (3 November 2014).

⁵⁸ Craig A. Satterlee, "Patristic principles for post-Christendom preaching: an example of the history of preaching in service to the church", *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35.4 (August 2008), p 268+

In brief, the Church today is tolerated but scarcely at the centre of society, a society in which people have other religious options, including the option of no religion at all. There are also indications – not least the rise of the sort of fashionably aggressive atheism espoused by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens et al. – that Christianity is not universally accepted. Nigel Dixon notes that even though postmodern society is ‘reasonably “tolerant” of spirituality it is antagonistic toward Christianity’. He attributes this in part to the strong relationship between Christianity and the spread of Western culture, such that Christianity is seen as part of the modern world and therefore a legitimate target.⁵⁹ In New Zealand there is opposition to religious education in state schools, and concerns have been raised recently that all religious symbolism could be abolished from schools following the removal of Bible studies from an Auckland school timetable.⁶⁰

In addition, the Church of today is divided, not only into different denominations but – just as it was in the past – by tensions over theology, practice, and polity, as different denominations and different groupings within and across denominations argue with one another about a variety of issues. These have included the ordination of women to priesthood or to the episcopate (or, in non-ordaining denominations, whether women can be in leadership positions at all), whether or not there is a ‘hell’, whether priests can be married, how we should interpret the Bible (and even which translation of it we should be reading), how the church should relate to people of other religions, not to mention fights over music and furniture (pews, or no pews). A major current series of tensions revolves around human sexuality, including the ordination – to priesthood or to the episcopate – of people who are homosexual in orientation, the blessing of same-sex relationships, and whether people who are either homosexual or (if heterosexual)

(Academic OneFile Web, 2 Nov. 2014) It might be argued that, in Augustine’s time, with pagans officially barred from military and civil service, the situation was different, but the case of Volusianus attests to the presence of pagans within the civil service, irrespective of what the law said.

⁵⁹ Nigel Dixon, *Villages Without Walls: an Exploration of the Necessity of Building Christian Community in a Post-Christian world* (Palmerston North: Voxhumana, 2011), 117.

⁶⁰ See *NZ Herald* ‘religion ban fears grow’ 1 March 2014.

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11211823> (25 March 2014).

cohabiting without marriage should be electable to positions of lay leadership within a congregation. 'Since the 1970s controversies over issues of human sexuality have become increasingly divisive and destructive throughout Christendom. Within the Anglican Communion the intensity of debate on these issues at successive Lambeth Conferences has demonstrated the reality of these divisions'.⁶¹ The point of many of these disagreements is lost on those outside the churches.

The Church today, and the society in which it finds itself, is in a period of rapid change. Many of these changes, in employment, family life, mobility, housing, education, and technology have been documented in *Mission-shaped church*. Other examples are provided more humorously by the existence of Facebook groups such as 'when I was your age, Pluto was a planet'; indeed the rise of the Internet and of social networking media such as Facebook and Twitter are themselves testimony to the extent to which life is different now. There are some indications that the burden of much of this societal change is carried unequally by those at the bottom of society. For example, in New Zealand, income inequality (a measure comparing those with higher household incomes to those at lower levels) the rose steeply between 1988 and 1991, briefly plateaued, then rose steadily from 1994 to 2004. New Zealand now has the widest income gaps since detailed records began in the early 1980s.⁶²

Moreover change itself is not the only issue: change has always happened and is not always negative, but what is now occurring is discontinuous change. 'Discontinuous change is disruptive and unanticipated; it creates situations that challenge our assumptions. The skills we have learned aren't helpful'.⁶³ Like North African society in the waning days of the Roman Empire, people today are trying to make sense of life using skills that have worked in the past but which are no longer suited to new circumstances.

⁶¹ Archbishop Robin Eames, Foreword to *The Windsor Report*. 2004 (London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2004), 4.

⁶² See *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*, ed. Max Rashbrooke (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2013), 1.

⁶³ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 7.

The world Augustine inhabited and our own world are clearly different, so too are both the ecclesiastical disputes and the skills and characteristics required of church leaders and theologians in these respective ages. Yet, as we have seen, there are many points of similarity between the Church, and the surrounding society, in which *City of God* was written and those which exists today. It will be interesting to see what Augustine's account of the two cities, and what it means for Christians to live simultaneously in both of them, might teach us, as individuals and as the community of the Church, in our own day.

Chapter 2 PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS

When Augustine began writing *City of God* he was speaking into a particular context, addressing his contemporaries in the church and in society about the pressing issue of the day: the disaster which had befallen the city of Rome. There is today a discipline which engages in precisely this type of discourse: public theology.

The Nature of Public Theology

Public theology has been defined by Andrew Bradstock as being ‘concerned with bringing a theological perspective to bear upon contemporary debates in the public square, drawing upon the insights of the Christian faith and offering its contribution as “gift” to the secular world’.⁶⁴ Central to this is an engagement with issues of concern to the public. This is not the church talking to itself about its own issues: this is not a discussion about doctrine, ecclesiastical polity, angels on pinheads, or church furniture. Nor is it an endeavour focussed on protecting the interests of the church or its freedom to preach the gospel and conduct worship.⁶⁵ Public theology, as Richard Nelson has noted, ‘is the church’s critical reflection on the specific topic of public life in order to help transform public life’.⁶⁶ Thus the spirit which lies behind public theology is that of generosity and humility, wanting to make a difference in society without claiming to be the only voice worth listening to. Public theologians know they are one contributor amongst many, not any longer the dominant voice, but speaking into a conversation in which they are often not those who are setting the agenda. Indeed, public theology ‘often takes ‘the world’s agenda’, or parts of it, as its own agenda’⁶⁷ and offers its contribution from somewhere other than centre stage.

⁶⁴ Andrew Bradstock, “‘Seeking the welfare of the city’: Public Theology as Radical Action”, in *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Zoë Bennett and David B. Gowler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 226-40 at 226.

⁶⁵ Duncan B. Forrester, “The Scope of Public Theology,” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17:2 (2004): 5-19, at 6.

⁶⁶ Richard D. Nelson, “The Old Testament and Public Theology,” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 36:2 (April 2009): 85-94, at 85.

⁶⁷ Forrester, “The Scope of Public Theology”, 6.

For many years, indeed centuries, the church was a dominant force in society, a locus of power and authority in its own right and close to other sources of power. This is true no longer. Christendom has faded away, along with many other types of authority – and even respect for authority itself – and the church no longer commands the allegiance of large parts of the population. Theologians of all kinds must recognise that they no longer have a privileged position from which to speak. While the issues this raises are germane to theology in general they are particularly sharp in the case of public theology since this involves speaking, not to ecclesiastical bodies or members of congregations, but into a public square which has no special reason to listen.

Public theology, then, is done by the Church from its newer and more uncertain position, closer to the margins than to the centre of society, offering its contribution as a gift to the secular world, and recognising that gifts are not always received as welcome. This is where a spirit of humility is appropriate: seeking to make a contribution to the surrounding culture for the good of that culture and for the wider world, confident that theology has something to say that is of value, but not presuming on a right to be heard.

Seeking the welfare of the city

The contribution offered by public theology is best expressed by the words of the prophet Jeremiah to the Israelites living in Babylon: ‘But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare’ (Jer 29:7). This is the generosity which works for the good of others, and recognises that the church and its theologians can function at the service of the world and, indeed, that the future of church and wider society are bound up with one another. As Nelson puts it, ‘When doing public theology, the church is thinking theologically with the common good in mind and communicating its thinking in public in order to influence public opinion and public policy’.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Nelson, “The Old Testament and Public Theology,” 85.

This wider dimension, this willingness to 'seek the welfare of the city' is key. Central to the witness of Christianity is concern for both society as a whole and individual members of it: a concern, in short, for 'public good'. Part of the gift that faith-based discourse can offer to the public square is its specific perspectives on what constitutes public good: issues such as the importance of relationships, and the uses of power to protect or to threaten those without it.⁶⁹ Marion Maddox has written of the way in which reconciliation functions as theological gift, in the development, and articulation in the public sphere, of 'a language and practice of international and intergenerational apology and reconciliation'.⁷⁰ The improved relationships between people of different races and generations which are the consequences of this gift clearly fall within the 'public good'. Another, less tangible, public good lies in the quality of debate which can eventuate when faith can make its distinctive contributions to public discourse. Andrew Bradstock has observed that one of the key elements of public theology is the way 'it can prompt us to ask uncomfortable questions' about all manner of issues which have at their heart the core values of our society.⁷¹ This too is part of its 'gift'.

Gavin Drew has noted that the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) is 'literally "the good (public) announcement" ' and in New Testament times was a general Greek term for any socially good news such as a military or political victory believed to be for the public good.⁷² The link between gospel, good news and public good is yet another reason which grants faith a place in the public square, even if much of secular society would initially query that. Nick Spencer's discussion of the role of Christianity in Britain today, *Neither Private nor Privileged*, has drawn attention to the way the purposes of the state (or in his words, its 'moral orientations') revolve around the conception of human nature and public good

⁶⁹ Nick Spencer, *Neither Private nor Privileged: The Role of Christianity in Britain Today* (London: Theos, 2008), 79: 'The Christian faith is fundamentally about relationships.'

⁷⁰ Marion Maddox, "Religion, Secularism and the Promise of Public Theology", *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 (2007), 82-100, at 94.

⁷¹ Andrew Bradstock, "Using God-talk in a Secular Society: Time for a new conversation on public issues?" University of Otago Winter Lecture 2010 <<http://www.otago.ac.nz/ctpi/otago015731.pdf>>, (4 November 2014), 13.

⁷² Gavin Drew, "The Gospel as public truth in a pluralist world", *Stimulus* 13.3 (August 2005), 21-30, at 21.

that a state holds.⁷³ The state exists to promote the public good. Christianity, like other faiths, has views on what constitutes the public good, what will bring about human flourishing, what is the 'good news'. Spencer aptly affirms the essentially public nature of Christianity: 'Christianity must be public in order to be itself'.⁷⁴ There is much that Christianity can bring out of its treasure house to offer to the rest of society, and many ideas and ways of debating that public theologians can suggest as they invite the public into 'thoughtful conversations with the church' about matters of significance.⁷⁵

Christian tradition and scripture

Bradstock's definition of the task of public theology includes, as well as offering a gift to the secular world, the bringing of specifically theological perspectives to bear upon issues. This involves drawing upon the insights of the Christian faith gathered by men and women through the centuries. Public theology, like all other types of theology, is founded on values derived from our religious traditions.⁷⁶ In Forrester's phrase, 'It strives to offer something that is distinctive, and that is gospel, rather than simply adding the voice of theology to what everyone is saying already'.⁷⁷ Part of what is involved here, and connected to the centrality of 'gospel', is a commitment to identity, to that which makes us who we are.⁷⁸ The Christian tradition is a rich source of wisdom, from both Testaments of Scripture, through the historic creeds and the writings (both formal and informal) of individuals and church Councils, to liturgical texts and modes of being. Ways to order community life and practices such as regular periods of rest are part of the contribution of the church to wider society.

The use of Scripture in particular can access a deep vein of imagery much of which has moved so far into general language ('hoping against hope' 'heaping coals of fire') that it can resonate even with those who no longer read the Bible or even know that is where

⁷³ Nick Spencer, *Neither Private nor Privileged*, 75.

⁷⁴ Nick Spencer, *"Doing God": A Future for Faith in the Public Square* (London: Theos, 2006), 32.

⁷⁵ Nelson, "The Old Testament and Public Theology," 85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷⁷ Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology", 6.

⁷⁸ See John Atherton, "Marginalisation, Manchester and the Scope of Public Theology," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17:2 (2004): 20-36, at 28.

those phrases were originally found. Drawing on the biblical narratives can, as Bradstock has found, ‘provoke a deepening of the debate’ around issues and lead to the reframing of those debates.⁷⁹ It offers a store of wisdom that, in a paradoxical way, may appear fresh and new with the very unfamiliarity that stems from the decline in Bible reading over the last two centuries. The key thing is to avoid the opposing pitfalls of asserting the authority of Scripture in a way that is unintelligible to people who do not share a faith in God (the ‘The Bible says so’ argument) or else attributing so little authority to the Bible that it seems to make no meaningful contribution to the discourse of our day. There should be humility, but there must also be confidence.

When the Bible is used in public theology it is critical that the exegesis involved is accessible to the public audience being addressed.⁸⁰ Relating Scripture to contemporary issues by collecting legalistic principles from the biblical context and applying them to our own culture in a rigid manner is not going to lead to a helpful contribution to public policy-making. Drawing on broader understandings and more general values, and on the life-affirming intentions of the original texts, on the other hand, has vast potential to influence the world we live in.⁸¹

A useful example is that of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who repeatedly used, as his justification for opposing apartheid, his conviction that human beings were ‘made in the image of God’. As Jonathan Chaplin points out, Tutu’s religious reasoning was launched into the public domain, and explicitly drew on the biblical story, yet none of his hearers wondered what he meant. ‘His reasoning was perfectly intelligible to every citizen in the land – including the white Christian defenders of apartheid who did all in their power to silence him’.⁸²

⁷⁹ Bradstock, “Seeking the welfare of the city”, 229.

⁸⁰ Nelson, “The Old Testament and Public Theology,” 86.

⁸¹ Bradstock, *ibid.*, 230-31 gives the example of using ‘public good’ arguments for keep one day a week free – how this might enhance the quality of life for families and for society as a whole – rather than arguing that a day of rest is commanded in Scripture.

⁸² Jonathan Chaplin, *Talking God: The Legitimacy of Religious Public Reasoning* (London: Theos, 2008), 43.

A secular public square

A third aspect of public theology that should be considered here relates to the location of the debate. These are, as Bradstock and others have noted, contemporary debates in the public square: public theologians are speaking into a space which is – particularly in New Zealand – generally described as largely secular.

What sort of secular state is New Zealand? Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* outlines three types of secularity: the emptying of public spaces of references to God or to ultimate reality, the falling off of religious belief and practice (people turning away from God and no longer going to church), and the move to a situation in which belief in God is now merely one option among others, and not the easiest option to choose. Whereas belief in God was once taken for granted, the 'default position' is now unbelief.⁸³ There are signs of all of these in present-day New Zealand.

Jonathan Chaplin has drawn attention to two kinds of secularism: one being a controlling ideology that shapes the action of the state, the other as an official stance of even-handedness which does not favour one faith community over another.⁸⁴ Rowan Williams calls these two types of secularism 'programmatic' (for the former – also known as 'secular fundamentalism') and 'procedural' (also known as 'inclusive secularism') for the latter.⁸⁵ Chaplin's view is that 'procedural secularism is never just procedural':

where society is pervasively secularised – where public life and institutions are principally governed as if transcendent religious authority is irrelevant – it will in practice almost inevitably lean towards programmatic secularism, if only by default. Equally, in a society where public life and institutions are principally governed as if biblical authority were binding, it will in practice almost inevitably appear to be Christianised, also by default.⁸⁶

⁸³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2-3.

⁸⁴ Chaplin, *Talking God*, 20.

⁸⁵ Rowan Williams, "Secularism, Faith and Freedom," lecture delivered at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Rome, 23 November 2006 in *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 23-36 at 27-28.

⁸⁶ Chaplin, *Talking God*, 23.

New Zealand would appear in many ways to be ‘principally governed as if transcendent religious authority is irrelevant’, that is ‘programmatically secularism’: the state and the general public holding both that God is irrelevant and that that is a good thing. This kind of thinking is likely to lie behind the description of New Zealand as ‘a secular country’ where many believe faith to be a matter for the private, not the public, sphere.

Nevertheless, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission records that some elements of this country’s Christian heritage are ‘reflected in public life’, citing Easter and Christmas as public holidays, and Christian prayers in some public ceremonies. The Commission also notes that there is ‘a degree of statutory recognition of Maori spiritual beliefs, which are inextricably connected to Maori culture’.⁸⁷ This can be problematic: for example, in October 2010 there was considerable agitation in the media over an invitation for a behind-the-scenes tour of some of Te Papa’s collections which included the condition that pregnant or menstruating women not attend, a policy in place because of Maori beliefs surrounding some of the Maori taonga included in the tour.⁸⁸

In spite of the general view that ‘religion’ is a private matter in New Zealand, there many incidents of faith-perspectives being articulated by members of the public and tacitly approved by the Government. Television coverage of events around the time of the Pike River mine disaster (November 2010) included a clip filmed in the local rugby club, where some of the stalwarts talked about how they were praying for the trapped miners. When a tragedy occurs pages on social networking sites are full of images of lit candles and comments such as ‘Our prayers are with the families in their tragic loss. May God comfort

⁸⁷ Human Rights Commission, *Human Rights in New Zealand 2010 Ngā Tika Tangata O Aotearoa* (Auckland: Human Rights Commission, 2010), 145

⁸⁸ One commentator said, ‘I don’t understand why a secular institution, funded by public money in a secular state, is imposing religious and cultural values on people’. Amelia Wade, “Anger at Te Papa ban on pregnant women”, *NZ Herald*, 12 October 2010, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10679873> (4 November 2014).

them'.⁸⁹ The public memorial service for the Pike River miners, an explicitly Christian service in terms of structure and much of its content, was attended by senior governmental figures and broadcast live on major television and radio channels, as was the public service for victims of the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake. ANZAC Day sees Christian clergy officiating at civic services of remembrance for military war dead in every town and city, with additional religious services held in cathedrals on other occasions (Remembrance Day, Battle of Britain Day). Moreover Graham Ward has drawn attention to 'the Harry Potter phenomenon', finding in the global interest in this seven-year long series of stories about 'transcendent darkness and goodness, transfiguration and betrayal, error, sacrifice, forgiveness and grace' a desire to connect with the magical and the mythological which appears in a distinctly Judaeo-Christian form.⁹⁰ Perhaps New Zealand secularism is more of the procedural kind, rather than the deliberate absence of religion in public life. Those who do public theology need to take account of secular landscapes, of whatever kind, and of the growing presence of faith-traditions other than Christianity in this country.

Public theology therefore is more than merely doing our theology in public, more than a simple discourse about God, and about humanity in relation to God, upon which the public is allowed to eavesdrop. It means inviting the public not only to observe but to become part of the process, a public which does not necessarily share the values, ideas, knowledge and indeed the faith of the theologian but which may well wish to engage. These considerations affect both public theology's methodology and also its subject matter.

Context

Crucial to the doing of public theology is its contextual nature. This is more than simply the engagement with pressing issues of concern to the public noted above. It takes into

⁸⁹ Almost three years after the event the Pike River Facebook page was still carrying messages such as 'My prayers and thought's [sic] are with you today.' <<http://www.facebook.com/#!/PikeRiver>> 4 July 2013 (12 May 2014).

⁹⁰ Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 149-52.

account the need to respond to situations and theories which have changed over time, for not only do the presenting problems vary between the ages but the methods of addressing them and the places where answers are sought can also differ.⁹¹ Given the nature of contemporary contexts and the ways these can change rapidly, public theology needs to be interdisciplinary, because of the need to engage with a variety of sources and experiences.⁹² Public theologians can thus find themselves working alongside others – economists, sociologists, philosophers, scientists – in together responding to problems and seeking solutions.

Some of the challenges to which those theologians are responding are not necessarily those which appear on the surface of the public's, or the politicians' agenda. Indeed, public theology must sometimes challenge the public agenda and its priorities⁹³, pointing out 'the elephant in the room' and attempting to shift the debate by acknowledging the underlying issues. A case in point is that of the Barmen Declaration, signed by members of the German Confessing Church in the city of Barmen on 31 May 1934. It was a response to the situation of the German Evangelical Church under Hitler, which had fallen under the spell of the extreme nationalism and anti-Semitism of the Nazi party. The Barmen Declaration rejected the subordination of the Church to the State, by which the Church might become an organ of the State or the State fulfil the vocation of the Church. In what must be regarded as one of public theology's finest hours, it called the Confessing Church to resist the theological claims of the Nazi state – and it did so bravely and in unashamedly religious language, intelligible to those who read it both inside and outside the church.⁹⁴

⁹¹ See Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology", 6, and Atherton, "Marginalisation, Manchester and the Scope of Public Theology", 27, for discussions on the contextual nature of public theology.

⁹² Atherton, *ibid.*

⁹³ Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology", 6.

⁹⁴ For example, article 2: "Christ Jesus, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption". (1 Cor. 1:30.) 'As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures. We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords--areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him'. Text of Barmen available at <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm>> (9 May 2014).

Claiming the right to speak

Given the changing contexts, the often marginal position of the church, and the secularity of the surrounding culture, what are the issues that must be negotiated by those doing public theology, particularly here in 21st century New Zealand? First, a key matter is claiming the right to speak, over against those who would confine theological discourse to within the bounds of the church. Part of this involves realising that faith has indeed a legitimate place in the New Zealand public square: after all, insisting that faith should be absent from the public sphere, and that persons of faith should express their views only in private, is to reduce these persons to a lower political standing than everyone else. In a democracy, and one which enshrines freedom of speech, that is unacceptable; it violates the premise on which western democracies claim to be built.

To insist that religious views, people and organisations should keep out of the public sphere is to ignore our country's history. Arguably, without the role of missionaries like Henry Williams in translating and interpreting the Treaty of Waitangi to the Maori chiefs and securing acceptance of and signatures to it, this country would not be the same today.⁹⁵ Furthermore the churches, and their members, continued their activity in the public square throughout the decades since the signing of the Treaty, right up till the present day.

Moreover trying to keep faith away from public discourse and confine it to the private sphere betrays an essential misunderstanding of Christianity itself – and one could argue that it behoves anyone who tries to exclude something from the public arena at least to demonstrate a basic understanding of what it is they are so opposed to. God and 'Caesar', theology and political power structures, have always had to deal with one another; that is abundantly clear from any reading of the Bible, whether Old or New Testaments. What people believe, about God and about themselves and their place in the world, will determine how they act, and in particular how they treat those at different

⁹⁵ For the role of Henry Williams and other missionaries in respect to the Treaty, see Allan Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa* (Auckland: Education for Ministry, 1990), chapter 3, 20-27.

levels of the societal pecking order. Christianity therefore is not a solely private affair: there has always been a political aspect to its theology and practice, rooted in the confession 'Jesus is Lord'. 'Rule out the political questions and you cut short the proclamation of God's saving power; you leave people enslaved where they ought to be set free from sin – their own and others'.⁹⁶

This is an argument aimed not only at the secular culture that surrounds the church, but also at people of faith themselves, some of whom may have reservations about doing theology in the public sphere rather than more safely within the sanctuary. Recognising that 'God and Caesar' will always be dealing with one another cuts both ways.

The language of the discourse

A second issue facing those doing public theology revolves around the language used. What voice will carry best? Mary Doak's discussion of the public nature of theological discourse has framed the dilemma faced by public theologians:

if we speak our distinctly religious perspective, our voice is too particular to be comprehensible beyond our religious community, whereas when we adopt commonly accepted terms, we seem no longer to have anything distinct to contribute.⁹⁷

Chris Marshall categorises the alternatives as using the language of faith – the 'distinctive discourse approach', or adopting the secular language of mainstream political discourse – the 'common currency approach', and these two terms serve as a valuable shorthand.⁹⁸

Different public theologians have advocated one or other of these approaches, either in their discussion of the nature and methods of public theology, or by example in their treatment of the issues before them. Duncan Forrester seems to advocate for a

⁹⁶ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

O'Donovan says that when the advocacy of political theology has been at its clearest, 'it has insisted that theology is political simply by responding to the dynamics of its own proper themes'.

⁹⁷ Mary Doak, *Reclaiming Narrative for Public Theology* (Albany: SUNY, 2004), 14.

⁹⁸ See Chris Marshall, "What language shall I borrow? The Bilingual Dilemma of Public Theology," *Stimulus* 13.3 (August 2005), 11-18, at 11.

distinctive discourse approach. When he writes about doing public theology ‘in an age of terror’ he believes that ‘more conventional language tools seem quite inadequate for handling such portentous matters’ and the events seem to demand religious symbols and religious ‘even apocalyptic’ language.⁹⁹ Robert Louis Wilken’s view is that faith is embedded in language, and so it is the distinctive Christian language that should be used: ‘The Church must rediscover herself, learn to savor her speech, delight in telling her stories, and confidently pass on what she has received’.¹⁰⁰ Forrester cautions, however, that using religious language and symbols does not guarantee the discussion will be handled well: ‘religious symbols may inflame rather than illumine, and religious rhetoric excite rather than clarify’.¹⁰¹ In contrast, John Atherton advocates the common currency approach and considers that contributions by public theologians should be broadly accessible to the public arena, which requires theology to ‘translate its understandings into publicly accessible discourse’.¹⁰²

Distinctive discourse appeals to the language, the resources and the narratives of the Christian tradition. It thus enables the Church to speak *as Church*, with all the integrity and moral weight which accompanies the alignment of speech and action. Use of distinctive discourse preserves Christian identity and gives people of faith something around which to rally. ‘If ... Christianity is a culture in its own right, the Church must insist on its own way of speaking’.¹⁰³ There is the risk, however, that one could end up with the Church speaking only to itself.

The common currency approach appeals to the concept of a shared public truth which is drawn from the use of reason to reflect on the natural world and the world of human experience, without adding in explicit religious language or claims of divine law.¹⁰⁴ It is likely to appeal to a broad cross section of society, including leaders who might not want

⁹⁹ Forrester, “The Scope of Public Theology”, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Louis Wilken, “The Church’s Way of Speaking”, *First Things*, 155 (Aug-Sept 2005), 27-31, at 31. See also 29.

¹⁰¹ Forrester, *ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁰² Atherton, “Marginalisation, Manchester and the Scope of Public Theology”, 32.

¹⁰³ Wilken, “The Church’s Way of Speaking”, 30.

¹⁰⁴ See Marshall, “What language shall I borrow?” 14.

to be seen to be swayed by obviously 'religious' arguments. The disadvantage of this approach, from the Christian standpoint, is that it could easily blunt the eschatological radicalism that lies behind Christianity¹⁰⁵, its ability to ask the hard questions (of itself, as well as of the world outside the Church). The temptation to compromise, to soft-pedal the stance on moral or ethical issues in order to make a point, should be acknowledged. Is using 'common currency' rendering to Caesar what should be God's? Moreover, with the increasing doubt in the post-modern world about the existence of self-evident truths that are universally accepted, common currency is not so 'common' any longer.

Both approaches, whether common currency or distinctive discourse, have much to recommend them but also significant disadvantages. 'The former risks compromising the gospel summons to conversion; the latter risks confining the gospel to the Christian ghetto'.¹⁰⁶ A third, integrated, approach has been proposed by Marshall, drawing on the work of Robert Gascoigne. Marshall and Gascoigne argue that the perspectives of public theology should be derived, not from an objective ahistorical reflection on nature (as if this were possible), but from Christian revelation. Public theologians should, though, remain open to contributions from outside the Christian tradition, recognising that Christians do not hold a monopoly on wisdom (or, indeed, common sense). Actions speak louder than words, and a life consistent with the gospel has a power beyond words offered in the public square.¹⁰⁷

A mixed audience

Another, related, issue facing public theologians is that they are addressing both those within the church and those outside it. Each group may be interested in separate issues and the background knowledge each has may not necessarily be the same. Dealing with multiple audiences demands different types of language and different levels of academic rigour.¹⁰⁸ There is the world, the church, and the academy¹⁰⁹ – and each of those can

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ Pearson (n.d.) "What is public theology?" Available at: <www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/theology/pact/documents/What_is_Public_Theology.pdf> (9 May 2014).

comprise subgroupings which require different methods and tones of communication and varying amounts of information. Making a policy submission to a select committee, engaging with the public at grass-roots level, speaking to the Mothers' Union, to church youth groups, or to a meeting of diocesan bishops are not the same thing.

A final issue centres around clearly articulating the purpose of public theology. It is, as noted above, to make a contribution to wider society, to help to transform that society. Contributions are offered as gift, as a way of working for the public good. Although it is concerned with the 'public relevance' of Christian beliefs and Christian doctrine¹¹⁰, and bears witness to the truth of its foundational words and actions, it does not set out to convert. It 'seeks the welfare of the city' even if that city remains unconnected to the church: it does not attempt to change Babylon to Jerusalem. It is this attitude that could lie behind Nelson's perspective that public theology 'does not seek so much to tell people how to behave but to inculcate thoughtful virtue in the citizenry, whatever their religious convictions or loyalties may be'.¹¹¹ These issues, and in particular those that relate to audience and purpose, highlight the differences between public theology and apologetics.

The nature of apologetics

Apologetics is, simply speaking, 'a speech in defence, a defence' – apologia – a word that comes to us from the Greek legal system. In a philosophical or religious sense, it is 'the attempt to defend a particular belief or system of beliefs against objections'.¹¹² Beilby points out that the word apologetics (as noun or as verb) occurs nineteen times in the New Testament, 'either to denote an answer given to a charge, objection or accusation leveled against an individual or a vindication (implying a successful answer or defense)'.¹¹³ Sometimes it is Paul defending himself or being defended by others, sometimes what is

¹⁰⁹ Michael Kirwan, drawing on the work of David Tracy, notes that the public theologian is addressing one or more of three 'publics': the academy, the Church, and society. *Political Theology: an Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 184.

¹¹⁰ Pearson, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Nelson, "The Old Testament and Public Theology," 85.

¹¹² James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

being defended is the gospel of Christ. Gradually the scope of Christian apologetics emerged, Beilby characterising it as an action (defending), a focus of the action (the Christian faith itself), a goal (upholding Christianity as true) and a context (the circumstances of the defence).¹¹⁴ Others have drawn attention to the place of reason, or reasoned argument, in the apologetic task: an attempt to make belief intelligible, to offer a persuasive account of the Christian faith on grounds of reason which are at least mutually agreed.¹¹⁵

This has been the approach taken by many conservative apologists, some of whom who can overstate the rational basis for faith. Many operate on the basis that we should believe only what can be supported by empirical evidence (Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands an Answer* or Lee Strobel's *The Case for Faith* falling into this category). An issue facing apologetics today is the challenge of postmodernism's claim that all truth is relative. In a sense, postmodern apologists only have to show that their opponents' traditions are also founded on unverifiable presuppositions. Furthermore, what constitutes evidence is no longer as clear as it once was.¹¹⁶ Another issue, another challenge, is that presented by religiously pluralistic societies, with a whole variety of faiths and spiritualities. Arguing the existence of 'God' won't get very far: what is needed is a credible presentation of the Christian God, of the Trinity, of Jesus Christ.

A further challenge, to a discipline which has long depended on the presentation of rational arguments, is the increased focus today on the emotions, on the search for what feels right, rather than what is true. Francis Spufford's *Unapologetic* ('Why, despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense') is an interesting development in this regard.¹¹⁷ It echoes Beilby's point that 'there is no problem if

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁵ See Jeremiah Gibbs and Jason Byassee, "Explain Yourself: Making Belief Intelligible", *Christian Century* (September 23, 2008), 26-29, at 16.

¹¹⁶ Gibbs and Byassee, *ibid.*, 26, 29.

¹¹⁷ Francis Spufford, *Unapologetic* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012). Spufford says, 'You can easily look up what Christians believe in. You can read any number of defences of Christian ideas. This, however, is a defence of Christian emotions – of their intelligibility, of their grown-up dignity. The book is called

Christian apologetics focuses on the rational dimension of faith as long as it acknowledges that the rational dimension is only part of what Christianity is'.¹¹⁸

Gibbs and Byassee divide postmodern apologists into two schools – the humble and the bold. The humble argue that the most desirable way of life is Christian, judging from the characters of people that follow that faith. This tends to come down to an argument about ethics with examples (Christians pay their taxes and are nice people). Bold apologists claim their way of looking at the world makes better sense of it than other ways and that non-Christian accounts simply collapse because of their inner contradictions (Christianity explains things like love and evil while Darwinism cannot).¹¹⁹ NT Wright (*Simply Christian*) and Tim Keller (*The Reason for God*) are examples of the 'bold' variety, both using different kinds of rational argument to make their points.¹²⁰ Another 'bold apologist', and one who has embraced the postmodern insight that any discussion of faith will inevitably depend on cultural context and individual experiences, is David Bentley Hart whose *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* admits that perfect detachment is impossible 'and I do not even aspire to detachment. In what follows my prejudices are transparent and unreserved, and my argument is wilfully extreme (or so it might seem). I think it prudent to admit this from the outset, if only to avoid being accused later of having made some pretense of perfect objectivity or neutrality so as to lull the reader into a state of pliant credulity'.¹²¹ This has moved a considerable distance from the apologetic tradition that began in the late second and early third centuries with people like Justin Martyr, Origen, and Tertullian, whose emphasis (even with colourful language and use of humour) was on rationale arguments in favour of Christianity.

Unapologetic because it isn't giving an 'apologia', the technical term for a defence of the ideas. And also because I'm not sorry.' 23.

¹¹⁸ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 169.

¹¹⁹ Gibbs and Byassee, *ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁰ Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008) is an interesting case. The book is a series of arguments, firstly against the most common objections to Christian faith, and secondly reasons 'for faith' – but the DVD produced in association with the book shows Keller conversing with a collection of articulate New Yorkers, letting them discuss their reasons for disbelieving as they do, and himself largely refraining from 'argument', using instead a few brief comments and questions.

¹²¹ David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), ix.

Augustine as an apologist

What of Augustine as an apologist? O'Daly considers the *City of God* 'the culmination of the Latin Christian apologetic tradition in antiquity', and sees Augustine as following in the footsteps of apologists like Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius Felix, and Lactantius.¹²² While Christianity's situation as public religion following the Theodosian legislation meant that new arguments were necessary, Augustine was still able to draw on elements of those earlier apologetics. He cites Tertullian briefly and, like him, uses Varro's work as a focus of his arguments.¹²³ A feature common to the Latin tradition of apologists is the use of classical authors, chiefly Varro and Cicero, but also Virgil and Seneca.¹²⁴ O'Daly has noted how, in addition to places in *City of God* where Augustine may be echoing or influenced by particular writers, he is familiar with the topics and types of arguments of the apologetic tradition as a whole. Pagans blaming Christianity for military defeats or natural catastrophes was nothing new, nor was apologists claiming the moral superiority of Christianity or mocking the multiplicity of pagan gods.¹²⁵ O'Daly comments that the apologetic tradition did not only attack paganism and defend Christianity, it was also a vehicle for disseminating Christian teaching: leading into both the polemical and the doctrinal aspects of *City of God*.¹²⁶ Evans also notes the way some have seen *City of God* as a catechetical work, a positive attempt to teach the faith rather than solely responding to negative criticism of it.¹²⁷

Evans sees *City of God* as a defence of the faith, an *apologia*, in the tradition of Origen's *Contra Celsus*.¹²⁸ Certainly Augustine himself called it 'a book in which I have taken upon myself the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own

¹²² O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: a reader's guide*, 39.

¹²³ See *City* VII.1 for both a brief mention of Tertullian (the reference is to the latter's *Ad Nationes* 2.9) and for one of many uses of Varro. See also O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 40-41.

¹²⁴ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 52.

¹²⁵ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God* 40-44.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁷ GR Evans, 'Introduction' to *City*, xxxvi

¹²⁸ GR Evans, *ibid.*, xxxiv.

gods to the Founder of that City'.¹²⁹ Beilby likewise places it firmly in the apologetic tradition, refuting paganism and embedding in his theological reflections apologetic arguments about the size and unanimity of the church. Throughout, Augustine argues for the 'importance of reason and the reasonability of faith'¹³⁰, although this is less an objective and external reason than more one generated by the revelation upon which Christianity depends.

Wilken argues that although much of *City of God* is a defence of ideas and beliefs (and therefore, classic apologetic) the book is 'rather a defense of a community that occupies space and exists in time, a ordered, purposeful gathering of human beings with a distinctive way of life, institutions, laws, beliefs, memory, and form of worship'.¹³¹ This defence of the community (never precisely defined but closely identified with the church) makes it different from that done by more traditional apologists. Augustine is seeking to interpret Christianity to the Romans and so to explain how this community (this other city) relates to the city of Rome in which Christians are living.¹³²

Augustine's audience

Who is Augustine's audience? Evans discerns 'a shadowy audience of argumentative objectors' envisaged by Augustine as he wrote.¹³³ Some of the Romans – those to whom Augustine was interpreting Christianity for example – might have been more curious observers than opponents, but this is difficult to tell. Another part of the work's audience, and another aspect of its purpose, according to Evans, was to reconnect back into the fellowship of the church those Christians who had gone astray.¹³⁴ Augustine himself, in letters to Marcellinus, Volusianus, and to Firmus (a catechumen) certainly had in mind readers within the church and on its fringes who might be seeking instruction in the faith or needing to be persuaded into the City of God:

¹²⁹ *City*, I.1

¹³⁰ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 46.

¹³¹ Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003). 191.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Evans, 'Introduction', xxxiv.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxvi.

But you yourself must see how you might give them [the books of *City*] to your friends, whether they want to be instructed about the Christian people or they are trapped in some superstition, from which it might seem possible that they can be set free by the grace of God through our effort.¹³⁵

Amongst the readers of *City of God* were Christians who needed instruction in the elements of the faith or who were looking for some rebuttal of pagan claims – which could be either for their own comfort or for use in their conversations with defenders of paganism.

Augustine as public theologian

Augustine, therefore, was writing for multiple audiences, and with a variety of purposes. He was addressing one of the major public issues of the day (the sack of Rome), offering the perspective of Christian understandings of life, history, and social behaviour, and setting out (for both pagans and members of the Church) how Christians fitted in to wider society. In addition to the undoubted apologetic elements in *City of God*, Augustine would appear to be doing public theology.

Obviously to express it like that is clearly an anachronism: the term ‘public theology’ was a product of the late 20th century. It must be accepted, however, that people were doing it long before there was a name for it. Throughout the ages, Christian thinkers and activists have engaged with the key issues of their day, and in doing so used the perspectives and tools of their faith. From a large number of appropriate examples, a few must suffice:

In a meditation on the Story of Naboth, whom king Ahab robbed of a vineyard (1 Kgs 21), Ambrose of Milan used an extended retelling of a biblical story and citations from elsewhere in Scripture to make a point about his own society: ‘The story of Naboth is an

¹³⁵ Augustine, *Ep 1A*.2 (to Firmus), Letters 211-270, 1*-29** *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Roland Teske, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 230-31, at 231.

ancient one, but an everyday experience. What rich man does not daily set his heart on other people's goods?' Addressing the wealthy classes of his day, Ambrose here showed hostility to private wealth and a preference for material goods being given for everyone's use.¹³⁶

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam addressed the repeated conflicts in his day in *The Complaint of Peace* (1517).¹³⁷ In a series of carefully reasoned arguments ranging through nature, Scripture, political science, economics and ethics, he put the case for peace against war. The work offered guidance on maintaining concord and avoiding war, including advice to, and critiques of, leaders.

Martin Luther, whom Nelson describes as one who 'sets the standard for us as a theologian who was never shy about sounding off in the public square'¹³⁸, reflected on questions relating to business ethics in '*Trade and Usury*'. Writing to the general public, especially the commercial sector, he attacked the 'sharp practices' of the merchants, especially monopolistic trading companies, gave advice on how to price their wares, and criticised the habit of one person 'standing surety' for another: 'Now it is fair and right that a merchant take as much profit in his wares as will reimburse him for their cost and compensate him for his trouble, his labor and his risk. ... Who can serve or labor for nothing? The gospel says: "The laborer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7).'¹³⁹

Like these and many others, Augustine was, to quote again Bradstock's definition of public theology referred to above, 'concerned with bringing a theological perspective to bear upon contemporary debates in the public square, drawing upon the insights of the Christian faith and offering its contribution ... to the secular world'. In terms of this, and in the light of key factors such as multiple audiences and diverse purposes, it is

¹³⁶ Ambrose of Milan, "from *The Story of Naboth*", trans. by Paul Arnold et al., in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625*, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids, MI.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 75-79, at 75.

¹³⁷ *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 572-580, trans. by Betty Radice.

¹³⁸ Nelson, "The Old Testament and Public Theology," 85.

¹³⁹ Martin Luther, *Trade and Usury* (1524), trans. by C.M. Jacobs, in *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 602- 608, at 603.

appropriate to ask what Augustine, as a public theologian, can offer to the contemporary church and contemporary world amid its debates, in particular about the role of Christians as both citizens in temporal society and members of an alternative society.

Chapter 3 KEY SECTIONS OF *CITY OF GOD*

The Structure of *City*

Augustine begins his work by focusing on what he sees as his primary task, defending the City of God against those who prefer the pagan gods to the true God.¹⁴⁰ This task, his *magnum opus et arduum*¹⁴¹, is more than a simple defence: as is noted above, it includes positive teaching on the place and role of the City of God and its counterpart, the Earthly City, and much more besides. The work is formally divided into two parts: Books I – X are principally a repudiation of the false teaching of the pagans and is Augustine’s reply to the enemies of the City of God, while Part 2, Books XI – XXII, cover in more detail the two cities.¹⁴²

Within this broad schema are other divisions. Augustine himself notes that Books I – V were his arguments against those who imagine that the pagan gods are to be worshipped for the sake of the pleasures of this present life, while Books VI – X respond to those who believe in worshipping the gods with a view to happiness in the afterlife.¹⁴³ Fortin refines this by seeing VI – X as occupied also with those who attend to the gods ‘for the good of the soul’ while I – V concern as well those whose reason for worshipping the Roman gods is connected to the growth of the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁴ The second five books are heavily philosophical in tone and subject matter, while the first five concentrate on historical matters, including many instances where the old pagan gods failed to protect the people who worshipped them. Part 2, the positive counterpart of the critique in the first ten books, contains teaching on the truth of the Christian faith.¹⁴⁵ This is divided into three sections of four books each, addressing respectively the origins, the course and the ends of the two cities. O’Meara identifies three great themes in *City*: the Bible (the final twelve books, dealing with the history of time and eternity as set out in the Bible), Rome (the

¹⁴⁰ *City* I. Preface (All references in this chapter are to *City*, unless otherwise stated.)

¹⁴¹ I. Pref. O’Daly takes *opus* to refer to the task as a whole, rather than to the ‘work’ itself. *Augustine’s City of God*, 67.

¹⁴² X.32; XI.1.

¹⁴³ X.32.

¹⁴⁴ Ernest L. Fortin, “*Civitate Dei, De*” in *Augustine through the Ages*, 196-202, at 196.

¹⁴⁵ Fortin, *ibid.*, citing Augustine *Retractationes* 2.43.2 and *Ep ad Firmum*.

first five books, concerning the polytheism of Rome), and Greece (the second five books, which are principally a discussion of philosophy, especially Platonism).¹⁴⁶

O'Daly has a useful division of *City* into five sections which elaborates on these broad outlines:

Books I – V: Where were the gods?

Books VI - X: Varro, Platonists, and Demons

Books XI – XIV: Creation, the Fall, and the Regime of the Passions

Books XV – XVIII: the History of the Two Cities

Books XIX – XXII: Final Destinations (the last judgement, the damned, the saved)¹⁴⁷

What follows is a précis of *City* which focuses on Augustine's treatment of the two cities throughout the work. Material has been selected according to its relevance to the central question regarding how Augustine's account of those two cities might inform the role of Christians in contemporary New Zealand, as both citizens in temporal society and members of an alternative society.

Book I

In the Preface and Book I Augustine sets out the occasion of *City's* writing – the Sack of Rome by the Goths in 410 – and his purpose in writing it. He details the events of the siege, its aftermath, and the impact upon both Christians and pagans. Augustine introduces the key concept of the two cities, the City of God (*civitas Dei*) and the Earthly City (*civitas terrena*). The city of this world is a city 'which aims at domination' and tries to enslave other nations. This is a fitting comment on the Roman empire, but of course for Augustine the Earthly City is wider than Rome. This city is itself dominated 'by that very lust of domination' *ipsa ei dominandi libido dominator*.¹⁴⁸ The other city, the City of God, exists both in the temporal world, where it is somewhat precariously situated, and in

¹⁴⁶ John J. O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 66.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter headings in *Augustine's City of God*.

¹⁴⁸ I. Preface.

the safer realm of heaven.¹⁴⁹ It is concerned with true religion and the true worship of God.¹⁵⁰

Some citizens of the Earthly City are actively working against the City of God, which must be defended (Augustine does not, at this stage, say by whom). He makes it clear, however, that it is possible for people to change allegiances, correct their errors, and become 'useful citizens of that City'.¹⁵¹ Demonstrating how the two cities are interwoven, Augustine recounts how some pagans were saved during the sack of Rome by taking refuge in Christian shrines, putting themselves under the protection of the City of God, and spared by Alaric out of respect for those buildings.

Much of Book I deals with the issue of the pagan gods ('conquered gods') being unable to protect cities (Troy, Rome) from destruction, thereby showing how pointless it is to blame Christ for the devastation and to allege that the catastrophe came to Rome 'just because it has left off the worship of its gods'.¹⁵² Augustine makes it clear that the citizens of the City of God (the saints) have their focus on a heavenly country and are 'no more than sojourners' even in their own homes.¹⁵³ They are pilgrims, members of a pilgrim city.

The two cities are interwoven, existing alongside each other. The City of God is 'on pilgrimage in this world', however within her are some who are only temporarily members, participating in worship but who will, after death, not be part of her in eternity. Some are trying to have it both ways – going to church one day and to the theatre another day. In a comment reminiscent of the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, Augustine describes the two cities as intermixed, awaiting separation at the last judgement.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ I.36.

¹⁵¹ I.1.

¹⁵² I.15.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ I.35.

Book II

Having introduced the City of God, as a concept and as a body of people on pilgrimage in this world (I.35), Augustine turns to a more general consideration of the past and the calamities which occurred before Christianity displaced the worship of the pagan gods, as part of his reply to those who blamed Christianity for the sack of Rome by the barbarians. He discusses in some detail the moral deficiencies of pagan religion, both Greek and Roman: 'Rome had sunk into a morass of moral degradation before the coming of our heavenly King'.¹⁵⁵ Significantly he argues that Christ is gradually withdrawing his family from a world that is in a state of decline, so that he might establish a city which is truly eternal and glorious.¹⁵⁶

Augustine considers that Christ's servants, whatever their occupations or class, are living in a corrupt state, and by their endurance of these conditions they may win for themselves a place in the City of God.¹⁵⁷ This is an explicit critique of the Christianised Roman Empire in which he and his contemporaries (both Christian and pagan) lived. He continues his denunciation of the Earthly City, whose goals are material prosperity, military victory and peace – or rather, a greed which motivates conspicuous consumption and oppression of the poor. Corrupt pleasure-seeking is the order of the day.¹⁵⁸ The Earthly City is no 'commonwealth' but is sunk in depravity, while true justice only exists within the City of God.¹⁵⁹ Moreover the 'truest and surest happiness' generally comes from God and is felt by those who worship that God, members of God's City.¹⁶⁰ It is to that city, that 'country', that Augustine summons the Romans, wanting them to add themselves 'to the number of our citizens'.¹⁶¹ He describes the City of God by contrasting it with Rome: 'There, instead of victory, is truth; instead of high rank, holiness; instead of peace, felicity; instead of life, eternity'.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ II.18.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ II.19.

¹⁵⁸ II.20.

¹⁵⁹ II.21.

¹⁶⁰ II.23.

¹⁶¹ II.29.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Book III

Augustine moves to consider the evils of warfare and other disasters that affected Rome and other cities. Peace is a benefit bestowed by the true God, and often this (like rain) falls on those who do not deserve it.¹⁶³ Disasters continually befell the early Roman Republic, as Roman historians themselves admitted, even though they usually praise their city in the highest terms. Augustine acknowledges that they are not part of that city, the City of God, which is truer than theirs, and whose citizens are chosen for eternity. He argues that if historians who are citizens of the Earthly City display freedom of speech, those who are part of the City of God should speak even more in the defence of their city.

¹⁶⁴ In recounting the various calamities (war, plague, flooding, fire) suffered by the Republic he continually asks ‘where were the gods?’ All those disasters occurred during the period when the pagan gods were still worshipped: it is perhaps more logical to accuse those gods of causing them.¹⁶⁵

Book IV

Augustine begins to turn his attention towards the growth of the Roman Empire, which he says was assisted by God.¹⁶⁶ Continuing his theme of ‘where were the gods?’ he wonders about which gods could be credited with the rise and fall of the various pre-Roman kingdoms of the world, since so many of these lands worshipped the same gods.¹⁶⁷ He then embarks on an extended critique of the plurality of minor gods and goddesses in the Roman pantheon. He eventually concludes that it is God who gives dominion on earth to the good and to the bad, God who is in control of historical events, and God alone who give happiness.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ III.9.

¹⁶⁴ III.17.

¹⁶⁵ III.31.

¹⁶⁶ IV.2.

¹⁶⁷ IV.7. ‘If the Assyrians did have gods exclusively their own, more highly skilled workers, as it were, in the empire-building and empire-maintaining trade, then are we to suppose that they were dead, when Assyria lost her Empire? Or that they preferred to cross over to the Medes, because they were had not been paid, or, perhaps, because higher wages were offered?’

¹⁶⁸ IV.33.

Book V

Having asserted that the growth of the Roman Empire and the length of time it lasted were not due to the pagan gods worshipped by its inhabitants but rather to the one true God, Augustine proceeds to consider this in more detail. Like other kingdoms, the Roman Empire was established not by chance or destiny (linked to the position of the stars) but by divine providence.¹⁶⁹ 'God decided that a Western empire should arise' and be famous for its size and greatness.¹⁷⁰

While the love of human praise, honour and glory is a fault, it nevertheless makes humanity better by suppressing other vices. It is preferable, however, to resist this desire, in favour of the love of truth and the glory of God. Augustine contrasts the temporal and the human with the divine and eternal. The Roman heroes who sought human glory belonged to the Earthly City: in seeking the safety of their country and a temporal kingdom they were motivated by a desire to live on after death in the praises of others.¹⁷¹ This reward they received, since it was to them that God granted 'the earthly glory of an empire which surpassed all others', rather than giving them eternal life in the Heavenly City. Augustine emphasises that it is only true religion (that is, the worship of the one true God) that leads to the City of God.¹⁷² The citizens of this city (the saints) are rewarded in the opposite manner to those in the Earthly City: they receive criticism here below but true happiness in heaven. The size and earthly glory of the Roman Empire was designed to show those citizens of the *civitas Dei* how they should love it and all its eternal benefits, since the Earthly City was so loved by those who sought only human and temporal glory.¹⁷³

The City of God is eternal: no-one is born or dies there, and it is the site of true happiness. Those who are on pilgrimage in the *civitas terrena* 'sigh for her beauty' and long to be

¹⁶⁹ V.1.

¹⁷⁰ V.13.

¹⁷¹ V.14.

¹⁷² V.15.

¹⁷³ V.16.

there.¹⁷⁴ Because earthly life is temporary it does not matter who the ruler is, as long as no-one is forced to commit evil acts. Augustine presents a series of contrasts between the City of God and the Earthly City: eternal life vs temporary joy, substantial glory vs empty praises, the company of angels vs that of human beings, the light of the Creator vs the light from the created sun and moon. If the Romans are prepared to do good or suffer ills for the sake of their earthly country, how much more should the citizens of heaven strive to reach their destination, especially since they also gain remission of their sins?¹⁷⁵ Since the Romans were prepared to perform difficult actions for the sake of their city and for human praises, why should Christians boast about what they have done in order to gain the eternal city, actions such as giving their possessions to the poor rather than collecting them for their children?¹⁷⁶ The City of God is so far above the Earthly City that even the martyrs should not claim to have done anything special, if so many Romans (whose stories Augustine recounts) have sacrificed themselves for their inferior city.

Augustine reminds his readers that God is to be worshipped for the sake of eternal life and participation in the heavenly City, not for any temporal blessings, which in any case are given to both good and evil people.¹⁷⁷ True virtue, which is linked to true worship of the true God, differs from the earthly virtue which seeks human glory. Even so, it is preferable for citizens of the Earthly City to have such earthly virtue than to be without it. Moreover it is better for humanity if those who have 'true piety' – that is, citizens of the City of God – should hold power and be involved in government.¹⁷⁸ Yet all kingdoms and empires, both good and evil, come about through God's power, just as being Christian or pagan does not determine the length of an emperor's reign.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ V.17.

¹⁷⁶ V.18.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ V.19.

¹⁷⁹ V.21, V.25.

Book VI

Augustine now proceeds to instruct those who consider that the pagan gods are to be worshipped because of the life which comes after death, when it is clearly folly to ask for eternal life from such divinities.¹⁸⁰ He critiques various opinions of Marcus Terentius Varro, the prolific author and polymath, drawing especially on Varro's *Antiquities*, a history of Roman religious institutions in which he considered human affairs and divine affairs. Whereas Varro considered that human communities came first, and then they established divine institutions (community, then religion), Augustine holds the opposite: it was true religion, which comes from God, that established the heavenly city (religion, then community).¹⁸¹ He goes on to condemn pagan theology in Varro's different classification: the mythic ('fabulous') theology of the theatre, the civic theology of Roman daily life, and the natural theology of the philosophers, focusing especially on civic religion.

Book VII

Augustine now discusses the 'select gods', the twenty most important gods by Varro's classification, still with his purpose of establishing that the true God should be sought and worshipped for the sake of eternal life and differentiating this true god from all the inadequate gods of the pagans.¹⁸²

Book VIII

Having dispensed with 'fabulous' theology (the theology of the theatre) and the 'civil' theology of the city, Augustine turns to 'natural' theology and disputes with the philosophers. He concentrates particularly on the Platonists, whom he judges to teach the philosophy that comes closest to Christianity.¹⁸³ He takes issue, however, with the concept of demons, as intermediaries between humans and gods. The whole earth is

¹⁸⁰ VI.1.

¹⁸¹ VI.4.

¹⁸² VII.Pref.

¹⁸³ VIII.8-10.

now singing 'a new song' to the Lord, since the City of God, 'which is the holy Church' is now being built in a world where humanity has been freed from captivity to demons.¹⁸⁴

Book IX

Augustine continues his discussion of gods and the demons supposedly located midway between gods and men. The true mediator between God and humanity is Jesus Christ, who is not only human but also divine.¹⁸⁵

Book X

Augustine continues his debates with the Platonists and develops a theology of worship. The true and perfect sacrifice is offered in those acts which are designed to unite us to God in holy fellowship.¹⁸⁶ Angels, who love humanity, wish humans to worship God rather than themselves. For the City of God is made up of angels and human beings together: humans on pilgrimage here below, and angels above who are helping us. One of the ways the angels do this is by bringing us the holy Scriptures.¹⁸⁷ God is the founder of that City, and of the 'visible and changing world', and God is the source of all blessedness.¹⁸⁸

Demons are enemies of the City of God. They had power for a time and used this to persecute the Church, leading to the martyrdom of those who resisted. These martyrs are citizens of the City of God, where they are honoured for their brave resistance.¹⁸⁹ A reversal happens: the wicked, who think themselves important in the Earthly City, are reduced to nothing in the City of God.¹⁹⁰ A key feature of the City of God (the 'Daughter of Sion') is that it knows and worships the one God. We are invited into the City by

¹⁸⁴ VIII.24.

¹⁸⁵ IX.15.

¹⁸⁶ X.6.

¹⁸⁷ X.7.

¹⁸⁸ X.18.

¹⁸⁹ X.21.

¹⁹⁰ X.25. Augustine is paraphrasing Ps 73.

angels, to become their fellow-citizens and to join with them in this worship, as sacrifices to God.¹⁹¹

Platonists like Porphyry have failed to discover the only way the soul can be freed, not by heading towards the Earthly City which is merely the ‘tottering grandeur of the temporal’, but by taking the path to the City of God which is secure, stable and eternal.¹⁹² This universal way of liberation, foretold by angels and prophets, was formerly revealed to only a few. These few included in particular the Hebrew people, whose state (*res publica*) was consecrated to be a prophesy and an announcement of the City of God which was to be assembled from all peoples.¹⁹³ The City was spoken of explicitly and (more often) implicitly during the period of the Old Testament, and then revealed more fully by Christ and the apostles.

Augustine finishes this first part of his book by concluding that he has now refuted the objections of the pagans (those who prefer their own gods to the One God of the *civitas Dei*), since he has addressed arguments raised by those who imagine those pagan gods should be worshipped for the sake of the pleasures of this present life and for the sake of the life that comes after death.

Book XI

Having concluding the refutation, Augustine now moves to the second part of his book, in which he discusses the origins and ends of the two cities. Scripture bears witness to the existence of the City of God – a city founded by the God of gods – and inculcates a desire to become a citizen on the part of those who love that God. This include the angels, who worship God rather than seeking to be worshipped by humans. By contrast, the citizens of the Earthly City prefer their own false gods, who are scrambling to reclaim their lost dominions. Augustine stresses that the two cities are interwoven with one another here

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² X.32.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

on earth.¹⁹⁴ He sets out to account for the origins of the two cities by discussing the differences between two classes of angels, good and bad.

The City of God (also referred to as the 'Holy City') consists of the holy angels and the blessed spirits, and is equated with the symbolic Jerusalem.¹⁹⁵ The holy angels form the greater, and more blessed, part of the City of God – blessed because they have never had to venture out on pilgrimage through an alien land.¹⁹⁶ The origin of the City constituted by the holy angels above is God: God founded it, and from God comes its enlightenment and its happiness (*inde est civitatis sanctae ... et origo et informatio et beatitudo*). The City is completely sustained by God: it subsists in God, 'it exists; it sees; it loves. It is strong with God's eternity; it shines with God's truth; it rejoices in God's goodness'.¹⁹⁷ Augustine is making it very clear that without God the City simply could not exist.

In noting that the holy angels constitute 'the City of God which is not on pilgrimage in this mortal life, but is eternally immortal in heaven' Augustine is making a distinction between that part of the City of God which is in heaven and that part which is on pilgrimage here on earth.¹⁹⁸ He closes Book XI with another distinction, between the two communities of angels (good and bad), which he says is a kind of prologue ('something like the beginnings') of the two human cities.¹⁹⁹

Book XII

Augustine repeats that the beginnings of the two human cities has already been seen in the communities of the angels (good and bad). It is not a matter of there being four cities (two angelic and two human): there are but two cities or communities – one good one (the City of God) which contains good angels and humans, and one bad, consisting of evil angels and humans. Both good and evil angels were created by God; the difference is

¹⁹⁴ XI.1.

¹⁹⁵ XI.7. Augustine quotes Gal 4:16, 'Jerusalem which is above, our mother, eternal in the heavens.'

¹⁹⁶ XI.9.

¹⁹⁷ XI.24.

¹⁹⁸ XI.28.

¹⁹⁹ XI.34.

attributed to their wills and desires rather than their origins: the evil ones have devoted themselves to their own ends rather than clinging to God.²⁰⁰ Similarly the bliss of the good angels comes from their adherence to God, while the evil angels are miserable because they have turned away from God and towards themselves.²⁰¹ Those who cling to God, both good angels and good human beings, have fellowship with God and also amongst themselves: together they are one City of God. Part of this community, therefore, consists of human beings, some of whom are on pilgrimage on earth and some (the souls of the departed) are at rest.²⁰²

After a lengthy discussion of creation, Augustine concludes the book by noting that in the creation of the first human being we see the beginnings of the two human cities, since from that first human one comes all humanity, both good and bad, and that this was foreknown by God.²⁰³

Book XIII

Augustine focuses on two major themes, the first being death (the consequence of the sin of the first human beings). The first death is the separation of the soul from the body, but there is also (following Rev 2:11) a second death, the separation of the soul from God.²⁰⁴ The second focus of this book is the resurrected, spiritual body, where he argues against the Platonists' assertion that earthly bodies cannot become immortal. It is during this debate that Augustine equates the City of God with God's Church, which he is defending against the attacks of the philosophers.²⁰⁵

Book XIV

As diverse as human society is, there are only two main divisions: the two cities. Augustine uses the Pauline distinction between spirit and flesh to describe the choices

²⁰⁰ XII.1.

²⁰¹ XII.6.

²⁰² XII.9.

²⁰³ XII.28.

²⁰⁴ XIII.2.

²⁰⁵ XIII.16.

made by those who live in each city: those in the Earthly City choose to live by the standard of the flesh, while the citizens of the City of God live by the standard of the spirit, and each seek their own kind of peace.²⁰⁶ He goes on to note that in Scripture living *secundum carnem*, according to the flesh, is not solely equated with ‘the body’: living by the flesh is ‘clearly a bad thing’, although the natural flesh itself is not evil.²⁰⁷ By ‘living by the flesh’ Augustine means more living *secundum hominem, non secundum Deum*, by human standards, not by God’s standards, the latter being equated with the standard of truth. The two cities are distinguished by the standards by which their citizens live: human standards or God’s standards.²⁰⁸ The citizens of the City of God (‘us Christians’) live by God’s standards while on pilgrimage in this present life and so have a right love, that is, a love for the right things.²⁰⁹

Augustine summarises what he considers should characterise the citizens of the City of God during their earthly pilgrimage, as they seek the goal of eternal happiness: they should live according to the spirit not the flesh, that is living by God’s standards not human ones. By contrast the citizens of the Earthly City live by human standards, worship false gods, and are shaken by negative emotions.²¹⁰ What is valued in the City of God, and what characterises its king, Christ, is humility, whereas pride is what rules the Devil. The great difference between the two cities is that one consists of a community of devout people who love God while the other contains irreligious folk who love themselves, *in quibus praecessit hac amor Dei, hac amor sui*.²¹¹ These two kinds of love are central to the creation of each city: the Earthly City was created by self-love, which extends indeed to a contempt for God, and that city glories in itself and in the strength of its leaders. By contrast the City of God was created out of a love for God (to the extent that those who live there show contempt for self), and this city glories in God, who is its strength. Within

²⁰⁶ XIV.1.

²⁰⁷ XIV.2.

²⁰⁸ XIV.4.

²⁰⁹ XIV.9.

²¹⁰ XIV.9.

²¹¹ XIV.13.

the City of God rulers and ruled serve each other in love, while the rulers of the Earthly City are dominated by that very lust to dominate that they exercise over other nations.²¹²

Even the wise within the Earthly City, living as they do by human standards, concentrate on developing their bodies and/or their minds – this is consistent with the self-love which characterises that city – and even those who know of God do not worship God but indulge in various forms of idol-worship. Within the City of God, however, God is worshipped and the community of the saints is anticipated.²¹³

Book XV

Augustine repeats his classification of the human race into two branches or cities: one which lives by human standards, and is doomed to eternal punishment with the Devil, another which lives by God's standards and will reign with God eternally. The cities originated with the angels and also with the two earliest humans, and have developed throughout all the ages of time.²¹⁴ He traces the development of the cities back to Cain (the Earthly City) and Abel (the City of God). Cain founded a city, but Abel was a pilgrim on earth and a citizen above, and he founded no city. The City of God is 'above' but it still produces citizens here below, who remain on pilgrimage throughout their life.²¹⁵ Augustine goes on to employ the Hagar/Ismael/children of the flesh and Sarah/Isaac/children of the promise allegory that Paul does in Galatians 4. The Earthly City signifies itself, but also serves as an image of the City of God above, just as Jerusalem is a city on earth but also symbolises the heavenly city.²¹⁶

He describes the Earthly City in more detail. It is ridden with conflict, divided by warfare and legal disputes, seeking victory through battle but finding this leads to death instead, accompanied by the temporary domination of those it has conquered. That city does,

²¹² XIV.28.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ XV.1.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ XV.2.

however, desire peace – but it tries to achieve this peace by making war.²¹⁷ Part of the problem was that the Earthly City was founded by someone who killed his own brother (Cain), and this was echoed with respect to the founding of the city of Rome by Romulus who had killed his brother Remus. Romulus and Remus demonstrate the conflict within the Earthly City, while the relationship between Cain and Abel shows the struggle between the two cities, Earthly and Heavenly.²¹⁸ Mutual forgiveness is important, and this is what enables citizens of the City of God to be restored while they are still on pilgrimage on earth.²¹⁹

Augustine repeats his earlier point, that those in the Earthly City worship false gods in the hope of getting the peace that comes, not from concern for others, but from a wish to dominate them. Their priorities are disordered: those who are good use the things of this world as a means to enjoying God, while evil people treat God as a means to the end of enjoying the world.²²⁰

Augustine makes his way through the primeval history in Genesis, tracing two lines of descent, through Cain for the Earthly City and through Seth for the City of God, thus showing how the two cities coexist alongside each other while seeking separate joys.²²¹ The Earthly City seeks earthly joys, believing these to be all that there is, and is satisfied with temporal peace and happiness.²²² To populate the Earthly City only generation (birth after sexual intercourse) is needed, while the City of God also requires regeneration or some process of reform.²²³ Working from the supposed meanings of the names of various characters in the primeval history, he makes the point that while the City of God is on pilgrimage on earth it lives in hope based on the resurrection of Christ.²²⁴ The line

²¹⁷ XV.4.

²¹⁸ XV.5.

²¹⁹ XV.6.

²²⁰ XV.7.

²²¹ XV.15.

²²² XV.17.

²²³ XV.16. Augustine uses the circumcision demanded of Abraham as a physical sign of this regeneration. He goes on to say (XV.17) that the Earthly City will be populated through carnal births.

²²⁴ XV.18. According to Augustine, Seth means 'resurrection' and Enos (the son of Seth and thus an early citizen of the City of God) is the 'son of the resurrection'.

representing the Earthly City from Cain to Lamech began and ended with murderers, while that of the City of God was represented by one (Enos) who 'hoped to call upon the name of the Lord'. This latter is significant, for calling upon God is what the City of God does, during its pilgrimage on earth.²²⁵ There are, therefore, two cities, one of which really exists in this world and one which exists in the hope which rests on God. To the former, God gives punishment, and to the latter, grace.²²⁶ The City of God, which Augustine describes as Christ's bride, loves God; the Earthly City loves something else in God's place.²²⁷

Augustine then arrives at Noah, seeing in the Ark a symbol of the City of God on its earthly pilgrimage and of the Church saved by the wood of the cross. The City of God is 'on pilgrimage in this wicked world as though in a flood'.²²⁸

Book XVI

Augustine then proceeds to trace the City of God from Noah to the family of Abraham, seeking to track down the hidden meanings of Scripture, since he believes that the accounts of events described there foreshadow the future and are to be interpreted with regard to Christ and his Church, which is the City of God.²²⁹ That City has been on pilgrimage in the people of Israel, in the persons of the Christian saints, and (in a shadowy, symbolic fashion) in all humanity.²³⁰ It was the Earthly City, however, living by human standards rather than by God's, that built the Tower of Babel.²³¹

He traces the line of descent of the City of God from Noah's son Shem to Abraham, while speculating whether there were also members of the Earthly City within Shem's descendants. Augustine decides it is most likely that, even then, the two cities were interwoven: 'we are bound to believe that the world was never devoid of men of both

²²⁵ XV.21.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ XV.22. Augustine cites the Song of Songs for the reference to the bride.

²²⁸ XV.26.

²²⁹ XVI.2.

²³⁰ XVI.3.

²³¹ XVI.5.

these kinds'.²³² He continues to outline the development of the City of God from the era which began with Abraham, considering that knowledge of the City becomes clearer from then onwards, in particular due to the number of divine promises of which he finds fulfilment in Christ.²³³ Abraham's family kept the City of God alive in a similar way to the survival of Noah's family during the flood.²³⁴ The line is traced through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah (this last because Christ was born from the tribe of Judah).²³⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, in view of the lengthy discussion of the descendants of Noah and then Abraham, the period of Moses, Joshua, the judges and the early kings (Saul and David) is dealt with in only one chapter.²³⁶

Book XVII

Augustine continues with his chronological survey of the history of the City of God, showing how God's promises to Abraham have been fulfilled in the period from the age of Samuel to the return of the Israelites from Exile. He singles out in particular matters that are prophetic in character, that is which look ahead to Christ and the kingdom of heaven, which he equates with the City of God.²³⁷ Some of these prophecies refer to the Earthly City ('the maidservant whose children are born into slavery, that is, the earthly Jerusalem') and some to the free City of God, 'the true Jerusalem', and some to both.²³⁸ Augustine stresses that the reward of the City of God (Jerusalem on high) is God himself: 'to possess him, and to be his possession, is the Highest Good' in that City. Thus he continually links the happiness of the City of God and its citizens to God and to God alone.²³⁹

²³² XVI.10.

²³³ XVI.12.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ XVI.41.

²³⁶ XVI.43.

²³⁷ XVII.1.

²³⁸ XVII.3. The allusion, a frequent one in *City*, is to Gal 4:21-31.

²³⁹ Ibid.

Augustine includes a lengthy commentary on the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) which he sees as prophetic of the City of God.²⁴⁰ Hannah finds her strength in God and not in herself – a key characteristic of the City; by contrast, the enemies of the City, those who belong to Babylon, rely on their own strength and glory.²⁴¹ Augustine also comments on Ps 89, which he sees as prophetic of Christ and describing what happened to the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem: the earthly city was temporarily ruled by citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem who placed their hope in the true Christ.²⁴² The people of the City of God (the heavenly Jerusalem) include both those who lived during Old Testament times ('those who were hidden in the time of the old covenant') and those, following the revelation of the new covenant, who are clearly Christians.²⁴³ King David is undoubtedly one of the former: one illustration of this being the way he used his music not for his own pleasure but in the service of God.²⁴⁴ He is also commended for his humility and penitence, both of which are characteristics of those who are part of the City of God.²⁴⁵

Still within the Psalms, Augustine turns to Ps 45, the ode for a royal wedding, which he reads as both a direct and an allegorical reference to the wedding between Christ and the Church. Christ is the king, the queen is Zion in the spiritual sense, the heavenly Jerusalem, while her enemy is Babylon, the city of the Devil. Those who live in that 'godless city' are the Israelites who are only physically, and not spiritually, descended from Abraham.²⁴⁶ He returns to the marriage imagery in his brief discussion of the Song of Songs.²⁴⁷

Augustine finds reference to the two cities in a passage in Ecclesiastes (10:16-17), comparing the land whose king is a servant (or a child) with that whose king is a

²⁴⁰ 'There speaks, by the spirit of prophecy, the Christian religion itself, the City of God itself, whose king and founder is Christ ...' XVII.4.

²⁴¹ Ibid. Later in this chapter, he comments that words in Hannah's prophecy describe how someone who glories ought to glory – not in themselves but in the Lord.

²⁴² XVII.10.

²⁴³ XVII.12.

²⁴⁴ XVII.14.

²⁴⁵ XVII.20.

²⁴⁶ XVII.16.

²⁴⁷ XVII.20.

nobleman: the former is the city of the Devil, the latter the city whose king is Christ. Christ is 'nobly born' since he is descended from the patriarchs who belong to the free city. In his city people feast to gain strength, not to get drunk – another indication that what differentiates the two cities is the motivation behind the actions of their citizens.²⁴⁸ Augustine then briefly summarises the division of the Jewish kingdom into Israel and Judah after the death of Solomon, and the post-Exilic prophets.

Book XVIII

Augustine reminds his readers of his task in writing about the origins, development and ends of the two cities, the City of God and the Earthly City (the city of this world). God's city does not exist in isolation: it coexists with the Earthly City, having developed in its shadow, and its human citizens live there as resident aliens.²⁴⁹ He now proceeds to outline the progress of the Earthly City from the time of Abraham, setting it in parallel with what was happening in the City of God at the same time. In this he depends considerably on the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, as translated and continued by Jerome.²⁵⁰

Augustine's view is that it is through divine providence that some nations became empires who conquered others, while some were themselves conquered. What unites the various parts of the Earthly City, however, is a common desire for worldly advantage and a common seeking to satisfy their own desires, in contrast with the City of God where the key aim is to satisfy God.²⁵¹ He draws chiefly on Greek and Latin sources in his parallel account of the Earthly City: Babylon as the first Rome, Rome as the second Babylon, proceeding side by side with the City of God.²⁵² Occasionally he diverts back to the City of God, noting for example that Jacob belonged there while Esau (the rejected elder son) went with the Earthly City.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ XVIII.1.

²⁵⁰ Translator's footnote to XVIII.1.

²⁵¹ XVIII.2.

²⁵² Ibid. He later (XVIII.22) describes Rome as the daughter of the former Babylon, saying that it was God's plan to unite the world under the Roman empire and Roman laws, and so give peace.

²⁵³ XVIII.4.

Augustine adjourns his progress through non-biblical history for a digression into various metamorphoses, explaining that these stories should encourage us to take refuge from this 'Babylon' and the society of wicked angels and humans who live there and by faith seek instead the living God. While we do not have to believe stories like this (though of course God is powerful enough to do anything), Augustine is taking an opportunity to point his readers towards the mind-set appropriate to those who live in the City of God.²⁵⁴

One characteristic of the citizens of the Earthly City is their inability to discriminate between their various historical authorities who present conflicting accounts, leaving the citizens not knowing whom they should trust. Those who live within the City of God, by contrast, can place full trust in the Scriptures, and use them as a standard for judging other works.²⁵⁵ Something similar happens with differing philosophical opinions: political authorities within the Earthly City do not attempt to judge between them (even though these are matters which can affect the misery or happiness of their citizens), while they are capable of forming definitive views about housing and finance. Again, within the City of God, false and true prophets are distinguished from one another and people know what to believe.²⁵⁶

Augustine wonders whether there were any citizens of the City of God outside Israel before the Christian era. One such was Job, an Edomite, and there could well be others who lived by God's standards and so belonged to the spiritual Jerusalem, but they would have received a revelation of Christ. He considers that those who are citizens in the City of God ('God's house and God's temple') are predestined to be such.²⁵⁷ There are also, he says, people currently within the Church who will, at the end, be separated out from the others and will not remain in the City of God for ever. The Church is and always has been

²⁵⁴ XVIII.18.

²⁵⁵ XVIII.40.

²⁵⁶ XVIII.41. Modern governments similarly prefer to stay away from adjudicating in religious or philosophical disputes, and stick to economics (while being unaware of the religious/philosophical biases affecting economic policy).

²⁵⁷ XVIII.47.

a mixture of good and evil people, and the division between them awaits the end of the world.²⁵⁸ Just as 'Babylon' contains contradictory opinions so also does the Church, in the form of heretics, yet these actually bring benefits, training the Church in wisdom, endurance and benevolence. For the Devil is not permitted to harm the City of God, in spite of the persecutions. The Church proceeds as a pilgrim through the world, and has always had to contend with evil days, not only since the time of Christ but in fact since the killing of Abel at the beginning of time.²⁵⁹ Augustine then recounts various persecutions suffered by Christians, while declining to speculate on when the final persecution, by the Antichrist, might take place.²⁶⁰

He emphasises the intermingling of the two cities throughout their entire history, and reiterates a key distinction between them: the Earthly City creates for herself false gods and worships them with sacrifices, the City of God is the creation of the true God and is God's sacrifice. While both cities live through good and bad times they do so with different faiths, expect different fates and love different objects; they are also destined for different ends.²⁶¹

Book XIX

In moving to a fuller discussion of the different ends of the two cities, Augustine enters into the philosophic debate over what constitutes the Supreme Good and Evil. What is at stake is the disparity between the hollow realities of the pagans and the hope and the true happiness given by God.²⁶² He says the City of God holds that eternal life is the Supreme Good (that which is desired for its own sake, and for which other things are desired), while eternal death is the Supreme Evil. To achieve the first, and escape the second, humanity must live by faith, and needs God's help to do this.²⁶³ Augustine concurs with the philosophers that the life of the wise is a social one: the City of God

²⁵⁸ XVIII. 48 and 49.

²⁵⁹ XVIII.51.

²⁶⁰ XVIII.52-54.

²⁶¹ XVIII.54.

²⁶² XIX.1.

²⁶³ XIX.4.

could not have begun and progressed without the corporate life of the saints.²⁶⁴ He considers the benefits and griefs which come through friendships, including (though not on such a familiar footing) friendship with the holy angels. Here is another difference with the philosophers of the Earthly City, for they erroneously believe that the demons are their friends when in fact they are dominated by them.²⁶⁵

The anxiety produced by the deceptions and temptations of the demons in the present can lead people to seek the eternal peace which only God can bring, for that is ultimate happiness; any peace which those who live rightly might enjoy in this earthly life pales into misery when compared with it.²⁶⁶ Augustine prefers the term 'eternal life' instead of 'peace' in respect of the end of the City of God, and this is where its ultimate good will be found.²⁶⁷

He continues his discussion of peace (a major theme in *City*) by connecting it with order: peace between individuals and God is ordered obedience, the peace of the City of God is an ordered and mutual fellowship in God; order here connected with appropriate hierarchical relationships.²⁶⁸ Humanity's use of temporal things is related to earthly peace in the Earthly City, but those who use them rightly can also enjoy eternal peace in the City of God.²⁶⁹ All peace (whether bodily or spiritual) is viewed in relation to that peace between God and humanity which it is so important to seek.²⁷⁰ The Christian seeks to live at peace with all people, and this is part of fulfilling the command to love one's neighbour as oneself; another part of that command is a concern that one's neighbour should also love God.²⁷¹ Citizens of the City of God, on pilgrimage in the world, should exercise love and compassion even when giving orders to their subordinates.²⁷²

²⁶⁴ XIX.5.

²⁶⁵ XIX.9.

²⁶⁶ XIX.10.

²⁶⁷ XIX.11. See also XIX.20.

²⁶⁸ XIX.13.

²⁶⁹ XIX.13-14.

²⁷⁰ XIX.14.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* Augustine does not elaborate on what might be an interesting connection between peaceful living and evangelism.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

Augustine outlines some of the differences between Christian and non-Christian households and their respective cities: while both use temporal things, lives based on faith are oriented towards eternal peace, but lives without this are merely seeking an earthly peace largely based around compromise between human wills. Citizens of the City of God make use of this earthly peace, but they do so as aliens, living in captivity in a foreign city. Even so, they still obey the laws of the Earthly City.²⁷³

When it comes to religious observance within the two cities, the Earthly City has a myriad of departmental gods, while the City of God worships only the one true God: this is the reason why their religious laws are incompatible.²⁷⁴ What is irrelevant to the citizens of the City of God are matters of dress and behaviour: anything goes, as long as it doesn't conflict with instructions which God has given. Matters of doctrine, on the other hand, *are* important. Similarly whether an active or a leisured life, or a combination of the two, is chosen matters less than the spirit in which one engages with that lifestyle: leisure should not lead to inactivity but to discovering the truth and caring for one's neighbour, activity should lead also to contemplation of God and achievement of particular tasks, not to seeking after honours.²⁷⁵ This is how members of the City of God should conduct themselves whilst they are living in the Earthly City.

Augustine discusses Scipio's definition of the state (in Cicero's *On the Republic*), and what he says may be read as a critique of the Earthly City: individuals who do not serve God have no justice, and there is therefore no justice in a group of such people. Because God does not rule over the Earthly City it is devoid of true justice: contrast this with a group of people who live by faith and love of God: there justice is present.²⁷⁶

God is the blessing of the human life, but even those alienated from God have a (temporary) peace, which is also used by those members of the City of God who are

²⁷³ XIX.17.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ XIX.19.

²⁷⁶ XIX.21; 23; 24.

pilgrims within 'Babylon': that is why they are bidden to pray for the authorities in the Earthly City.²⁷⁷ That temporary peace is shared by good and bad alike whereas the special peace which comes from God belongs only to citizens of the heavenly city. It is they who not only pray 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' but who put this into effect through loving actions.²⁷⁸

Book XX

Augustine discusses the last judgement, when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, since this will lead to the separation of the two cities. For just as the two cities are interwoven, so are the wheat and the weeds, growing side by side within the Church, and it is the 'wheat' of whom it is said that 'their true home is in heaven'.²⁷⁹ He surveys various passages of Scripture where the last judgement is addressed, beginning with those from the New Testament.

Augustine understands the 'beast' of Revelation to represent the Earthly City and its inhabitants, while those who have not received the beast's mark are the citizens of the City of God. Those who belong to the beast are not only the openly active opponents of Christ but also some within the Church, the 'weeds' who will remain there until the judgement.²⁸⁰ Notwithstanding the presence of these weeds, the Church is elsewhere equated by Augustine with the 'universal City of Christ', while the Earthly City is the 'universal City of the Devil'; this will persecute the Church when the thousand years are over.²⁸¹

Addressing the imagery of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, in Revelation 21, Augustine says that this city 'has been coming down from heaven since its beginning', since the City is created by the grace of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit; it is this grace that

²⁷⁷ XIX.26.

²⁷⁸ XIX.27.

²⁷⁹ XX.9. See Matt 13:24-30, 36-43 for the parable; Phil 3:30.

²⁸⁰ XX.9. Similarly the 'false prophet' of Rev 20:10 is the Antichrist (XX.14). Augustine later refers to 'the pretended Christians who are in the Church'. XX.19.

²⁸¹ XX.11. XX.13. See Rev 20:7.

has enabled the number of its inhabitants to increase. At the last judgement the splendour of the City will finally be made obvious to all.²⁸² After that judgement all grief shall end, before that, however, members of the City will still weep – not only because of their sufferings but also when they pray for others.²⁸³ Augustine continues his meditations on the last judgement by discussing passages from both Testaments: 1 Thessalonians, Isaiah, Daniel, the Psalms, Malachi, and elsewhere.

Book XXI

Following from his discussion of the last judgement, Augustine deals with the ultimate destinations of the two cities. He leaves the end of the City of God for the final book and discusses first the punishment of those who belong to the Earthly City – now referred to as the Devil's City.²⁸⁴ Much of this book is argumentative in character, as he addresses questions raised by those against whom he has been defending the City of God: is eternal punishment possible, and is it just (given that the offences being punished were committed over a short period of time?) Augustine is clear that those who do not belong to the City of God will face eternal punishment.²⁸⁵

Book XXII

Augustine moves to the eternal happiness of the City of God, where all the human citizens will join the angels in immortality, and be bound together in fellowship. God, the founder of that City, is the means of their life and happiness.²⁸⁶ Two promises are now fulfilled in Christ: all nations are blessed in Abraham's descendants and all the dead rise again, as God's saints receive the kingdom.²⁸⁷

For much of this book Augustine deals with the objections of the philosophers who do not believe in the resurrection of the body and who therefore deny that the souls and bodies

²⁸² XX.17.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ XXI.1.

²⁸⁵ XXI.24. See also XXI.11 'when a man has been condemned to the second death, the laws of that other City [the City of God] cannot call him back to life eternal'.

²⁸⁶ XXII.1.

²⁸⁷ XXII.3.

of the saints will be reunited in heaven. His arguments involve both logic (including the fact of widespread belief in Christ's resurrection) and testimony to miracles which he himself knows of. He contrasts Christ, the founder of the City of God, with Rome's founder Romulus: the City's foundation, and its love of Christ, stems from its belief that Christ is God, whereas Rome was first founded and only afterwards loved Romulus and so worshipped him as a god.²⁸⁸ Moreover, Romulus was worshipped by communities subject to Roman authority out of fear; there was no such fear in the case of the Christian martyrs. Indeed the citizens of the City of God never fought for its preservation: even when being persecuted they never fought back, and so the City grew. The City's safety can only be obtained through faith, as so many martyrs have shown, while no-one became a martyr for the sake of Romulus.²⁸⁹

In the end the saints will be in a state of peace both with God and within and between themselves, and they will join the angels in full possession of the City of God, being able to see God face to face.²⁹⁰ Great happiness will ensue, since all evil will be banished and all good will be present, and saints and angels will spend their time praising God. One of the distinguishing marks of that City will be the complete absence of jealousy between all its members: all will coexist in peaceful harmony.²⁹¹ The rest which will exist within the City of God will be an eternal Sabbath. *'Nam quis alius noster est finis nisi pervenire ad regnum, cuius nullus est finis? For what is our end but to reach that kingdom which has no end?'*²⁹²

Key themes

In addition to the themes identified by O'Meara (the Bible, Rome, and Greece) a number of other topics recur frequently in the twenty-two books of *City*. Augustine returns, again and again, to the idea of love: it is love for God, and the things of God, which characterises the *civitas Dei*; included in this is love of one's neighbours. Such love is the

²⁸⁸ XXII.6.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ XXII.29.

²⁹¹ XXII.30.

²⁹² Ibid.

motivating force behind all the actions of the citizens of the city of God. Contrasted to this love is *amor sui*, love of oneself, a seeking after one's own comfort, riches, and glory. It is that love (love of the wrong things) that characterises the Earthly City and its inhabitants. These inhabitants are not only human: demons (bad angels) are part of the *civitas terrena*, just as good angels share the City of God with the saints in heaven and human beings on earth.

Related to love is the issue of worship: those who love God (the one true God) will worship God, and this is true religion; those who love other things (riches, false gods, or themselves) will worship them instead. Such false worship is also associated with fear rather than love. Consequently true worship only occurs within the City of God, and is associated with Christ the mediator, the ruler of that City.

Two, related, questions that recur throughout the work concern what is the Highest Good, the *Summum Bonum*, and what creates true happiness. They are linked, since what makes humanity truly happy is its Highest Good, that for which all else will be left behind. For the citizens of the *civitas Dei*, the Highest Good and only source of true happiness is God: possessing God and being God's possession; and thus those who are part of the Earthly City cannot know true happiness. Linked to this true happiness is true peace, another major theme in *City*. True peace is an important ingredient in the true state: much of *City* is Augustine's extended answer to the question regarding what constitutes the true commonwealth / *res publica*. Justice is key, giving to each what is due to them, and thus true justice and real peace is only to be found within the City of God.

Another theme centres around the contrast between what is eternal and what is merely temporary. It is this emphasis that explains the life of the citizens of the City of God, living as strangers and pilgrims in this world, *in hoc saeculo*, encouraged by the eschatological hope they share with the angels and saints. Finally, what Augustine

emphasises, over and over, is the extent to which the two cities are mixed up together, interwoven and only to be separated out in the last judgement.

Foundational distinctions between the two cities

The key distinction between the City of God and the Earthly City lies in what each of them loves. The City of God and its citizens love God – the one true God – and the purpose of their existence is to love and worship God, in whom is all their glory. That is why they live their lives according to God's standards, not human ones. The citizens of the Earthly City have only themselves as their object: they live to please themselves, and their lives are characterised by pursuing pleasure, oriented towards their goals of riches and military victories. They seek their own glory, are content with the temporary praise of others, and live by human standards. The Earthly City aims at domination and tries to enslave other nations, but is itself dominated by that very desire to dominate, *libido dominandi*.

Consequently life within each city is very different. The Earthly City is a corrupt state, characterised by pride, injustice, conflict (lawsuits and battles), by the oppression of the poor and by a striving after high rank, as the city's rulers try to dominate others. Within the City of God there is humility, justice, truth and peace, and a love for the right things. There is a mutuality in which rulers and ruled serve each other in love, and people pray for one another.

The cities differ as to their origins: the City of God was founded by God, and it is continually (indeed, eternally) sustained by God. Without God it could not exist. The Earthly City, by contrast, is of human origin – and that is why it will ultimately come to an end. The City of God exists both in heaven and on earth, and its citizens are angels, saints and human beings – these last live on earth as aliens and sojourners, pilgrims whose real home is above. Its king is Christ. The Earthly City is only on earth, consisting of humans but also of bad angels (demons) and its king is the Devil. The members of this city worship many false gods, who are powerless but nevertheless feared. The final end

of the citizens of the Earthly City is eternal punishment, while the members of the City of God are destined for eternal life, peace and happiness.

Augustine sometimes speaks of the City of God as the Church, but the two are not identical. The two cities are interwoven and intermixed, *perplexae* and *permixtae*, existing alongside each other. Their members are intermixed, like the wheat and the weeds in the parable, and it is only at the last judgement that they will be separated.

Chapter 4 SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In the Preface to *City*, Augustine describes his task as ‘defending the glorious City of God’ against the pagans – what James Wetzel calls ‘an installment in a late antique culture war’ – but even at that early stage the work was more than that.²⁹³ Augustine was clear that he would be discussing the City of God ‘both as it exists in this world of time ... and as it stands in the security of its everlasting seat’. Thus from the beginning there were signs that the *magnum opus et arduum* would turn out to be a series of theological reflections on human history.²⁹⁴ The historical aspects are significant, for a key distinction between the two cities is how they are defined by time and by eternity or, in Augustine’s language, their origin and development and their destined ends.²⁹⁵ As Augustine traces the progress of each city through time, he is crafting an understanding of history in which humanity is shaped by its interaction with God and God’s interaction with it. Our history – what we do and who we become – hangs on our creation by, and our response (or lack of response) to, God.²⁹⁶ Augustine’s own life illustrates this: many commentators have noted that what Augustine is doing in *City* parallels the approach he has already taken, in respect of his own story, in *Confessions*. O’Meara sees *City* as the application of the *Confessions* to the history of humanity, its theme constructed from the details of his own process of conversion. Miles Hollingworth, by contrast, reads *City* back into the *Confessions*, seeing Augustine’s conversion as a process of learning to do without the compromises that characterise the life one lives in the Earthly City.²⁹⁷

²⁹³ *City*, I. Preface; James Wetzel, “A Tangle of Two Cities”, *Augustinian Studies* 43:1/2 (2012) 5-23, at 6.

²⁹⁴ Wetzel’s view (ibid.) is that *City* began as culture war but continued (in books XI to XXII) as ‘a theological meditation on the meaning of human history’; I think the historical theologising was planned all along. R.A. Markus calls *City* a work of ‘historical apologetics’. Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1.

²⁹⁵ *City*, X.32.

²⁹⁶ Matthew Levering describes Augustine’s achievement as a biblical understanding of history where the key to human life is an ‘ecclesial participation in the eternal God through Christ and the Holy Spirit’. *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to his Most Important Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 114.

²⁹⁷ John J. O’Meara, *Understanding Augustine*, 60. Miles Hollingworth, *The Pilgrim City: St Augustine of Hippo and his Innovation in Political Thought* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 5.

Thus *City* is theological history and not theological geography: the two cities are temporal identities more than spatial ones. This is one of the reasons why it can be hard to pin down precisely what Augustine means by the ‘City of God’ and the ‘Earthly City’, for we are inclined to approach our own cities accompanied by our inner geographer. We know them as places we inhabit, we think of Augustine’s cities as spatial metaphors.

City is also a Christian philosophy of society, or more particularly a theology of a Christian society, in contrast to other societies amongst which Christians must live. The title, *City of God*, contrasts with those other philosophies of society, the *Republic* of Plato and of Cicero.²⁹⁸ Thus Augustine has long been read for what he can teach us about Christianity’s relationship with the surrounding society and with the state. It must be clearly understood at the outset that any talk of ‘the state’ is an anachronism, albeit a useful one. Markus has noted the way commentators extrapolate Augustinian theories of the state from the direction of his comments about Rome, and Figgis has cautioned against translating *civitas* by ‘state’.²⁹⁹

What are the Cities?

In spite of the reader’s penchant for geography it is clear that Augustine’s two cities are not cities as we would ordinarily understand the word. They are categories, classes of person.³⁰⁰ O’Donovan describes them as ‘moral communities’, and refers to the tendency of those who see Augustine as a ‘realist’ to consider the cities not actual moral communities but rather ideal ones, possibilities which earthy communities merely approximate to a greater or lesser degree.³⁰¹ Mary Clark points out that Augustine does not put forward the City of God in theoretical terms as an imaginary city, the product of

²⁹⁸ See Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 129.

²⁹⁹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 72. John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine’s ‘City of God’* (Gloucester, MA: Longmans, Green & Co, 1921; reprinted Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963), 51. There is a similarly vexed question over the best way of translating *res publica*: not ‘republic’, sometimes ‘commonwealth’, often ‘state’. See Paul J. Griffiths, ‘Secularity and the *saeculum*’ in *Augustine’s City of God: A Critical Guide* ed. James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 33-54, at 40-41.

³⁰⁰ Hollingworth, *Pilgrim City*, 11-12.

³⁰¹ Oliver O’Donovan, “The Political Thought of *City of God*” in *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics Past and Present*, ed. Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 2004), 48-72, at 56.

philosophical speculation: it is not an ideal archetype (contra Plato, perhaps?) but composed of real, living persons.³⁰² William Cavanaugh notes that the two cities are not mapped out in space but projected across time: he sees Augustine's project in terms of salvation history, for God saves in time. 'The two cities are the already and the not yet of the Kingdom of God'.³⁰³ Cavanaugh argues that neither of the two cities are spaces complete with carefully drawn boundaries; instead they are 'sets of practices or dramatic performances', one tragic: the Earthly City, performing the *libido dominandi*, and one comic: the City of God enacting the comedy of redemption.³⁰⁴

It is clear that the two societies have fundamentally different characters, and these spring from the contrary loves of their members.³⁰⁵ A key aspect of Augustine's theology is his concept of 'love'. For him this includes both passing motives which generate momentary actions, engrained character traits which lead to habitual action, and fundamental orientations which run still deeper. The loves which characterise the two cities are the last of these: the fundamental orientations of those who are members of each city.³⁰⁶ The members of the City of God love God and want to glorify God. Those who are members of the Earthly City love themselves and seek after their own glory.³⁰⁷ For Augustine, love is connected with the will: *recta itaque voluntas est bonus amor et voluntas perversa malus amor* 'a rightly directed will is love in a good sense and a perverted will is love in a bad sense'.³⁰⁸

The key principle is that the cities are defined by their members and by the objects of their members' love, and not by any geographical boundaries: as Dougherty observes, the divide between Augustine's two cities is 'not one of borders and boundaries, but of

³⁰² Mary T. Clark, *Augustine* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1997), 98.

³⁰³ William T. Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimaging of Political Space", *Political Theology* 7.3 (2006), 299-321, at 312.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 312, 315.

³⁰⁵ Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), 270.

³⁰⁶ Paul Weithman, "Augustine's political philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234-252, at 235-36.

³⁰⁷ *City*, XIV.28.

³⁰⁸ *City*, XIV.7.

wills'.³⁰⁹ This is a change from the usual sense of the word: *civitas*, city, is customarily viewed in a geographical sense, as a place with buildings, walls, boundaries. Catherine Conybeare notes Augustine's use of *civitas* instead of the more common *populus* or *regnum*.³¹⁰

Conybeare sheds light on his treatment of the city image outside *City of God* by reference to his sermons of exposition on the psalms. In Augustine's sermon on Ps 87 (Ps 86 in the numbering of his time) 'Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God' he says to his congregation, 'a city is sung about and celebrated, a city of which we are citizens by virtue of being Christians, a city from which we are absent abroad as long as we are mortal and to which we are traveling'.³¹¹ The psalm's reference to Rahab and Babylon prompts Augustine to declare that the population of the City of God is susceptible to change: people may slip into it as did Rahab. While Jerusalem is the city of those loyal to God, and Babylon the city of the godless, Babylon gradually changes into Jerusalem through the work of Christ. Augustine and his congregation are citizens of this flexible City of God: the city is connected to its people.³¹²

In the aftermath of the sack of Rome Augustine preached at Hippo on Matt 18:7-9 ('Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks'), to a congregation which included some of the refugees from the ransacked city. He tackled head on the accusation that Rome had fallen because it had abandoned the old gods. Perhaps, he told them, Rome actually is not destroyed, not obliterated, not perished. Perhaps Rome isn't perishing if Romans aren't perishing. 'What is Rome, after all, but Romans? I mean, we are not concerned

³⁰⁹ Richard J. Dougherty, "Citizen", in *Augustine through the Ages*, 194-96, at 195.

³¹⁰ Catherine Conybeare, "The City of Augustine: on the Interpretation of *Civitas*" [hereafter, "*Civitas*"] in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, ed. Carol Harrison, Caroline Humfress, and Isabella Sandwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 138-155, at 139.

³¹¹ Augustine, Exposition of Ps 86 *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98 III/18 The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Maria Boulding, ed. John E Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 246-56, at 246. The sermon was preached at Carthage on 14 September, the feast of St Cyprian. This edition gives the year as 401, 416 or 412. Conybeare, "*Civitas*" 142, suggests 403 or 404 as the likely date.

³¹² See Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* Ps 86, at 252-53; Conybeare, "*Civitas*" 142-43.

with bricks and mortar, with high apartment blocks and extensive city walls'. The city is its people, not its buildings, the *civitas* is constituted by its *cives*.³¹³

Conybeare sets Augustine's concept of a city constituted by its people in the context of Cicero's *de Re Publica*, where the author puts into the mouth of Scipio Africanus the idea that the *res publica* is the *res populi* held together by common agreement about what is right / just: the state / commonwealth is the people.³¹⁴ When, twice in *City*, Augustine refers to Cicero's definition it is to challenge and to change it. But what he changes, in his alternative definition of a commonwealth, is not the basic idea that the people are constitutive of the commonwealth, but that the grouping is of rational beings united by a common agreement on what they love.³¹⁵ For Augustine, humanity is social. A *civitas* is not so much a city or a state as it is a society, a grouping of individuals who share a common life: how could the City of God have begun, continued and reached its goal 'if the life of the saints were not social?'³¹⁶

The cities, therefore are societies constituted by their citizens and by what they love: there are 'two cities, or communities, one consisting of the good, angels as well as men, and the other of the evil'.³¹⁷ These cities are, crucially, interwoven and intermixed in this era: *perplexae quippe sunt istae duae civitates in hoc saeculo invicemque permixtae*.³¹⁸

³¹³ Augustine, Sermon 81, *Sermons III (51-94) The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Edmund Hill, ed. John E Rotelle (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), 350-68, at 365. See Conybeare, "Civitas" 143-44.

³¹⁴ Conybeare, "Civitas" 144-48.

³¹⁵ *City*, XIX.24, see also XIX 21 and 23, and II.21. See Weithman, "Augustine's political philosophy", 243. Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 210, notes that Augustine is not substituting justice ('what is right') for love, but bringing it in under love, since justice is rendering to someone their due, and we render to God what is due to God when we love God and our neighbour.

³¹⁶ *City* XIX.5. See Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 206-07.

³¹⁷ *City*, XII.1.

³¹⁸ *City*, I.35.

What does Augustine mean by the 'City of God'?

Augustine discusses two cities, but from the outset his priority is the City of God: that is the title of his work and its opening words.³¹⁹ It is not immediately clear, however, precisely what he means by the term. Cranz points out that Augustine tells his readers much about the City of God but he does not actually define it.³²⁰ In Cranz's view, Augustine comes closest to telling his audience what he means by the City of God when he speaks of it as 'we'.³²¹ It is clear that the City of God is a society made up of good angels, the saints in heaven and members of the City on pilgrimage on earth. Its members are the devout, those in whom the love of God takes first place.³²²

Augustine describes the origins of the City of God from the creation of the good angels (that is, those angels who did not fall): the Holy City began with the holy angels, in the sense that they were its earliest citizens.³²³ Even before the angels, 'the whole united Trinity' was involved: the City of God was founded by God, enlightened by God, and received its happiness from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³²⁴ With his customary attention to Scripture, he continues from this foundation through the historical periods of the Old Testament. It is clear to him that the City of God had members, both human and angelic, long before the coming of Christ. Abel, a pilgrim and stranger on earth, was an early 'citizen above': unlike his brother Cain he founded no city in this world.³²⁵ The City of God was kept alive through the centuries by key people: Augustine singles out, *inter alia*, Noah, Hannah, David, and the family of Abraham. Noah's ark is a symbol of the *civitas Dei* on pilgrimage in this world, while the spiritual descendants of Abraham are members of the City of God: Augustine uses the allegory of Sarah/Isaac/children of the

³¹⁹ *Gloriosissimam civitatem Dei ad te promissione debito defendere aduersus eos.* (The verb comes a long way after: the fulfilment of my promise to you to defend the most glorious City of God against its enemies.) *City* I.Pref.

³²⁰ F. Edward Cranz, "De Civitate Dei, XV,2, and Augustine's Idea of the Christian Society", in *Augustine: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 404-421, at 404.

³²¹ Cranz, *ibid.*, 404-05. See also Augustine, Exposition of Ps 86.

³²² *City*, XII.9, XIV.13.

³²³ *City*, XI.9.

³²⁴ Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 278. See *City*, XI,24.

³²⁵ *City*, XV.1.

promise from Galatians 4.³²⁶ It is in the people of Israel that the City of God has been on pilgrimage.³²⁷ Israel was an earthly nation, but is symbolic of the heavenly city, as the earthly Jerusalem is a shadow of what was to come in the future.³²⁸ There are also members of the City of God who come from outside Israel, for example Job the Edomite.³²⁹ The City of God is the heavenly Jerusalem, and its people, assembled from all nations, include both those who lived during Old Testament times ('those who were hidden in the time of the old covenant') and those, following the revelation of the new covenant, who are 'clearly manifested as belonging to Christ'.³³⁰

The City of God is the city of Christ: Christ is its founder and ruler.³³¹ As the king of the city, Christ has made himself the way through the thorn-bushes and briars which block the path towards it.³³² Christ, human and divine, is the true mediator between God and humanity.³³³ As human, he is 'nobly born' by descent from the patriarchs belonging to the free city, as divine, he is the Word, co-eternal with the Father.³³⁴ Human beings come into the City of God through Christ: it is a society into which we are called by baptism.³³⁵ Augustine's Trinitarian understanding comes out when he states that the City is created by the grace of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.³³⁶ Elsewhere he says that faith leads to God, through Christ, 'all who are predestined for the City of God, which is God's house and God's temple'.³³⁷

³²⁶ *City*, XV.26, XV.2.

³²⁷ As well as in the persons of the saints and also having a shadowy symbolic representation in humankind generally. *City*, XVI.3.

³²⁸ *City*, XV.2, XVII.14. Dodaro notes that at some times, Israel is symbolic of the City of God, while at others it foreshadows the story of those who disregard the sovereignty of God. Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 110.

³²⁹ *City*, XVIII.47.

³³⁰ *City*, XVII.12, X.32.

³³¹ *In ea re publica, cuius conditor rectorque Christus est. City*, II.21. Also XVII.4.

³³² Augustine, Exposition of Ps 86.1.

³³³ *City*, IX. 15.

³³⁴ *City*, XVII.20.

³³⁵ David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30.

³³⁶ *City*, XX.17.

³³⁷ *City*, XVIII.47. The mention of predestination makes it clear that the initiative, in admission to the City of God as in everything else, is always with God.

Christ is not only the City's founder and ruler: he is its source of security and the mediator of divine justice.³³⁸ Without him the City of God would not exist: it would have no citizens, no safety and no justice. Connected to this theme of justice is that of worship, since Augustine's working definition of justice is 'that which assigns to everyone his due'.³³⁹ Worship is due to God, and therefore since only in the City of God does true worship happen, then only in this City can true justice exist. For this worship, Christ is indispensable; Augustine held that God can be known only through the mystery of the incarnation.³⁴⁰ The City of God is that which knows and worships one God. There humanity ('we') joins with the angels to be, with them, a sacrifice to God.³⁴¹

Augustine's habit of referring to the City of God in the first person plural, especially when discussing worship, leads to a key question raised by *City*: is the City of God to be equated with the Church? This, in Reinhold Niebuhr's words, is Augustine's 'alleged identification of the *civitas dei* with the visible church', a charge from which Niebuhr believes we should absolve him.³⁴² Carol Harrison has pointed out that Augustine frequently likens the Church to the City of God, but her view, and that of the majority of commentators, is that the two should not be identified.³⁴³ Forrester takes the same line: the Church on earth cannot simply be identified with the City of God. The Church is a mixed body, of the saved and others, but Augustine did see it as a sign and partial manifestation of the City of God.³⁴⁴ Hollingsworth calls the Heavenly City 'what the Earthly City would desperately like to be but cannot', since it can realise only imperfect versions of all the virtues found in the City of God. For him, the Heavenly City can have no exact counterpart on earth: no body of people however saintly, no city or empire, and not even the institutional church can take on the role of the City of God.³⁴⁵ In his introduction to his translation of *City*,

³³⁸ Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 108, 94.

³³⁹ *City*, XIX.21. The 'giving to each his due' comes from Aristotle's *Eth. Nic.*, 5,5,2.

³⁴⁰ Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 71.

³⁴¹ *City*, X.25.

³⁴² Reinhold Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism" in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey and Craig Hovey (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 223-239, at 234.

³⁴³ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 220.

³⁴⁴ Duncan Forrester, *Theology and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 25.

³⁴⁵ Hollingsworth, *Pilgrim City*, 13-14.

Dyson makes it clear that Augustine's City of God is 'not simply coextensive with, or a synonym for' the institutional Church, but he admits that Augustine's language is frequently ambiguous and materially inconsistent.³⁴⁶ This inconsistency has been noted by several commentators and is a key part of the problem.³⁴⁷

O'Meara notes that 'in a *very general* way Augustine identifies' the Church with the City of God on pilgrimage on earth, using a variety of formulae 'but the "identity" is always there'.³⁴⁸ He goes on to outline some of the reservations he and other commentators have to such an identification of the Church with the City of God. Amongst these are the citizens of that city who predate the Church (including the Sibyl as well as many Hebrews), and the mixed nature of the Church as a visible body. The Gospel stories of the weeds among the wheat, the separation of wheat and chaff, and the mixture of fish in the net all contributed to Augustine's view that there were both people within the institutional church who would not, at the end, be numbered amongst the citizens above, and people currently outside the church who would be found to be members of the heavenly city.³⁴⁹

Against this we have Cranz, who considers that Augustine represents the Christian society as either City of God, heavenly kingdom, or *ecclesia*.³⁵⁰ He cites, as do others, the passages where Augustine refers to 'the kingdom of heaven, which is the City of God' and 'the City of God, that is to say, God's Church'.³⁵¹ In his view, Augustine's use of all three terminologies is a deliberate expression of his social thought and not simply inconsistency. Milbank also argues for Augustine's 'explicit identification' of the visible and institutional church with the City of God on pilgrimage in the world, stressing the

³⁴⁶ R.W. Dyson, introduction to *The City of God*, xx.

³⁴⁷ 'With a highly differentiated personality like Augustine's, with his complex and subtle mind, it would be a counsel of despair to begin with the assumption that his thoughts and attitudes should have a simple, monolithic consistency about them.' Markus, *Saeculum*, 134-35. 'Augustine is too great to be always consistent.' Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'*, 56.

³⁴⁸ O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine*, 76. Italics in original.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Cranz, "*De Civitate Dei*, XV,2" 410.

³⁵¹ *City*, XVII.1 (kingdom of heaven), XIII.16 (Church: *civitatem Dei, hoc est eius ecclesiam*) There are many other references where the Church is called the City of God.

importance to him of institutional adherence (as shown, for example, in the Donatist controversy).³⁵²

Markus is more nuanced. In *Saeculum*, he considered that the channel of God's work in the world is the City of God in its earthly pilgrimage, but said that this City is not the Church, though it will exist within the Church as well as outside it.³⁵³ Later, he identifies the Church with the City of God in the sense that it is sacramentally identical with the eschatological community of the redeemed. There is an essential continuity between the Church 'as it now is' and the Church 'as it then will be'.³⁵⁴ Henry Chadwick makes a similar eschatological point, seeing the Church as the anticipation and sign of the kingdom of God, and considering that in Augustine's thought the City of God is 'normally located in but not coterminous with' the Church which is scattered throughout the world.³⁵⁵ This is a key distinction: the Church is not the City of God, but anticipates it, witnesses to it, and points to it.

A crucial element in the debate over the possible identification of the Church with the City of God is not just the definition of the City but that of the Church also. If 'the Church' is understood as the institutional body, organised in hierarchical fashion then, as noted above, most commentators agree that such an identification is not appropriate. But if 'the Church' is the whole communion of saints in its widest sense, then it can be equated with the City of God. Figgis considers that in *City* Augustine is not interested in hierarchical questions and that for him the Church is the whole body of the faithful.³⁵⁶

³⁵² John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 402. Hollerich likewise considers that Markus' reading underestimates the degree to which Augustine sees the Church itself as a 'political' reality embracing the whole of our social life. Michael J. Hollerich, "John Milbank, Augustine, and the 'Secular'" in *Augustinian Studies* 30:2 (1999), 311-26, at 321.

³⁵³ Markus, *Saeculum*, 180.

³⁵⁴ Markus, "The Latin Fathers", 113.

³⁵⁵ Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, 128.

³⁵⁶ Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'*, 69-70. Nevertheless, Figgis notes that in his controversy with the Donatists Augustine thinks of the Church as an organised body, hierarchically governed. Perhaps this is an example of Augustine's inconsistent greatness.

Significantly, Dyson's conclusion to the issue of what Augustine means by the 'City of God' is that it is 'what is usually meant' by the Communion of Saints.³⁵⁷

This is where it helps to remember that *City* is theological history and not theological geography, that the two cities are temporal identities more than spatial ones. When the City of God is described as a society made up of good angels, the saints in heaven and members of the City on pilgrimage on earth, we are reminded of its temporal/eternal nature.³⁵⁸ The Church, *understood as communion of saints*, is predominately a temporal society, existing through the ages as a body of people rather than as an institution. Eschatology is key. Mary Clark makes an interesting distinction between the eschatological church, which is the City of God, and the 'historical City of God' that is the Church.³⁵⁹ Only in the eschaton will the membership of the City of God be clear. Prior to that, the two cities will remain interwoven, and the Church will include, amongst those who claim to belong to it, many who will ultimately be numbered as citizens of the Earthly City.³⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the Church, while on its earthly pilgrimage, is the chosen channel of God's grace.³⁶¹ Only in the Church can we receive salvation. Markus sees a link between the sacramental community of the church on earth and the heavenly city which, for him, is essential to the definition of 'Church'.³⁶² Griffiths draws a crucial distinction between the Church visible, the *corpus permixtum*, which includes citizens of both cities amongst its members, and the Church 'as she will finally be'.³⁶³

³⁵⁷ Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xx.

³⁵⁸ In the Preface to *City*, Augustine says he will be discussing the City of God 'both as it exists in this world of time ... and as it stands in the security of its everlasting seat'. I see this as an indication that we are to understand the City of God as being in the temporal/eternal category of things and not in the spatial/geographical category.

³⁵⁹ Clark, *Augustine*, 97.

³⁶⁰ Compare Markus, "The Latin Fathers", 106; 'As actual, discernible societies the two "cities" have a separate identity only eschatologically'.

³⁶¹ Clark, *Augustine*, 97.

³⁶² Markus, *Saeculum*, 119. He sees, therefore, the Church as the 'historically visible form' of the City of God.

³⁶³ Paul J. Griffiths, "Secularity and the *saeculum*", 52.

While the Church in its eschatological fulfilment *is* the City of God, the Church currently on earth is but a sign and an anticipation of the City of God. Yet this latter ‘Church’ is the one in which we who are alive today live and worship: the pilgrim Church, *peregrina civitas regis Christi*, the pilgrim city of Christ the king.³⁶⁴ It is always *in via*, on the road.³⁶⁵ Its members are focussed on a heavenly country and are ‘no more than sojourners’ even in their own homes.³⁶⁶ They are *peregrini*, pilgrims, resident aliens in a land which is not their own.³⁶⁷ As such, they are exiles waiting to return to their homeland. While they wait they live by faith, and obey the laws of the earthly city in which they find themselves.³⁶⁸ This life of pilgrimage is characterised by mutual forgiveness and by hope based on the resurrection of Christ. The City of God on pilgrimage in this world is a paradox, ‘a nomad city’.³⁶⁹ Its citizens live according to God’s standards: they, and the way they live, are contrasted with the citizens of the Earthly City, whose lives are shaped by human standards. Indeed Augustine uses the City of God itself as a standard by which other societies are judged and found wanting.³⁷⁰

What does Augustine mean by the ‘Earthly City’?

Those who are members of the Earthly City, the *civitas terrena*, love themselves and seek after their own glory.³⁷¹ It, like the City of God, is not to be equated with any particular geographical territory; indeed Niebuhr conceives of it as ‘the whole human community’ on all levels: the family, the commonwealth/state, and the world, and these places are full of dangers.³⁷² While Augustine several times refers to the Earthly City in terms of ‘Babylon’, it is Babylon as a metaphor that he most often means, not the actual historical empire.³⁷³ ‘Babylon’ is the City of this world, and the society of wicked angels and

³⁶⁴ *City*, I.35.

³⁶⁵ Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine’s ‘City of God’*, 68.

³⁶⁶ *City*, I.15.

³⁶⁷ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 211.

³⁶⁸ *City*, XIX.17.

³⁶⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 392.

³⁷⁰ See Weithman, “Augustine’s political philosophy”, 248.

³⁷¹ *City*, XIV.28.

³⁷² Reinhold Niebuhr, “Augustine’s Political Realism”, 226. See also *City*, XIX.5-9

³⁷³ For example, *City*, XVII.4 where he mentions the enemies of the City, those who belong to Babylon, who rely on their own strength and glory and not on God’s.

humans who live there.³⁷⁴ Dyson names the members of the City of God as the elect, those predestined to salvation, but the Earthly City (sometimes called the city of the devil) is the city of the lost and its members are destined for eternal damnation.³⁷⁵

There is a bleakness about the *civitas terrena* that is apparent to all who read *City*. This is the effect of that desire to dominate, *libido dominandi*, by which the Earthly City is itself dominated. The perpetual seeking after glory makes for permanent strife.³⁷⁶ Not only do its citizens live only to please themselves, and pursue their own glory, but so do the pagan gods, competing with one another for *their* glory. The Earthly City is wholly under the power of these gods / malignant demons.³⁷⁷

The reason for this bleakness, for the domination of *libido dominandi* is quite clear: the Earthly City is characterised by sin. Dyson notes the way in which Augustine's social and political thinking hangs fundamentally on his understanding of the Fall. The first humans were created to love and serve God but succumbed instead to self-love, a tendency which from then onwards marks all humanity.³⁷⁸ As Hollingsworth puts it, 'The damage done by Adam was foundational'.³⁷⁹

What is sin for Augustine? For Augustine, humanity is social – and so sin is also social. It is a denial of God and others in favour of self-love and self-assertion, even to a contempt of God.³⁸⁰ Because of sin, human society is divided against itself, the stronger oppressing the weaker.³⁸¹ In this light, Augustine proceeds systematically to deconstruct ancient political society, measuring it by its own standards and judging it a failure. Its virtue is not

³⁷⁴ *City*, XVIII.18.

³⁷⁵ Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xix.

³⁷⁶ Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: a Reading of the *City of God*" in *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, ed. by William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey and Craig Hovey (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 731-48, at 739.

³⁷⁷ *City*, XIX.9.

³⁷⁸ Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xvi-xvii.

³⁷⁹ Hollingsworth, *Pilgrim City*, 164.

³⁸⁰ *City*, XIV.28. See also Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 391.

³⁸¹ *City*, XVIII.2.

in fact virtue, its community is not real community, and its justice is not true justice.³⁸² More particularly, the worship of the Earthly City is not true worship: it has created false gods for itself – even creating them out of human beings – in order to offer sacrifices to them, but it is only worship of the one true God that counts as real worship.³⁸³ Yet it is not all bad. Augustine is clear that the Earthly City, as well as the City of God, enjoys the good things of this life (though with different expectations, different loves and different ultimate fates).³⁸⁴

Just as there are questions over whether Augustine meant to equate the City of God with the Church, there is the issue over whether the Earthly City is to be understood as Rome. At first sight, it is a logical conclusion to draw: Rome was the great and powerful city whose sack had provided the initial occasion for the writing of *City*, and it was the political and social reality which its readers experienced. Milbank has remarked on how Augustine condemns the Roman commonwealth for its individualism,³⁸⁵ that is, its self-assertion and quest for glory which is a mark of the Earthly City. Definitional issues arise over ‘Rome’: Augustine frequently speaks of it in *City*, but sometimes he means to refer to the city itself, sometimes to the Roman Republic, at other times to the Roman Empire, or to the society of Roman citizens and their traditions and customs.³⁸⁶

In giving his account of the Earthly City Augustine uses the imagery of ‘Babylon’. He describes Babylon as the first Rome, Rome as the second Babylon, proceeding side by side with the City of God.³⁸⁷ He describes the City of God by contrasting it with Rome: ‘There, instead of victory, is truth; instead of high rank, holiness; instead of peace, felicity; instead of life, eternity’.³⁸⁸ Lancel notes that Rome is an obvious image of the Earthly City, but that it is an imperfect image: the Earthly City is an evil place, but within Rome itself a

³⁸² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 389-90.

³⁸³ *City*, XVIII.54.

³⁸⁴ *City*, XVIII.54.

³⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 401.

³⁸⁶ Weithman, “Augustine’s political philosophy”, 237-38. Weithman’s view is that, amongst all these different usages of ‘Rome’, Augustine never means the set of institutions that collectively administer its political affairs.

³⁸⁷ *City*, XVIII.2.

³⁸⁸ *City*, II.29.

mixture of good and evil can be observed.³⁸⁹ Even as he describes Rome as the daughter of the former Babylon, Augustine says that it was God's plan to unite the world under the Roman empire and Roman laws, and so give peace.³⁹⁰ God, indeed, has granted to the Romans the earthly glory of an empire superior to all others; they are good according to the standards of the Earthly City and so God assisted them to 'the glory of so great an empire'.³⁹¹ There is a greatness about Rome which Augustine's readers forget at their peril.

Augustine objects to the Roman gods, but he finds much to praise otherwise in the city and its citizens. He commends – indeed, he admires – a number of figures from the history of the Roman republic: Brutus, Furius Camillus (who 'could find no better country where he could live with greater honour'), Curtius and especially Marcus Regulus are all praised for their virtues, courage, honour and even for their devotion to their gods.³⁹² When compared to these men, Christians have nothing to boast about. We can see here Augustine the classically-trained Roman citizen.³⁹³

Part of the problem with Rome, for Augustine himself, and in the way it is presented in *City*, was that Rome was less interested in metaphysics and eschatology and more in how to achieve happiness. That should never be an ultimate focus, and in any case, true happiness can only come from God. Aside from Roman religion, Augustine's general attitude to Rome, and also to Greece, is positive.

At the time of *City's* writing Rome, however, had turned its back on polytheism and was officially Christian. Did this incline Augustine even more towards a positive outlook on the empire? Earlier theologians like Cyprian and Tertullian, living under times of persecution, had somewhat naturally viewed the empire in negative and apocalyptic

³⁸⁹ Serge Lancel, *St Augustine*, trans. by Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 402.

³⁹⁰ *City*, XVIII.22.

³⁹¹ *City*, IV.15, V.19.

³⁹² *City*, V.18.

³⁹³ See O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine*, 94-95 for a useful discussion of Augustine's Roman background.

terms, as a hostile and evil power.³⁹⁴ After the Constantinian settlement and the recognition of Christianity as the official faith of the empire came the imperial theology of Eusebius: the worship of the one true God under one emperor. At its highest, this way of thinking regarded the emperor as God's representative on earth, divinely ordained to deliver the empire from paganism and to protect and increase the Christian church. The empire was an instrument for the salvation of humanity. Harrison (amongst others) points out that this view was shared by almost all of Augustine's contemporaries.³⁹⁵

Augustine did not take this line, at least not in the end. There are signs early on that he did not question the prevailing view of empire and shared in the interpretation of history which saw God's hand at work in the suppression of paganism, the establishment of the Christian empire and the person of the Christian emperors.³⁹⁶ His comments on Constantine and his praise of Theodosius in the early sections of *City* can be read in this light.³⁹⁷ In later years, however, he came to re-evaluate the received imperial theology in favour of a different understanding.

Augustine ultimately rejected both the imperial theology of Eusebius and the apocalyptic condemnations of Rome during pagan times. He came to see the empire as theologically neutral, neither a divine instrument nor the work of the devil, but merely the context in which people lived their lives.³⁹⁸ Rome was neither the City of God nor the Earthly City. This, incidentally, accounts for much of the ambivalence towards Rome in *City*.

For Augustine, therefore, the Earthly City is wider than Rome, but it should be asked whether he sees, and criticised in the *civitas terrena*, what we today call 'the State' (anachronistic though that term is for Augustine). Augustine seems not to have had a well-defined theory of the state, that is, of the mechanisms for the governance of society.

³⁹⁴ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 201.

³⁹⁵ Harrison, *ibid.*, 202-03. See Markus, "The Latin Fathers", for an outline of the imperial theology of Eusebius et al.

³⁹⁶ See Markus, *Saeculum*, 30-31.

³⁹⁷ *City*, V.25-26.

³⁹⁸ Markus, "The Latin Fathers", 105, *Saeculum*, 54-55; Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 203.

Weithman accounts for this with his view that Augustine is more interested in the rationale for human relationships than in political institutions.³⁹⁹ O'Donovan notes that while Augustine pays a great deal of attention to society, in *City* (in contrast to some of his other works), he does not address questions of government.⁴⁰⁰ This is because, as Dyson rightly acknowledges, *City* is not intended as a political treatise, and Augustine is not commenting on the advantages or disadvantages of particular forms of government.⁴⁰¹ He does not recommend an ideal 'state' for the simple and connected reasons, I consider, that any human form for the ordering of society will be flawed by our fallen condition, and that our final destination, and hence our priority, is in any case elsewhere.

Although Augustine is not offering his readers a theory of political governance, he does have views on what the state, as he experienced it, is like – and these views are not always consistent. On the one hand, his approach to social and political structures was profoundly shaped by his understanding of the Fall. His strong doctrine of original sin engendered a lack of hope in what could be achieved by changes to the institutions of society.⁴⁰² The power of sin over people's lives is such that the most political forces can do is to minimise disorder and so restrain the worst effects of evil.⁴⁰³

Political power, however, is itself compromised. It is part of – a consequence of – the Fall. Augustine believed that human life is naturally social, but not natural political (or, as Hollingworth puts it, 'there was no politics in Paradise').⁴⁰⁴ Humanity was created to have dominion over flocks, not over other people. Before Noah, there is no reference to slavery.⁴⁰⁵ O'Donovan comments that here Augustine is reminding his readers of the

³⁹⁹ Weithman, "Augustine's political philosophy", 237-38.

⁴⁰⁰ O'Donovan, "The Political Thought of *City of God*", 52. O'Donovan notes Augustine's account of secular government and its relation to the church in other writings, including Ep 153.

⁴⁰¹ Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xv. Dyson goes on to conclude, however, that while Augustine does not set out a 'theory' of Church and State, he does offer some of the components of such a theory. Ibid., xxviii.

⁴⁰² Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, 140.

⁴⁰³ Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, 29. See *City*, XIX.16.

⁴⁰⁴ Hollingworth, *Pilgrim City*, 13.

⁴⁰⁵ *City*, XIX.15.

patristic tradition that slavery and government were both provided by Providence for the relief of a fallen world.⁴⁰⁶ Human beings are sinful, choosing to live by their own standards and their own will instead of God's: when left to themselves disorder (a bad thing in Augustine's world) would result, were it not for the restraining use, or threat, of force.⁴⁰⁷ In that sense, politics is the inevitable consequence of the Fall – Hollingsworth calls it 'the archetypal sinful activity'.⁴⁰⁸ Augustine uses the well-known story of Alexander and the pirate to make the point that between the rulers of a state and the heads of robber bands the difference is only that of scale. 'Because I do it with a tiny craft, I'm called a pirate; because you have a mighty navy, you're called an emperor'.⁴⁰⁹ True, Augustine includes the premise 'remove justice' when he likens kingdoms to large-scale gangs of criminals, but he elsewhere contends that, outside the City of God, there is no justice.⁴¹⁰

Seen at its worst, the state encapsulates humanity's weaknesses: all the vices (greed, vanity, striving after glory) that result ultimately from the *libido dominandi*. Even when at its best any earthly kingdom, lacking justice, cannot be a true commonwealth. Yet, says Dyson, this does not imply that Augustine is hostile to, or opposed to, the state.⁴¹¹ For on the other hand, the existence of states ('kingdoms and empires') is due to God: God gave sovereignty to the Assyrians, the Persians and the Romans, and to individual rulers within those empires, and God's pleasure is never wrong.⁴¹² There is a positive role for the state, in providing (to a relative, but not ultimate degree) some peace, justice and order and so protecting human society against itself.⁴¹³ Markus sees in Augustine's *City* a role for the state (that is, for political institutions) in containing disorder, controlling conflict

⁴⁰⁶ O'Donovan, "The Political Thought of *City of God*", 67.

⁴⁰⁷ Weithman, "Augustine's political philosophy", 238.

⁴⁰⁸ Hollingsworth, *Pilgrim City*, 65.

⁴⁰⁹ *City*, IV.4.

⁴¹⁰ *City*, XIX.21; 23; 24.

⁴¹¹ Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xxiv.

⁴¹² *City*, V.21.

⁴¹³ Harrison, *Augustine*, 216. O'Meara suggests that Augustine makes a distinction between absolute and relative goods, for a justice which, with reference to what is owed to the true God, is not justice at all but which, judged by less absolute standards, could nevertheless be considered a kind of justice. *Understanding Augustine*, 98-99.

and securing the shared goods needed by all people.⁴¹⁴ Even pagan states have a role in securing peace and order which everyone finds useful: even members of the City of God ‘make use of the peace of Babylon’.⁴¹⁵ Augustine is under no illusions: good and bad rulers exist, and Augustine lists some of the attributes of the good, that is, Christian, ruler (the famous ‘Mirror for Princes’ in *City* V.24): justice, humility, forgiveness and so on. ‘Order’ is a key thing: it is so important that even a bad ruler should be obeyed.⁴¹⁶ TeSelle notes that, unlike Ambrose, Augustine was not prepared to stand up against the civil authorities.⁴¹⁷

Is the ‘State’, then, to be understood as the Earthly City? Augustine has far too ambivalent attitude towards the state for this to be an acceptable conclusion. The Earthly City is a bleak and evil place; the state, in *City*, has many negative but also many positive aspects. Milbank concludes that Augustine does not regard the Earthly City as a ‘state’ (in the modern sense of a sphere of sovereignty) but is instead the vestigial remains of an entire pagan mode of practice.⁴¹⁸ For Markus, the state is theologically neutral. The Roman empire – as with all actual human societies – is neither the City of God nor the Earthly City. It exists ‘in the region where the two cities overlap’ that is, in the *saeculum*.⁴¹⁹ Harrison takes a similar view. Although Augustine is sometimes inconsistent on the identification of the *civitas terrena*, and although it and the empire/state resemble each other and sometimes overlap, she concludes that they are not synonymous. The state is simply part of the *saeculum*.⁴²⁰

How do the Cities interact?

Augustine puts forward two cities, stemming from ‘two loves’, love for God and love for self. How do these cities interact with one another? This is primarily a question about

⁴¹⁴ Markus, “Refusing to bless the state: prophetic church and secular state” in *Sacred and Secular: Themes in Late Antiquity*, 372-79, at 374; and “The Latin Fathers”, 110.

⁴¹⁵ *City*, XIX.26. See also Dyson, Introduction to *Augustine The City of God*, xxiv.

⁴¹⁶ Lancel, *St Augustine*, 406; Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, 137-38.

⁴¹⁷ TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 273-4.

⁴¹⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 406.

⁴¹⁹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 55, 98.

⁴²⁰ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 216. She comments that Augustine writes within a tradition of rhetoric which was not at all constrained by matters of general consistency’.

how the *civitas peregrina*, the City of God on pilgrimage, deals with the *civitas terrena*: the saints are safe in heaven, and the holy angels fortunate in that they have never had to be on pilgrimage in a strange land, but the humans currently alive on earth are the ones who are faced with the Earthly City on a daily basis.⁴²¹ Augustine's central idea is that the two cities are interwoven and intermixed, *perplexae* and *permixtae*, and that this takes place not in a 'where' but in a 'when': *in hoc saeculo*, in this age.

This is Markus' notion of the *Saeculum*, 'the world of men and of time'.⁴²² The noun *saeculum*, as in '*hoc saeculum*' generally means a period of time with a beginning.⁴²³ Specifically it is, in Wetzel's phrase, 'the time of mixing between the first coming of Christ and the show-stopping second'.⁴²⁴ Augustine, in Markus' view, saw the *saeculum* as the 'historical, empirical, perplexed and interwoven' life of the two cities: in any historical period and society the two cities will be present, but mixed up with one another.⁴²⁵ The *saeculum*, therefore, is the area of overlap ('area' here is best taken in a temporal not a spatial sense) between the two cities, what Hollingworth refers to as the 'space' occupied by the Pilgrim City.⁴²⁶

What Markus, and those who have followed him, is doing is arguing for something more than the simply binary system of 'sacred' and 'profane'. The *saeculum* is an intermediate realm in which these overlap, an area sometimes called 'the secular'.⁴²⁷ Markus sees the secular as neutral, the shared overlap between insider and outsider groups, the domain of religious (but not moral) *adiaphora*. Whereas both 'sacred' and 'profane' involve reference to religion, either positively or negatively, 'secular' requires a neutrality in the

⁴²¹ *City*, XI.9.

⁴²² Markus, *Saeculum*, viii.

⁴²³ Griffiths, "Secularity and the *saeculum*", 33. There is also '*saeculum futuram*', which has a beginning but no end, stretching out into eternity.

⁴²⁴ Wetzel, "A Tangle of Two Cities", 7.

⁴²⁵ Markus, *Saeculum*, 101.

⁴²⁶ Hollingworth, *Pilgrim City*, 17.

⁴²⁷ Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular: from Augustine to Gregory the Great" in *Sacred and Secular: Themes in Late Antiquity*, 84-96, at 84-85.

public sphere. From the Christian standpoint, it points to what can be shared with non-Christians.⁴²⁸

Griffiths has compared Augustine's understanding of the *saeculum* with three modern conceptions of 'the secular'. Is the *saeculum* secular as we would understand secular? Augustine would have understood the concept of societies with no visible ecclesial presence, and societies with norms or laws to which both Christians and pagans can assent (but which they would understand differently), but he would not, says Griffiths, have entertained the idea of societal norms and laws which are theologically neutral, that is, which can be fully understood and engaged in without raising any questions about God's action in the world. For Augustine, any good law is good to the extent that it participates in principles ordained by God.⁴²⁹ There is always 'God's action in the world'.

Markus is not without his challengers, particularly over the concept of a neutral public space and whether Augustine would have recognised this. Rowan Williams contends that Augustine redefines 'the public', seeking to show that it is life *outside* the Christian community which fails to be truly public: the secular order is individualistic, not public enough.⁴³⁰ O'Donovan and Cavanaugh both disagree with Markus' idea of a neutral meeting space, sometimes called 'a naked public square'. O'Donovan critiques Markus' reading of Augustine whereby the 'secularisation' of the political sphere implies a pluralistic and religiously neutral civil community.⁴³¹ Cavanaugh says, 'For Augustine, the earthly city is not religiously neutral, but its members share a common end, "the love of self, even to the contempt of God"'.⁴³² This, however, conflates the idea of the *saeculum* with the Earthly City, which is, I believe, a misinterpretation of Markus and one which Cavanaugh shares with O'Donovan. Neither accepts the concept of a neutral space

⁴²⁸ Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006) 5-6.

⁴²⁹ Griffiths, "Secularity and the *saeculum*", 35-38. The first two of these understandings of 'secular' would seem to correspond to the 'procedural secularism' of Chaplin and Williams (see chapter 2), the third to 'programmatically secularism'. Griffiths goes on to suggest ways in which Augustine's thoughts may have something to say to those who wish to think about politics today.

⁴³⁰ Williams, "Politics and the Soul", 734-35, 747. Cavanaugh takes a similar line: 'The city of God, therefore, is not part of a larger whole, but is a public in its own right.' "From One City to Two", 310.

⁴³¹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 173; O'Donovan, "The Political Thought of *City of God*", 58-59.

⁴³² Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two", 310.

between the two cities. Carol Harrison, by contrast, does. There is a secular context (and the empire is part of it) in which the life of humanity takes place, in which the members of the City of God and the Earthly City pursue their intertwined courses: the *saeculum*.⁴³³

A *saeculum* in which sacred and profane overlap, in which the City of God and the Earthly City are intertwined, is deeply ambiguous. It contains all that is good about the world, all the gifts of God, all the order and all the beauty ‘so ancient and so new’ which Augustine loved. It also contains all the ugliness, all the vice, all the disorder that have been around since the Fall.⁴³⁴ This is what makes life in the *saeculum* so challenging and confusing, because it means living within the tension of what is possible in the Earthly City and of all the promise and hope which the City of God holds out.⁴³⁵

Part of the difficulty is that the real distinction between the membership of the two cities is only certain in an eschatological sense. Within the Roman empire, and within any other social group, the cities are interwoven, only separated out into a visibly differentiated identity at the end of time. Markus sees in Augustine’s ‘uncompromising agnosticism about the end’, especially in Book XVIII of *City*, a reaction to, and indeed a disagreement with, the imperial theology which saw in the Christian empire of Theodosius the triumph of the Church and a permanent end to persecutions, and he could not be sure that this was the case: there may yet be suffering for the Church.⁴³⁶ Although the populations of the City of God and the Earthly City are mixed up with one another in the world of time, eschatologically membership of the two cities is mutually exclusive: no person can ultimately be recognised as a citizen of both cities.⁴³⁷ Wetzel agrees with Markus here, but has pointed out some of the practical difficulties of this not knowing, on this side of the eschaton, ‘who is being saved, who is not’.⁴³⁸ Within any actual society – whether the

⁴³³ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 203. I concur with Harrison, and with Markus.

⁴³⁴ Griffiths, “Secularity and the *saeculum*”, 34.

⁴³⁵ See Forrester, *Theology and Politics*, 37.

⁴³⁶ Markus, “The Sacred and the Secular”, 94. See *City*, XVIII, 51-54.

⁴³⁷ Markus, *Saeculum*, 101.

⁴³⁸ Wetzel, “A Tangle of Two Cities”, 10-11. Wetzel uses an interesting, but over-stated, analogy: ‘You and I are compelled by circumstance to live together, and we both know that one of us is irredeemably a psychopath; we just don’t know which of us it is.’

Roman or our own – there will always be a mixed population, in which those who will finally be, and always have been, citizens of the City of God live alongside those who will finally be, and always have been, citizens of the Earthly City.⁴³⁹ Markus' central point is worth stating in detail:

Membership of the two cities is mutually exclusive, and there can be no possible overlap; but membership of either is compatible both with belonging to the Roman – or some other – state and with belonging to the Church.⁴⁴⁰

This hangs on a possible differentiation between 'membership' and 'belonging to', understood as a temporal, not a spatial, distinction. Wetzel considers the consequence of Markus' thinking here to be an invisibility of the *civitas peregrina* which blunts the church's critique of the world⁴⁴¹, but this need not be the case: it is a potential problem against which the church must guard itself, not an actual one. For the inability – and the inadvisability – of making firm judgements this side of the eschaton over which city a particular person is a member of does not mean that we can come to no conclusions whatever about the actions of the two cities. Griffiths has noted the way the practices of actual human societies can be categorised as tending towards one or other of the cities: what actual societies do may be visible to and discussed by contemporary observers and historians.⁴⁴² As Chadwick comments on *City*, XVIII.24, 'the quality of a society can be seen by asking what it loves: what, so to speak, it collectively spends its money on'.⁴⁴³

What the emphasis on the final definitive separation of the two cities only eschatologically does, however, is reinforce Augustine's conclusion that the final good, the ultimate destination, of humanity is not here, but elsewhere. The members of the City of God whom we meet, perhaps unknowingly, are pilgrims on their way to somewhere else. How do they live while on pilgrimage? How does Augustine think

⁴³⁹ Griffiths, "Secularity and the *saeculum*", 43-44.

⁴⁴⁰ Markus, *Saeculum*, 60-61.

⁴⁴¹ Wetzel, "A Tangle of Two Cities", 17.

⁴⁴² Griffiths, "Secularity and the *saeculum*", 44.

⁴⁴³ Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, 144.

Christians who are members of the *civitas peregrina* should conduct themselves while in the *saeculum*?

Living in the *Saeculum*

Living in this present age is, as we have seen, deeply ambiguous. In Book XXII Augustine catalogues some of the pains of ‘this life of misery, a kind of hell on earth’, in which childhood punishments, bereavement, torture, natural disasters and assaults of demons figure prominently, and are the common lot of members of both cities. There are, in addition, some sufferings reserved for the righteous, connected with spiritual warfare. Yet this is not all there is about life in the *saeculum*: there are also ‘innumerable blessings of all kinds’ conferred by God on humanity. This life is subject to condemnation, but it is full of good things nevertheless.⁴⁴⁴ It is in just this situation, in which blessings and miseries are as interwoven and intermixed as are the two cities themselves, that Christians exist. This is where we live our lives, all the while knowing ourselves to be ‘in exile’.

Augustine gives the same advice to members of the City of God in exile in their ‘Babylon’ as Jeremiah gave to his people: seek the welfare of the city where they found themselves, ‘because in her peace is your peace’.⁴⁴⁵ Living at peace with all people is part of fulfilling the command to love one’s neighbour as oneself. Love is Augustine’s standard of conduct, and here the double command for love of God and love of neighbour (including love of oneself) requires that the Christian should be at peace, ‘as far as lies in him’ with all humanity.⁴⁴⁶ Pilgrims heading towards the eternal city (and its eternal peace) should share in and contribute to the earthly peace.⁴⁴⁷ Augustine adds two rules which can bring about this necessary ‘ordered harmony’: do no harm to anyone and help everyone whenever possible.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ *City*, XXII.22-24.

⁴⁴⁵ *City*, XIX.26. Jer 29:7.

⁴⁴⁶ *City*, XIX.14.

⁴⁴⁷ TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 275.

⁴⁴⁸ *City*, XIX.14.

The life of a city is inevitably a social one, and people, however different, must live together. Augustine was clear that the City of God, while on pilgrimage in this world, not only does not abolish the various laws, customs and institutions of whatever secular cities its citizens find themselves inhabiting, but actually maintains and follows these, provided only that they do not hinder 'the religion which teaches that the true God is to be worshipped'.⁴⁴⁹ This, says Elshtain, represents 'the limits to which earthly dominion can rightfully be about'.⁴⁵⁰ It is in the light of this, I suggest, that we should read the passages where Augustine says that even a bad ruler should be obeyed (remembering that he believed even one such as Nero received his power by divine providence); since human life is short and our destination is in heaven it does not matter under whose rule people find themselves, provided that they are not forced to 'impious and wicked acts'.⁴⁵¹ This is not mere passivity: Christians are to be actively peaceful and helpful, obedient to the laws of their surrounding society – but only up to the point at which their greater obedience to the worship of the true God and commitment to the peace which exists 'between mortal man and immortal God' is called into question.⁴⁵²

What Augustine is doing is giving an account of 'how Christians may, and why they must, be good citizens of the empire'.⁴⁵³ Blaming 'Christian times' for the sack of Rome happened in part because people felt that Christians were insufficiently part of the empire. Augustine shows that this is not the case: Christians do have an interest in the state, albeit one qualified (and this is no small qualification) by allegiance to the City of God.

This is why Augustine advocated Christian participation in the institutions of society. Understanding from his own experience the pull towards a contemplative ('leisured') life and the demands of daily business, his advice centred around motivation: no one should

⁴⁴⁹ *City*, XIX.17.

⁴⁵⁰ Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 98-99. Elshtain sees Bonhoeffer's opposition to Nazi Germany as 'based on solid Augustinian principles.'

⁴⁵¹ *City*, V.19, V.17.

⁴⁵² *City*, XIX.14.

⁴⁵³ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 209.

be so leisured as to forget about the interests of one's neighbour, nor so active as to forget about God. If one is called upon to exercise the burden of public office, this is to be undertaken 'because of the compulsion of love' and the ability to achieve tasks that promote the well-being of the common people.⁴⁵⁴ Christians should not shirk civil posts such as those of governor, magistrate, or judge.⁴⁵⁵ In the famous passage in Book XIX on the unfortunate situation of the judge who, as part of his office, is commonly required to employ torture while trying cases and may possibly end up torturing an innocent man, Augustine does not use this as a reason to recommend declining such judicial office, saying merely that the wise and mature person would hate such a necessity even as he does it. 'The claims of human society constrain him and draw him to this duty; and it is unthinkable to him that he should shirk it'.⁴⁵⁶ Similarly Augustine began a letter of advice to the provincial governor of Africa, Macedonius, 'you who are the busiest man in the state and most attentive not to your own advantage but to that of others, for we are happy not only for you but for human affairs, that you are such a man'.⁴⁵⁷ The letter is an extended discussion of the roles and responsibilities of Christian public officials in the early 5th century. Augustine's consideration of the duties of Christian officials goes all the way to the very top, with his picture of a Christian emperor, ruling with justice and humility and putting his power at the service of God.⁴⁵⁸ Similarly he endorses Christians serving in the army, writing to Boniface, 'Do not suppose that no one can please God who as a soldier carries the weapons of war. ... Think of this first, then, when you take up your weapons for a fight, namely, that even your bodily strength is a gift of God. For in that way you will bear in mind not to act against God by means of the gift of God'.⁴⁵⁹

Members of the City of God on pilgrimage in the world, therefore, should not withdraw from that world, but be involved in its society and institutions, working for the peace of

⁴⁵⁴ *City*, XIX.19.

⁴⁵⁵ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 216.

⁴⁵⁶ *City*, XIX.6.

⁴⁵⁷ Augustine, Ep. 153.1, *Letters 100-155 The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Roland Teske. ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 390-404, at 391.

⁴⁵⁸ *City*, V.24.

⁴⁵⁹ Augustine, Ep. 189.4 and 6, *Letters 156-210, The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Roland Teske. ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 259-62, at 260-61.

all and 'seeking the welfare of the city' in which they find themselves. What Niebuhr calls 'Augustine's formula for leavening the city of this world with the love of the City of God'⁴⁶⁰ does justice to the myriad variations in the actual situations in which Christians are called to live. They should always remember, however, that their true home is elsewhere, that they are *peregrini*, resident aliens, sojourners even in their own homes. Markus likens life in the *saeculum* to Bonhoeffer's notion of the penultimate: it is where we live, the temporal setting in which we must act, but it is not the ultimate reality.⁴⁶¹ What, therefore does Augustine's explorations of living in the interwoven and intermixed cities have to say to us who are living in New Zealand today?

⁴⁶⁰ Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism", 232.

⁴⁶¹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 172. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. by Reinhard Krauss et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 159-70.

Chapter 5 LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY

Introduction

'In truth', says Augustine, 'those two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgement: *perplexae quippe sunt istae duae civitates in hoc saeculo invicemque permixtae, donec ultimo iudicio dirimantur*'.⁴⁶² The cities are not geographical entities but temporal ones; they are communities, societies constituted by their citizens and by what they love. Members of the City of God and those associated with the Earthly City rub shoulders with one another and will be doing so as long as this present age lasts. This era is the *saeculum*, the deeply ambiguous setting for the real life of the Christian community and for all the rest of humanity. Rome is not Wellington (in time or in geography), but Augustine's examination of the two interwoven cities is nonetheless instructive for our own lives, here and now.

Part of the ambiguity of life in the *saeculum* – not by any means the whole of it – is that Christians are not the only ones here. As in Augustine's day, the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere in the Western world is tolerated, legal and (to a certain extent) supported by the authorities, but its place in society and in the political sphere is weakening. Christianity is one player amongst many: people of other faiths live here in increasing numbers, just as do people who affiliate with no faith at all. Members of the two cities must therefore interact.

Certainly Augustine would not allow the easy option of withdrawing from this. Nowhere in *City* does he present the City of God as an enclave isolated from the *civitas terrena*. The cities are intermixed and will remain so until the eschaton: even if one of them attempted to quarantine itself it would carry members of the other city away with it as well. Christians must deal with the broader culture within which they (we) live: that is what life in the *saeculum* is about.

⁴⁶² *City*, I.35.

Engagement with the culture

Miroslav Volf has outlined a number of ways in which Christian communities might understand their role within contemporary society. One is to accommodate to the surrounding culture, translating the Christian message into the concepts and language of society and adjusting its values to fit in with society's social practices. Another is the reverse, focusing on the biblical story and interpreting the larger culture in terms of that perspective. A third possibility is the separatist one: retreating from the world and locating the Christian community in a territory that is clearly set apart from the rest of society ('islands in a sea of worldliness').⁴⁶³ The problem with the first two is that the Christian community and the surrounding culture will end up talking past each other, while with the third no dialogue is possible, apart perhaps from lobbing verbal missiles over the walls. The problem with all of these models, as Volf points out, is that they presuppose that the culture which surrounds the Christian communities is a purely foreign one, and a place from which God is absent, rather than a world which God created and pronounced good.⁴⁶⁴ Augustine's attitude to the world, his insistence that 'God in his goodness created good things, and that all things which do not belong to God's own being, though inferior to God, are nevertheless good, and the creation of God's goodness'⁴⁶⁵ can assure Christians of the goodness of the created order and remind them that they do not have a monopoly on the presence and the love of God. O'Meara has pointed out how Christians 'somehow give the impression' of lacking confidence in God's provision and the essential goodness of creation: the approach taken in *City* can serve to correct this.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 84-89. Volf associates accommodation with classical theological liberalism, reversing the direction of conformation (the second option) with post-liberalism, and sees separatism as a radical version of the post-liberal position. While Augustine undoubtedly situated history within the story of divine creation and redemption and interpreted the world on those terms (the post-liberal position), what Volf is critiquing here under that term is a lack of meaningful conversation with the larger culture.

⁴⁶⁴ Volf, *ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁶⁵ *City*, XI.23.

⁴⁶⁶ O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine*, 54.

Volf's preferred option is that of public engagement, of Christians remaining in their surrounding culture and engaging with it, seeking to change it from within.⁴⁶⁷ This form of conscious engagement, which aims to bring the culture closer to God while remaining inside it, is one which Augustine modelled himself in *City*. The way in which he so frequently draws on the writers of the classical pagan world in which he himself was educated – Sallust, Cicero, Varro, Virgil, and Plato as well as many others – shows his knowledge of and respect for these sources.⁴⁶⁸ He admires and praises figures from Rome's past and the values and virtues they display. He acknowledges where he has learnt from Roman history and Greek philosophy. Augustine's approach in looking for and accepting the good in our secular culture is one which can promote constructive dialogue. One does not withdraw: one engages.

Central to this notion of public engagement by the Christian community (what Augustine would call 'the City of God on pilgrimage in this world') is its wholeheartedness. Christians are involved with the world with their whole being: word *and* action, inner spirituality *and* working for outward change in society's institutions, head and heart and hands. Such an engagement concerns all the dimensions of a culture: how the self is understood, how people relate to one another, how 'the good' is defined.⁴⁶⁹ Peter Brown describes *City* as a work that is not about flight from the world, but whose theme is 'our business within this common mortal life', a book about 'being otherworldly in the world'.⁴⁷⁰ We live within the world of time, within the *saeculum*, and it is amongst the details of daily life that our interaction with the culture must take place.⁴⁷¹

Work as loving service

So the lesson from *City* is that withdrawal, into a sort of 'holy huddle', is not an option. Members of the City of God have neither the duty nor the right to opt out from

⁴⁶⁷ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 89-94.

⁴⁶⁸ Carol Harrison notes the way Augustine aligns Sallust and Cicero ('two of the pagans' most respected authorities') to strengthen his argument about the Roman state ceasing to exist as a commonwealth. *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 209.

⁴⁶⁹ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 96-97.

⁴⁷⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 324, referencing *City* XV.21.

⁴⁷¹ See also Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 91.

involvement in the day-to-day business of life.⁴⁷² Augustine's counsel to hold, or at very least not to shrink from, positions of public office⁴⁷³ can and should lead to a greater valuing of all work. For daily work, whether in an office, a kitchen, a classroom or the factory floor, is seen by Augustine (for whom all things were social) as undertaken 'for the claims of human society'. Work, as that at which individual members of the City of God on pilgrimage in the world labour each day, using the gifts that God has given them, can also be taken and transformed by that same God and used to bring closer the coming of the kingdom. Augustine's comments on the role of judges, and his advice to Boniface about service in the army,⁴⁷⁴ can encourage all Christians, not just those who are ordained or otherwise in the service of the Church, to see their jobs or careers as vocations. This should also encourage the local church to pray, for example, as much for teachers in the suburban primary school as it does for the parish's Sunday School leaders, as much for public servants as for members of Vestry. The daily round of work can be full of holy significance.

For Augustine, it comes down to love. The City of God is created by the love of God, and its members serve one another in love.⁴⁷⁵ The commandments to love God and to love one's neighbour (and hence also to love oneself) are at the root of living within the Holy City. 'The life of the saint, like the life of the citizen, is a social life'.⁴⁷⁶ The ethics generated by this are surprisingly simple: the observance of two rules, 'first, to do no harm to anyone, and, secondly, to help everyone whenever possible'.⁴⁷⁷ The double commandment to love, and the rules which follow from it apply, for Augustine, to all Christians no matter what the time and place in which they find themselves. It is, says Harrison, the lowest common denominator.⁴⁷⁸ What this might look like in practice will depend on the particular situation, for real love is concrete, not abstract, action-based not theoretical. Significantly, in my view, Augustine does not here distinguish the objects

⁴⁷² Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, 141.

⁴⁷³ *City*, XIX.19, XIX.6.

⁴⁷⁴ *City*, XIX.6; Ep. 189.

⁴⁷⁵ *City*, XIV.28.

⁴⁷⁶ Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 96.

⁴⁷⁷ *City*, XIX.14.

⁴⁷⁸ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 211.

of such love on the basis of which city they belong to: members of the City of God are to help everyone, not only their fellow citizens. This is an outward-focused ethic, and a very practical one.

Kristen Deede Johnson has pointed out how Augustine saw the question of love as integrally connected to that of order. When human beings love God, they will live according to God's standards and thus in harmony with the order and design which God wills for the universe.⁴⁷⁹ Order, therefore, is linked to 'rightly ordered'; what people love should be properly ordered: heavenly things before earthly ones, eternal things before transitory ones, and God before everything else.⁴⁸⁰ Peace among people that follows this schema is described as 'that ordered harmony'.⁴⁸¹ It is for this reason that Augustine enjoins members of the City of God to obey the customs, laws and institutions of the territories they live within, 'by which earthly peace is achieved and preserved'.⁴⁸² He sees a positive value in such obedience, perhaps because he had also seen the consequences when earthly peace is not preserved. Opinions today may differ somewhat around whether there should be limits to this obedience, but Augustine's point about the ordering of our loves cannot be overemphasised, for it speaks about priorities. If we can get those right, everything else falls into place.

Seeking the welfare of the city

Those who are part of Christian society are to be at peace ('ordered harmony'), as far as possible, with all people. Because the two cities are so intermingled, citizens of the *civitas Dei* are to work for the peace of the Earthly City and of its citizens. Members of the City of God today will have to work out how, in their context, to 'seek the welfare of the city' where they find themselves, 'because in her peace is your peace'.⁴⁸³ Again, the principle of active engagement with one's local community is central. Christians and

⁴⁷⁹ Kristen Deede Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism: Beyond Tolerance and Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 153.

⁴⁸⁰ Johnson, *ibid.*, referencing Augustine, Sermon 335c.

⁴⁸¹ *City*, XIX.14.

⁴⁸² *City*, XIX.17. For discussion of the limits of such obedience, see below.

⁴⁸³ *City*, XIX.26. Jer 29:7.

Christian churches should be asking themselves how they can contribute to the welfare of their suburb, their city, their country. For Augustine considered the *Summum Bonum*, the Highest Good, to be social. That which makes humanity truly happy – what Volf calls ‘the proper content of a flourishing life’⁴⁸⁴ – stems from love, love for God and love between human beings. It involves serving the common good and constitutes the peace which is the ‘perfectly ordered and completely harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of each other in God’.⁴⁸⁵

In approaching his theological history by way of the metaphor of two cities, Augustine underlines his belief that humanity is social. Each city is a collective, a grouping of human beings who share a common life. This deep commitment to human society, and to the need for human community, speaks persuasively to our situation, in the face of the individualism prevalent in Pakeha New Zealand, as in many other modern Western societies. There is a hunger for community amongst people who are tired of being alone: Augustine reminds us that humanity was created to be social.⁴⁸⁶ The Mediator between God and humanity is Jesus Christ, the God who became human, who took on human flesh and therefore human relating, in order that humanity might be brought to participate in the ultimate community of the Trinity.⁴⁸⁷ This can inspire a greater commitment to sociality and to the way in which the Christian community can model life-giving relationships to the world around.

Since, for Augustine, humanity is social, sin is also social. Sin is when we deny God and the relationship we should have with God, and when we deny others in favour of loving ourselves.⁴⁸⁸ It leads to disorder and disharmony within and between individuals.⁴⁸⁹ Within the Earthly City each group pursues its own advantages and seeks gratification of its own desires.⁴⁹⁰ Within the City of God, by contrast, there is humility, justice, truth and

⁴⁸⁴ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 58.

⁴⁸⁵ *City*, XIX.17.

⁴⁸⁶ *City*, XII.22.

⁴⁸⁷ *City*, IX. 15.

⁴⁸⁸ *City*, XIV.28.

⁴⁸⁹ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 155.

⁴⁹⁰ *City*, XVIII.2.

peace, and a love for the right things: these are community-oriented, community-building qualities, as is the mutuality of serving each other in love, and praying for one another. Augustine's presentation of the differences between the two cities can deepen awareness of 'the hurts we absorb from one another' and encourage an honest confession of the times 'where we have failed to support one another and be what we claim to be'.⁴⁹¹ Sin is not just social in theory: like real love it is concrete, and action-based, and needs to be faced.

Dealing with 'the other'

The *perplexa* and *permixta*, interwoven and intermixed, nature of the two cities' existence in the *saeculum* means that, as we have seen, Christians are not the only ones around. Those who belong in the City of God will live amongst and need to interact with those who profess other faiths, those who are casually or aggressively secular, as well as those who claim no religious adherence but rather an undefined sense of 'spirituality'. Charles Mathewes contends that Augustine's approach in dealing with 'otherness' (both non-believers and other-believers) can explain what is going on in such encounters and assist us to navigate them.⁴⁹² Mathewes reminds us of the Christian tradition's mixed history in relation to 'the other', often seeing non-Christians as strange and threatening, yet this is within a theology that is actually founded on the reconciliation of otherness: humanity to God, sinners to one another.⁴⁹³ The mutual forgiveness and reconciliation which enables citizens of the City of God to be restored while they are still on pilgrimage on earth is part of this⁴⁹⁴, but a like welcome has not always been extended to persons outside the Christian community.

Part of what Augustine can teach us about dealing with otherness we have already touched on: his respect for secular sources, his willingness to investigate them thoroughly and to learn from them, his acknowledgment of his debt to them. He even speaks of 'the

⁴⁹¹The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (Christchurch: Genesis, 1989), 181, 479.

⁴⁹² Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 107.

⁴⁹³ Mathewes, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *City*, XV.6.

brilliant wit shown by philosophers and heretics in defending their very errors and falsehoods'.⁴⁹⁵ No real conversation can proceed without such respect. Moreover his strong doctrine of original sin, his awareness of the power of sin over the lives of all humanity (himself, the members of the City of God on pilgrimage, the citizens of the Earthly City) can engender the humility necessary for any dialogue: Christians do not always get it right, and they too are sometimes dominated by *libido dominandi* in their interactions with others.

Augustine also relieves Christians of the pressure of 'trying too hard', of somehow supposing that it is their job to convert others to faith in the one true God. His own experiences of conversion and his account of the origins of the City of God make it clear that the world's belief in Christ and in the resurrection was due to the power of God, and not to human persuasion.⁴⁹⁶ Conversion is a continual process, ongoing throughout our lives⁴⁹⁷; so too is the manner in which our understandings of God, of ourselves and of the world around us are changing and developing. In *City*, as in *Confessions* and elsewhere, Augustine charts his questioning and the progression of his intellectual and spiritual development. He admits where he does not know something, he acknowledges when he is speculating.⁴⁹⁸ This notion of understanding as provisional, something open to revision, provides a theological imperative for engagement.⁴⁹⁹ Dialogue with those who believe differently can mean that theological ideas can be (as Augustine himself realised) 'more carefully examined, more clearly understood, and more earnestly propounded ... and thus an argument turns out to be an opportunity for instruction' for oneself, just as much as for one's dialogue partner.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ *City*, XXII.24. Augustine is speaking, he says, of 'the natural abilities of the human mind, the chief ornament of this mortal life', without reference to faith or to the way of truth.

⁴⁹⁶ *City*, XXII.7.

⁴⁹⁷ Conversion can also be seen as an 'event' as well as a process: in the dual senses of the moment of acceptance of the claims of Christ (as Augustine did in the garden in Milan) and of the Christ-event itself, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

⁴⁹⁸ *City*, XXII.29, for example, where Augustine does not know what the saints will be doing in their immortal and spiritual bodies.

⁴⁹⁹ See Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 130-31.

⁵⁰⁰ *City*, XVI.2.

Pluralism and the challenge it presents is a socio-political fact, part of the reality of life in the *saeculum*. Mathewes sees in Augustine's approach a form of apologetics which involves confronting interlocutors with 'as much common ground as you can' and using that to work towards a common understanding of both your worldview and theirs.⁵⁰¹ What can eventuate is a conversation where the parties can learn from one another as they come to understand their areas of agreement and disagreement, their shared practices and individual particularities.⁵⁰² In this context, Johnson has noted the way that Augustine's life and thought were marked by humility, a recognition that truth comes to us as a gift, and a desire for genuine engagement with others.⁵⁰³

Volf frames the process of engagement in terms of 'learning to share religious wisdom well'.⁵⁰⁴ Not only are Christians instructed to do this by Jesus, but they do so as an expression of love for their neighbours. Augustine considers that someone who loves God 'will be concerned also that his neighbour should love God, since he is told to love his neighbour as himself; and the same is true also of his concern for his wife, his children ... and for all other men, so far as is possible'.⁵⁰⁵ The sharing of wisdom, therefore, should be an expression of this neighbourly love, and done in such a way that it involves giving *and* receiving, where 'good givers' respect the integrity of those who are receiving the gift.⁵⁰⁶ Volf offers some characteristics of such 'giving witness' in terms of what it is not: a witness is neither a tyrant who imposes nor a merchant who sells.⁵⁰⁷ Augustine would phrase this in terms of not getting caught up in the *libido dominandi*, and remembering that the good news of the gospel is always a gift of grace.

This process of engagement with the other is not through words alone. A conversation can take place in which participants interact verbally and through their ways of life.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰¹ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 138.

⁵⁰² See also Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 241.

⁵⁰³ Johnson, *ibid.*, 245.

⁵⁰⁴ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 100.

⁵⁰⁵ *City*, XIX.14.

⁵⁰⁶ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 113-14, 111.

⁵⁰⁷ Volf, *ibid.*, 106-07.

⁵⁰⁸ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 240.

Giving witness involves more than a sharing of religious wisdom in the manner of a teacher passing on information; it is about pointing to a way of life in which one is an active participant.⁵⁰⁹ Again, this is the approach taken by Augustine in *City*, where it is clear that he is writing, as it were, ‘from the inside’ as someone given over, heart and soul, to the service of God.⁵¹⁰ He respects his interlocutors but he is utterly clear where his own allegiance lies.

Engaging with diversity

Such guidance for individual Christians in conversation with individual others (both non-believers and other-believers) as we can take from Augustine’s approach can also apply in respect of the interactions the Church has with wider society. Augustine was writing *City* for a mixed audience: members of the old pagan aristocracy, both opponents and curious observers, Christians who had gone astray, and those who were faithful but nervous. Some of these were needing instruction in the faith, others were looking for points to use in their exchanges with defenders of paganism. Augustine lived in the midst of plurality and diversity, and was aware of the complexities involved.

Today we have many of the same complexities, among them what language to speak and what, if any, power and influence Christians and their leadership might have. The Church needs to find a way of dealing with a more diverse spiritual landscape, and with both secular authorities and a wider public who are ahead of the game in recognising that the religious map has changed. How might the process of active, respectful engagement that Augustine models in *City* work on a larger scale?

Volf puts forward a polity in which religious communities, including the Church, could speak in their own religious voices in the public arena, and in which the state would relate to these communities on an equal and impartial basis.⁵¹¹ While no religion would be able to claim a privileged status, they might find such a polity preferable to one which is

⁵⁰⁹ Volf, *ibid.*, 108.

⁵¹⁰ For example the end of *City*, asking those for whom ‘this huge work’ is enough not to thank him but to join with him in rendering thanks to God. XXII.30.

⁵¹¹ Volf, *A Public Faith*, 126-3.

secularised. Volf is not suggesting here a blurring of the distinctions between different faiths which would reduce all religions to an underlying sameness, and he does foresee that some exclusions would need to be made, or else this would 'indiscriminately affirm anything and everything'. There are of course problems with this approach, but the most useful aspect of such a 'pluralism as a political project' centres around the suggestion that people of faith and the religious communities to which they belong should speak in the public arena 'in their own religious voice'. This would involve neither focusing on the commonalities between religions nor on their differences and particularities, but instead speaking out of the centre of one's faith. To speak in a Christian voice, therefore, would be to speak out of the fundamental convictions of that faith, the love of God for all people (including sinners), and an acknowledgment that one's identity as a Christian involves attention to the boundaries between Christianity and other faiths and an engagement with them that might be a source of new learning and enrichment.⁵¹² Such a method could address the issue within public theology over which language to use within the public arena, for it allows for a valuing of religious convictions in a mutually respectful environment. It seems to me that this is what Augustine is doing in *City*: speaking in a Christian voice, out of the centre of that faith and its fundamental convictions about reality, and doing it in a way which neither papers over the differences with other religions nor sees these as a barrier to all dialogue.

Volf's project of political pluralism appears to envisage a type of procedural secularism, an official even-handedness on the part of the state which does not favour one faith community over another.⁵¹³ As we are aware, this was not the situation in which Augustine was writing, but he may nonetheless have something to teach the Church and its members in terms of how it and they might relate to the state.

The Church and the State

As we have seen, Augustine's attitude in *City* to the state was ambivalent. It has many negative aspects, but also many positive ones. The Roman empire, and by extension our

⁵¹² Volf, *A Public Faith*, 130-33.

⁵¹³ See Chaplin, *Talking God*, 20.

modern states, is neither the City of God nor the Earthly City, but is simply part of the *saeculum*, part of that region where the two cities live out their interwoven and intermixed existence. Augustine came to reject both the imperial theology of Eusebius, under which the Christian emperor was hailed as God's representative on earth and the empire as an instrument for the salvation of humanity, and the apocalyptic condemnations of Rome during pagan times. The Roman empire – and by implication, says Markus, any earthly society – is of itself 'neither holy nor diabolical'.⁵¹⁴

A consequence of this rejection of imperial theology is that no particular form of the state should be regarded as divinely sanctioned. Those of us who live within Western-style liberal democracies may well see them as the optimal constitutional format, but we should not claim that God feels the same way. There are no 'God-prescribed political arrangements'.⁵¹⁵ A corollary of this is that Christians should be wary of any attempt to endow the state with absolute value. As Rowan Williams has commented, 'No particular *ordo* is identical with the order of God's city, and so no state can rightly be defended as an absolute "value" in itself'.⁵¹⁶ This throws into interesting relief the question that appears on the security vetting form for certain positions within the New Zealand public service: 'Has the candidate ever belonged to or been associated with any ethnic, religious or political group to which the candidate gives a greater loyalty than to New Zealand?' Surely any member of the Church should be answering 'yes' to this.

Mathewes considers that Christian faith encourages civic involvement but at the same time recognises the limits of nationalism, leading Christians inevitably to resist 'the monotheism of the state'.⁵¹⁷ According the state ultimate value or offering it ultimate loyalty is a form of idolatry. Christians should regard the state as theologically neutral, neither fundamentally perfect (only the post-eschaton City of God is this) nor fatally flawed, but with both positive and negative features.

⁵¹⁴ Markus, "The Latin Fathers", 105, *Saeculum*, 54-55.

⁵¹⁵ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 170.

⁵¹⁶ Williams, "Politics and the Soul", 745.

⁵¹⁷ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 201.

Members of the City of God should, while in the *saeculum*, make use of the earthly peace of the *civitas terrena*, and work for and defend it, as far as they can ‘without detriment to true religion and piety’.⁵¹⁸ Johnson sees the relationship of citizens of the Heavenly City to the Earthly City as lying somewhere in between the extremes of either completely abandoning it to its own devices or else looking to it to provide a utopian harmony and peace, which can only be achieved eschatologically within the City of God.⁵¹⁹

Christians’ relationship to the state likewise should fall between these extremes. They should neither love it overmuch, nor fear its power and influence. What they should *not* do is withdraw from it. Augustine shows in *City* that (contrary to what some of the rest of his contemporary society thought) Christians do have an interest in the state, although this is qualified by their allegiance to the City of God. This is why Augustine advocated Christian participation in the institutions of society.

So Christians today should obey the laws of the country in which they live, should not shrink from joining the army (that would come under ‘defending the earthly peace’), and be active in the public sphere. This means, for example, that Christians can work for the state, having careers within the public service and holding public office. The motivation here, as so often in Augustine, is that of love. Engagement in public affairs should be undertaken ‘because of the compulsion of love’, because, that is, through the work that one does the well-being of the population at large might be promoted; but one should not stand for high public positions out of ambition.⁵²⁰ The Augustinian vision is for a world peopled with Christian officials, members of parliament and cabinet ministers (as well as employees and executives within the private sector), seeing what they do as a way of serving those they live amongst and seeking the peace of the cities in which they find themselves. One concrete example of this is that of Allen Catherine Kagina, the recently-retired Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority, who transformed that body by addressing corruption and increasing a service orientation in those who work

⁵¹⁸ *City*, XIX.17.

⁵¹⁹ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 169.

⁵²⁰ *City*, XIX.19.

there. She is explicit about the role her Christian faith has in her career as a public servant.⁵²¹

What this does not mean is that Christians should seek to take over the institutions of the state, attempting to build some sort of theocracy. That would be endeavouring to create the City of God on earth, a project not merely inappropriate but also doomed to failure: the *civitas Dei* will only take its final form in the eschaton. If a Christian ruler (Prime Minister, President, Mayor) should seek to make their territory Christian the attempt would fail, for this world is too marked by injustice and *libido dominandi*.⁵²² Here in the *saeculum* political institutions, like everything else, will always be mixed. The Augustinian vision does mean, however, that Christians can serve in the political realm, while recognising that their primary citizenship is elsewhere.

Christian faith and public engagement

A reading of *City* should encourage a deeper relationship between Christian faith and public engagement. That the two are related might surprise some. Mathewes has pointed out that many Christians today 'do believe that "public life" is optional for Christians'.⁵²³ For some, this stems from a narrower focus on individual piety and worship, for others it shows a reluctance to venture into the world of 'dirty politics'. There are, however, a number of ways in which Christians can bring their faith to bear on matters within the public arena. In a section perceptively entitled 'Loving One's Neighbour through Faithful Political Engagement' Ronald Sider outlines several approaches. These vary from embracing a 'biblically balanced political agenda', to understanding and engaging with different ways for Christians to shape public policy.⁵²⁴ His interpretation of the first of these is broad: 'Any political engagement that claims to

⁵²¹ See Yasiin Mugerwa and Ismail Musa Ladu, 'URA boss Kagina leaves office this October' *Daily Monitor* (Uganda) 24 July 2014 <<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/URA-boss-Kagina-leaves-office-this-October/-/688334/2395052/-/bij6ir/-/index.html>> (6 November 2014) and <http://www.willowcreek.com/events/leadership/speaker_Allen_Catherine_Kagina_rsp.asp> (6 November 2014).

⁵²² See Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 171.

⁵²³ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 164.

⁵²⁴ Ronald J. Sider, *Just Politics: A Guide for Christian Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), 191-97.

be Christian must be concerned with the full range of things that the Bible says God cares about'.⁵²⁵ This is a counsel against picking and choosing from a narrow range of concerns that fit with personal preferences or political agendas (think abortion, marriage equality, law and order...) to the neglect of other issues.

Amongst the methods Christians have for shaping public policy noted by Sider is prayer. Augustine identifies this as a task for members of the City of God while the cities are intermingled, citing Paul's instructions for the Church to pray for rulers and those in high positions.⁵²⁶ Christians can also help to shape the cultural norms in society by their common life and by their contributions to the worlds of ideas and creative art.⁵²⁷ This is reminiscent of what Reinhold Niebuhr called 'Augustine's formula for leavening the city of this world with the love of the city of God.'⁵²⁸ Augustine noted the way in which 'every component part contributes to the completeness of the whole of which it forms a part', as he made connections between the domestic peace of the household and the peace of the whole city.⁵²⁹ Simply by living intentionally as members of an alternative community Christians can influence the wider society of which they are a part.

The Church as a whole can both support individual Christians in their public engagement and be publicly active itself. Part of this involves educating and encouraging members of the Church to think wisely about politics, coming to an understanding of economics, justice, personal and corporate ethics, and environmental concerns that is based on what is found in the Bible and in Christian tradition. Some of this will be at the level of the local parish, addressing through sermons and study groups the events and issues that feature in the public domain, in the same way as Augustine preached on what was happening to his people in the world outside the doors of his and their basilica. The Church can also speak into the lives of candidates for public office and those who are elected, both

⁵²⁵ Sider, *ibid.*, 193.

⁵²⁶ *City*, XIX.26.

⁵²⁷ Sider, *ibid.*, 194-95.

⁵²⁸ Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism", 232.

⁵²⁹ *City*, XIX.16.

privately to those who are members of local congregations, and through those who are official or unofficial chaplains within parliaments and government departments.⁵³⁰

Sometimes leaders of the Church will speak directly to their members, or to society at large, about particular issues. One recent example is the Letter from the Archbishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand ahead of the 2014 General Election.⁵³¹ Archbishops Philip Richardson and Brown Turei wrote to encourage all Anglicans to exercise their rights and responsibilities as voters. The letter did not suggest whom people should vote for, but did offer some scripturally-based principles to guide Christian thinking when assessing the policies offered in that election, and also identified four key challenges facing Aotearoa New Zealand as Anglicans reflected on the Gospel vision of the Kingdom of God. The letter was closely reasoned, carefully drafted, and accompanied by further information in background papers about each of the issues addressed. It was interesting to hear subsequently about the criticism the Archbishops had attracted for releasing such guidance, from people who believed ‘the Church should stay out of politics’.⁵³²

There are occasions when the Church as a whole will be publicly, and indeed politically, active, the 1998 Hiko of Hope being one such example. This was a protest march, against the poverty and rising inequality of that time, and also a march in favour of certain key principles which the Church believed should shape New Zealand society. Begun by the Anglican General Synod / te Hinota Whanui, it involved ordinary Anglicans across the country, later being joined by members of other denominations and secular organisations, and culminated at a rally in Parliament Grounds. Actions such as this are based on a recognition that within the *saeculum* members of the City of God are to work for the peace of the Earthly City and of all its citizens. This concern for both society as a

⁵³⁰ Some jurisdictions have official chaplains within parliamentary bodies (one thinks here of chaplains to the US Senate for example), but there is also a degree of ‘unofficial chaplaincy’ such as the role of the Rev’d David Major within the Anglican Diocese of Wellington in ministering within the New Zealand Parliament.

⁵³¹ Archbishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, *Pre-Election Statement*, 28 August 2014. (Not available electronically.)

⁵³² The General Secretary of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (pers. comm. 14 September 2014).

whole and individual members of it is a concern, in short, for ‘public good’, that *Summum Bonum* which Augustine considered to be social. Part of the gift offered by such public engagement is the Church’s specific perspectives on what constitutes public good, for example issues such as the importance of relationships, and the uses of power to protect or to threaten those without it.⁵³³ The Church has a place in ‘the conversations that comprise civic life’.⁵³⁴ Part of what Augustine is doing in *City* is lifting the contemporary conversations about the sack of Rome and the place of Christians within the state onto a new plane.

Markus sees in Augustine’s rejection of the two opposing assessments of the Empire, as neither holy nor diabolical, an understanding of political life which recognised (with the Donatists) that ‘the true Christian is always and necessarily at odds with the world’ and (with the Catholics of the imperial Church) that the social order is not irrelevant to the Christian life and that political engagement and commitment are ‘inescapable duties’ laid upon Christians because they are part of society.⁵³⁵

Duncan Forrester saw in *City* Augustine turning away from classical political theology (such as Varro’s civic theology of Roman daily life⁵³⁶) and inaugurating a new kind of political theology which saw its task not as sustaining the state but instead as critiquing it and interpreting events in the light of the gospel.⁵³⁷ This ‘speaking truth to power’ need not be incompatible with Augustine’s direction to members of the City of God to obey the customs, laws and institutions of the territories they inhabit, provided that no hindrance is presented thereby ‘to the religion which teaches that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped’.⁵³⁸ Elshtain sees in this an expression of the limits of earthly dominion: ‘What the *civitas dei* offers is a reference point that is also, potentially, a resistance

⁵³³ See Spencer, *Neither Private nor Privileged*, 79: ‘The Christian faith is fundamentally about relationships’.

⁵³⁴ The phrase is Mathewes’: *A Theology of Public Life*, 203.

⁵³⁵ Markus, *Saeculum*, 167.

⁵³⁶ *City*, VI.5.

⁵³⁷ Forrester, *Theology and Politics*, 58.

⁵³⁸ *City*, XIX.17.

point'.⁵³⁹ I would add to that that if true religion (that is, the worship of the one true God, that leads to the City of God⁵⁴⁰) is defined in terms of Isaiah 58, Amos 5 and Micah 6 (those passages which explicitly define true worship in terms of social justice) the Church has more than sufficient mandate to speak out.

More than an interest group

The Church, however, does not always engage effectively in the public sphere. Mathewes comments that churches sometimes suffer from a 'theological asphasia' about their participation in civic life which renders them mute, unable to speak in a comprehensive language about society's ordering, character and purpose. He notes further that church leaders' interventions in public life can often be clumsy, seeming to be more about seeking partisan political gain. This can play into concerns that churches are seeking converts or endeavouring to establish a theocracy. Mathewes adds, 'In both their silence and their speaking, they implicitly accept the master frame of the civil religion of the state or secular civic order without offering the radical challenge to that order that they should'.⁵⁴¹

This illustrates another hurdle to the Church's public engagement, the danger that the Church is seen as 'simply one more interest group'.⁵⁴² Sometimes the Church and its members see themselves in that way, getting caught up in the identity politics of 'Christian-Americans' (or 'Christian-feminists' or 'Christian-lawyers'); sometimes they merely assent to a label and a status handed to them. Johnson notes the way Christianity has accepted the dominant paradigms of civil society in order to be included in the public conversation and questions: 'How far does the Church go in choosing to view itself as one of a number of "voluntary associations", thereby enabling itself to be part of the "public realm"?'⁵⁴³

⁵³⁹ Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 98-99.

⁵⁴⁰ *City*, V.15.

⁵⁴¹ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 202.

⁵⁴² Mathewes, *ibid.*, 204.

⁵⁴³ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 224, 228.

Who defines the Church's identity and the language it employs? Modern psychology cautions against allowing the self to be defined by how others see it, and yet this frequently happens as the Church reacts to the default secularity of contemporary society by defining itself (or allowing itself to be so defined) in secular terms.⁵⁴⁴ It need not do so. Rowan Williams outlines the advantages of the Church defining itself and being active in the public sphere in its own terms: 'the presence of the Church, not as a clamorous interest group but as a community confident of its rootedness in something beyond the merely political, expresses a vision of human dignity and mutual human obligation which, because of its indifference to popular success or official legitimation, poses to every other community a special challenge.'⁵⁴⁵ Certainly Augustine maintained (in his correspondence with Macedonius and the comments in *City* about judges, for example) that Christians are called to be active in civic and judicial life precisely *as Christians*, bringing their faith perspectives to bear on their public roles.⁵⁴⁶

Another way for the Church and its members to be more consciously and confidently active in the public square is by recognising the Church itself as a public space in its own right. Indeed the Church may have greater claim to be 'public' than civic society: Williams recalls Augustine's consistent condemnation of public life in the classical world as not being public enough.⁵⁴⁷ Cavanaugh takes a similar approach, noting that for Augustine it is not the empire but the church that is 'the true *res publica*, the "public thing"; the *imperium* has forfeited any such claim to be truly public by its refusal to do justice, by refusing to give God his due'.⁵⁴⁸ For Augustine, giving to God what is due to God (his working definition of right and justice) must include sacrifice, 'the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar ... where it is shown to the

⁵⁴⁴ For example, in New Zealand 'churches or religious societies' are included amongst 'Non-profit institutions serving households excluding tangata whenua governance organisations' in the Department of Statistics Institutional classification. See <<http://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/classifications-and-standards/classification-related-stats-standards/institutional-sector/appendix2.aspx>> (28 October 2014).

⁵⁴⁵ Rowan Williams, "Faith Communities in a Civil Society", in *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 302-09, at 306.

⁵⁴⁶ Ep. 153, *City*, XIX.6.

⁵⁴⁷ Williams, "Politics and the Soul", 747, referencing *City*, II.21 and XIX.21-23.

⁵⁴⁸ William T. Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public? Some Problems with Civil Society", *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 21 (2001): 105-123, at 116.

Church that she herself is offered in the offering which she presents to God'.⁵⁴⁹ According to Augustine, therefore, the true 'public thing' is thus constituted by the Eucharist.⁵⁵⁰ The Church offers itself to God in the elements, and is made into the Body of Christ. Robert Jenson notes, 'What must always be in our vision when thinking of Augustine's City of God is the Eucharist, a public space where the one God gives himself to his community, and where in consequence all sorts and conditions of humanity drink from one cup and eat of one loaf'.⁵⁵¹

With this in mind, the Church can therefore speak of itself – to itself and to the world at large – as true public space, constituted by its worship of God, and take its place alongside the other public spaces of civic society. This is a different way of defining 'public' which bypasses the question of the Church's right to speak into the (mostly secular) public square.⁵⁵² In addition to speaking in its own religious voice (Volf's suggestion, above) it invites the Church to speak in the language of practices. The Eucharist, that public exercise of mutual hospitality and self-giving which makes many into one, is such a practice, but there are others. Cavanaugh suggests that the most fruitful way to dialogue with those outside the Church might be through concrete practices 'that do not need translation into some putatively "neutral" language to be understood'.⁵⁵³ He gives the example of creating opportunities for telling alternative stories about material goods, making possible alternative forms of economics. Another illustration is the practice of members of the Urban Vision community in Wellington who move, as couples and young families, to live in social housing areas to exercise hospitality and model a new way of life amongst the other tenants.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁴⁹ *City*, X.6.

⁵⁵⁰ Cavanaugh, "Public Theology", 118.

⁵⁵¹ Robert Jenson, "Eschatology" in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 407-20, at 412-13.

⁵⁵² See Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 221.

⁵⁵³ Cavanaugh, "Public Theology", 120.

⁵⁵⁴ See <<http://www.urbanvision.org.nz/about-uv/where-is-uv/>> (29 October 2014).

The Church's identity

What can the Church learn about its own identity and way of life from Augustine's treatment of the two cities? The City of God is not the Church on earth, although it exists within the Church as well as outside it; and the Church is not the City of God, but anticipates it and witnesses to it while on pilgrimage in the world. As a sign and foretaste of the coming kingdom the Church must point away from itself, understanding that it is not the main event, but acknowledging its calling to be a model of the new society. In the *saeculum*, the time between the first and second comings of Christ, the Church embodies the 'already' and the 'not yet' of the reign of God. Worship is key: it is that which distinguishes the *civitas Dei* from the *civitas terrena*⁵⁵⁵, and that which, through the Eucharist, constitutes the Church as the true *res publica*, the public space within which engagement with others is possible. As committed as the Church should be to public engagement, to involvement in the world of work and political life in the *saeculum*, worship – the true worship of the true God – must remain central.

In the Eucharist the Church gathers around lectern and altar, Word and Sacrament, around Scripture and the bread and wine. The daily Eucharist is the sacramental symbol of the sacrifice of Christ, the mediator between God and humanity.⁵⁵⁶ The sacraments are means by which God's grace comes to human beings and human communities – and this community aspect is crucial for Augustine, for whom humanity is social. Johnson comments, 'Augustine can conceive of no "individual" life of faith, separated from the Church and its sacraments'.⁵⁵⁷

Augustine was a preacher of the gospel, and a pastoral one at that. Many of the ideas which came to final form in *City* were worked out in sermons, especially those on the psalms addressing Zion, the City of God. To the congregation in Carthage he said, 'When people love one another, and love their God who dwells in them, they form a city for God. Every city is held together by some law, and the law of this city is charity. But God himself

⁵⁵⁵ *City*, V.15.

⁵⁵⁶ *City*, X.20.

⁵⁵⁷ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 160.,

is this charity ... Any person who is full of charity is therefore full of God, and when many persons are full of charity they make a city for God. ... Make your home in it, and God will not be far from you'.⁵⁵⁸ Throughout the pages of *City*, amongst all the polemic and the philosophical discussions, Augustine is doing the same as he is in his sermons, preaching the gospel, being the pastor, and trying to help his people lead lives that will bring them closer to God.

In *City* Augustine models for his readers this gathering around the Bible that is the mark of Christian worship and Christian life. One aspect which stands out strongly, and about which the Church sometimes needs reminding, is this commitment to and confidence in Scripture.⁵⁵⁹ Augustine inhabits the Bible. Almost every page in *City* has its share of biblical quotations, stories and examples, sitting alongside (indeed, above) all the classical sources and legends he also uses. Furthermore the Bible is important in more than a methodological sense. For Augustine the scriptures are divine discourse: he draws an implicit analogy between the political oratory of Scipio/Cicero in establishing justice in the Roman *res publica* and the role of the scriptures, as God's oratory, in the formation of the just society.⁵⁶⁰ Believers are drawn, through the scriptures, to find God's wisdom, justice and grace.

Human beings come into the City of God through Christ: it is a society, an eschatological polity, into which we are called by baptism into the Church.⁵⁶¹ The gift the citizens of that polity receive through the 'sacrament of rebirth' comes only through Christ, who is the mediator between God and humanity.⁵⁶² The *civitas Dei* is created by the grace of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁸ Augustine, Exposition of Ps 98 (Psalm 99 in our numbering.) *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98 III/18*, 466-83, at 470. Preached possibly in 411.

⁵⁵⁹ For example, *City*, XVIII.40.

⁵⁶⁰ Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 115-16. For Cicero's emphasis on the oratory of the statesman, see *City*, II.21.

⁵⁶¹ David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, 30.

⁵⁶² *City*, XIII.23.

⁵⁶³ *City*, XX.17.

The Church should be characterised by that chief phenomenon by which the City of God was created: the love of God. The Church, therefore should love God, and not itself: such *amor sui* is the mark of the Earthly City. When the Church concentrates its energies and resources on preserving itself as an organisation it falls short of what it is called to be. As a witness to the City of God it is not an 'institution' but a body of people, just as any city is constituted by its people and not its buildings, its practices and not its geography. In *City* Augustine is primarily interested in the Church not as an hierarchical institution but rather as the whole body of the faithful: it is this emphasis on relationships that is central to what he is doing here.⁵⁶⁴ The Church built by Christ is the house of God built by living stones, a building constructed by those who believe 'and who have themselves been constructed anew'.⁵⁶⁵

The Church, as the City of God on pilgrimage in the world, is a diverse body, drawn out from all nations and speaking all languages, with different modes of dress and manners of life.⁵⁶⁶ This diversity is one of its strengths: differences are taken seriously but do not become divisive; at its best, people are able to distinguish between '*differentia*' and matters of 'no importance at all'. In spite of all this variety, it can live in peace – a peace very unlike that of the Earthly City. When the Church, in New Zealand and across the globe, shows itself able to find unity in the midst of diversity it mirrors the City of God.

There is diversity in another sense, however, about life in the *saeculum*, and that is less positive. Within the Church (as the City on pilgrimage) there are some who have been baptised and who participate in the Eucharist, but who will not, in the end, be part of the City of God. Some of these are hidden, but Augustine admits that some are well-known, murmuring against God from within the Church.⁵⁶⁷ The Church is a mixed body, the *corpus permixtum*, composed of good and wicked people.⁵⁶⁸ He uses the Gospel stories

⁵⁶⁴ Elsewhere (for example in his controversies with the Donatists), Augustine was more inclined to treat the Church as an organised body, hierarchically governed. See Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'*, 69-70.

⁵⁶⁵ *City*, XVIII.48.

⁵⁶⁶ *City*, XIX.17 and 19.

⁵⁶⁷ *City*, I.35.

⁵⁶⁸ *De doct. Christ.*, 3.45.

of the weeds among the wheat, the separation of wheat and chaff, and the mixture of fish in the net⁵⁶⁹ to acknowledge the way in which members of the two cities are intermingled within the Church on earth, just as there are people currently outside the Church who will be found to be members of the heavenly city. Another ‘diversity-related’ problem is that of dissensions amongst different groups of Christians which make it harder for those ‘who wish to be Christians’, causing them to become confused and hesitate before taking that step.⁵⁷⁰ Realising that these sources of difficulty in our present age were also causing problems in Augustine’s time is comforting and depressing in about equal proportions.

Augustine is realistic about the nature and character of the Church. It is not perfect, and some of that is the Church’s own fault. There are tears and sorrows in this life, and in ‘our present state’ (that is, in the *saeculum*), ‘if we say that we are without sin, we are fooling ourselves and we are remote from the truth’.⁵⁷¹ Jenson reminds us that, as a bishop during a particularly strife-filled period of church history, Augustine was in no position to romanticise the Body of Christ. ‘The church is a struggling, tempted, and ambiguous presence of God’s polity ... but it is nothing less than that. ... As long as the church does not utterly cease to be church by ceasing to worship the true God, its gravest defections and strikes cannot undo its *tranquillitas*’.⁵⁷² When the Church is faithful to its essence it can be truly great. Part of that is happening now, in the *saeculum*. ‘We’, says Augustine, addressing his readers in the present tense, ‘are made partakers of [God’s] peace’, which we know within ourselves, between each other, and with God. ‘We have received the pledge of the Spirit, and have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ, and so we already begin to belong to those angels with whom we shall share the possession of that holy and most delightful City of God’.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ *City*, XVIII.49.

⁵⁷⁰ *City*, XVIII.51.

⁵⁷¹ *City*, XX.17, citing 1 John 1:8. Hence Augustine’s emphasis on forgiveness in the life of the City of God, such that our righteousness consists more ‘in the forgiveness of sins rather than in the perfection of virtues’. XIX.27.

⁵⁷² Jenson, “Eschatology”, 412.

⁵⁷³ *City*, XXII.29.

The Church, therefore, is caught between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. While in its eschatological fulfilment it is the *civitas Dei*, it is currently only a sign and an anticipation on earth of the City of God. As an anticipation, it should, in its internal life and its dealings with the world around it, point to and model itself upon the City of God in heaven. Performing as well as proclaiming the love of God, its members should love their neighbours who may still be within the *civitas terrena*. As they seek the welfare of the earthly cities in which they make their temporary home, the service they offer should be without the greed, vanity, and striving after glory that result ultimately from the *libido dominandi*. Their love for their co-citizens should likewise not display such characteristics: churches themselves should be free from abuses of power and from envy, competition, and an undue focus on markers such as size of membership or splendour of buildings. Public engagement by the Church and its members (whether as participants in the political process or contributors to debate in the public square) should be unhampered by arrogance, dishonesty, and corruption. Members of the Church who share Augustine's strong awareness of the power of sin in people's lives can have the humility to accept their own and others' shortcomings. Moreover an understanding of the essentially provisional nature of the visible Church on earth can help it to refrain from premature judgement: the wheat and the weeds are growing together in the same field, the two cities are 'mingled together from the beginning to the end of their history'⁵⁷⁴ and it is impossible to tell, before the eschaton, who will ultimately be found in which city. Until then, the City of God remains on pilgrimage on earth, *the peregrina civitas regis Christi*, the pilgrim city of Christ the king.⁵⁷⁵

Living as the pilgrim city

What does it mean to be on pilgrimage? Augustine considered that the general quality of the citizens of the City of God during their earthly pilgrimage was clear: they should live according to the spirit not the flesh, that is living by God's standards not human ones.⁵⁷⁶ What is involved here is actually two things: values and allegiance. Pilgrims are to live by

⁵⁷⁴ *City*, XVIII.54.

⁵⁷⁵ *City*, I.35.

⁵⁷⁶ *City*, XIV.9.

the norms, virtues, and love (of God and neighbours) around which life in the *civitas Dei* is structured, treating these standards as their principal frame of reference; and they are to remember that this City – and no other – has their primary allegiance.⁵⁷⁷ Elshtain describes the pilgrim as the one who is ‘tethered to this earth and its arrangements through bonds of affection and necessity’ but who recognises that these arrangements are neither absolute nor final.⁵⁷⁸ No earthly city can bring the peace and love of the City of God; at best there will only be a compromise peace and an imperfect realisation of justice. In no other city can people find ultimate community.

The pilgrimage of the City of God on earth is a collective one, a journey its members make together towards the ‘New Jerusalem’, accompanying each other and watched over by the angels within the heavenly city above. In the baptism liturgy the priest or bishop says to the newly baptised: ‘N, you are now a pilgrim with us. As a member of Christ's body, the Church, you will be challenged to affirm your faith in God and receive the laying on of hands in confirmation. May you grow in the Holy Spirit, fulfil your ministry and follow Christ your whole life long’.⁵⁷⁹ As Augustine understood, no-one can properly be a pilgrim on their own.

Pilgrims are called to live out what it means to be part of the City of God, to embody its own narratives of love, hospitality, humility and grace.⁵⁸⁰ What this will look like in concrete practice is likely to be different for particular communities in particular situation. Part of what it involved for Augustine, considers Hollingworth, was a perfect subjection and obedience to the will of God.⁵⁸¹

Pilgrims have a sense of being ‘called out’ from the world, into an uncertain journey, toward ‘the city that is to come’ (Heb 13:14). They are to be found at the margins, at the

⁵⁷⁷ Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 161. See also Elshtain’s comment that the rules ‘first, to do no harm to anyone, and, secondly, to help everyone whenever possible’ is the ethic of the pilgrim. *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 96.

⁵⁷⁸ Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, 96.

⁵⁷⁹ *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, 389.

⁵⁸⁰ See Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*, 246.

⁵⁸¹ Hollingworth, *Pilgrim City*, 133.

edges of a culture. Augustine is drawing on the idea, used in the New Testament, that believers are foreigners on the earth, seeking the heavenly city which is their homeland. Paul and the writer of Ephesians describe the alien status of Christians, whose citizenship is in heaven: being members of God's household along with the saints, they share in a city built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ in the centre (Phil. 3:20, Eph. 2:19-22). Hauweras and Willamon reflect this understanding when they comment, 'the church exists today as resident aliens, an adventurous colony in a society of unbelief'.⁵⁸²

How are we to understand this claim to alien status? Brown notes that the category of *peregrini*, resident aliens, was well-known in the ancient world, and Augustine fell into this category when he was staying in Milan.⁵⁸³ At base, *peregrinatio* simply means the act of being or living abroad, travelling in foreign parts; a *peregrinus* was a foreigner or a stranger, *peregrinitas* the condition of a foreigner as opposed to that of a Roman citizen. This captures the idea of 'belonging somewhere else' that Quicke draws on when he says that Christians carry two passports: 'One is stamped with our country of citizenship, an awful looking photograph, place of birth, height, color of eyes, and expiry date. The other we carry as children in the kingdom of God, sons and daughters of the Most High'.⁵⁸⁴ Fergusson interprets 'alien' as a mark of the tensions that come with maintaining the faith amidst difficult circumstances: indifferent, threatening or hostile, and questions whether Christians can be described as 'alien' when belonging to a cosmopolitan and international movement.⁵⁸⁵ There may, however, be tensions arising from trying to maintain faith and live a different manner of life in a situation which may be all too comfortable: the obligations and commitments which follow from baptism are still there.

'Pilgrim' and 'pilgrimage' are the words most translators use for Augustine, for they capture this sense: not merely of belonging in another country (being a foreigner) but of

⁵⁸² Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willamon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People who Know that Something is Wrong* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 49.

⁵⁸³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 323.

⁵⁸⁴ Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 175.

⁵⁸⁵ Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society*, 26.

travelling back there.⁵⁸⁶ Augustine's understanding of the City of God was deeply shaped by the psalms, which are a source of images of pilgrims travelling up to Jerusalem and exiles longing to return to their native land.⁵⁸⁷ Pilgrims are those who are on their way to somewhere else, seeking their final destination, not wandering as tourists and sight-seers. It is this sense of focus that the Church, at its best, needs to rediscover, that awareness of being on a demanding journey, one we make accompanied by God: we come from God and go to God and God (and, Augustine would say, the angels) travels with us. The Christian cannot be at home in the world; Markus' insight is that Augustine saw this homelessness not in sociological but in eschatological terms.⁵⁸⁸

The eschatological lens

The key to *City* is to see it through an eschatological lens. Augustine presents us with a vision of two cities, interwoven and intermixed, and then repeatedly assures us that the cities will remain in that state until the last judgement. Moreover it will not become clear precisely who is a member of which city *until* the judgement, and we do not know exactly when that event will occur. In the *saeculum*, or to use Mathewes' perceptive phrase, 'during the world',⁵⁸⁹ the populations of the City of God and the Earthly City are mixed up with one another; eschatologically, however, membership of the two cities is mutually exclusive. No one person can ultimately be recognised as a citizen of both cities.⁵⁹⁰ We reach the final pages of *City* XXII with a sense of necessary dissatisfaction: the climax will occur after the end of the book, right now we will not know what happens (even, especially, to ourselves), and there is no way around that.

The *saeculum*, the time in which we live, is the setting for Christian pilgrims' family life and work, and for their involvement in its society and institutions. They will obey the

⁵⁸⁶ Bettenson at one point uses the double phrase 'a pilgrim and a stranger' to translate *peregrinus*, referring to Abel's status in this world while belonging to the City of God. *City*, XV.1 Hollingworth considers that Augustine's 'two cities' introduced late antiquity to a new category of citizenship, 'the Christian pilgrim', in the world but not of it. *Pilgrim City*, 179.

⁵⁸⁷ Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 211.

⁵⁸⁸ Markus, *Saeculum*, 167.

⁵⁸⁹ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 308.

⁵⁹⁰ Markus, *Saeculum*, 101.

laws, serve their communities (in an active or contemplative way), love their neighbours. The specifics of how they do those things can and will vary. What matters is that they direct every aspect of their life to the service of Christ, the ruler of the City of God. The option of withdrawing into a holy enclave and pulling up the drawbridge behind them is simply not one Augustine is willing to contemplate. All dimensions of Christians' lives have to be contextualised by the eschatological imperative, by our living as part of the *civitas Dei* on pilgrimage on earth.

The Church's identity, and its function as 'public space' constituted by the Eucharist, is shaped by the claims it makes in regard to the eschaton. Its true calling is an eschatological one: to witness to a reality that lies beyond this world. Only the Church can do that. As Lesslie Newbiggin said, 'the church has a real purchase on the world's life only insofar as it finds a point of reference beyond the life of this world'.⁵⁹¹ That point of reference is the place from which the Church can critique the agenda and actions of the world around it. Any sort of political engagement, and the political theology which prepares the way for this, can only begin with eschatology for, as Graham Ward has noted, eschatology examines the God of history and the God in history.⁵⁹² That constitutes a challenge to the politics of this age, for the existence of the Church, *when it is being true to its essence*, generates unwelcome comparisons with the sort of community, justice, and peace which exist in the world.

An eschatological standpoint can spur the Church on to take action against the evils of this world, working for a better peace and a purer justice even as it admits that there can be no lasting peace and perfect justice in the *saeculum*. The heavenly City of God gives a vision of what might be, and it is this that animates the members of that city on earth to love their neighbours and seek the welfare of their earthly communities.

⁵⁹¹ Lesslie Newbiggin, "Church, World, Kingdom", in *Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 106.

⁵⁹² Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*, 166.

The eschatological lens will give to the Church that confidence about the future which it often sorely needs, especially when it is to be engaged with the policies and institutions of the ambiguous world which is the *saeculum*. It can engender a sense that it is God – and not archbishops, popes, or leaders of para-church organisations, nor presidents, prime ministers or the heads of the World Bank or the United Nations – who is ultimately in charge.

Augustine recognised that our present reality, accompanied with the hope of the future life on which we have set our hearts, can indeed be a happy one.⁵⁹³ For that future life is grounded in the vision of Christ, the founder of the City of God, together with his risen Body the Church complete in heaven, no longer that *corpus permixtum* which we experience today. In our eschatology is our hope: that is perhaps the greatest lesson for the Church today, here in New Zealand and elsewhere, in Augustine's *City*.

⁵⁹³ *City*, XIX.20.

Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

We have been seeking to discover how Augustine's account of the two Cities might inform the role of Christians in contemporary New Zealand, those who are living both as citizens in the secular realm and as members of an alternative, Christian, society. On the surface, the world of late antiquity, in Rome and in Augustine's North Africa, is far removed from daily life in Wellington or in New Zealand's provincial towns, but there are more than sufficient points of connection for a reading of *City of God* to be instructive.

Both the time during which Augustine was writing *City* and our present age have the sense of being near the beginning a new era: a range of developments and possibilities but also new problems. Tension between people's inner and outer lives, between their own experiences and the demands of the way of life they have inherited, plus the unsettling effects of rising inequality and rapid and discontinuous change, make for difficult and uncertain times. The old patterns are no longer working, and some people try to cope with this by attempting to control the environment and the persons they live amongst: *libido dominandi* can be prompted by fear and anxiety just as much as by the wish for glory.

The Church, in Augustine's age and in our own, is part of the established social and political sphere, tolerated to varying degrees, but by no means universally well-regarded. The Church's place in our society is weakening, particularly in this country, while in Augustine's day it was not yet strong. In both the fading days of the Roman Empire and in our own culture people have other religious options, including the option of no religion at all. Augustine's contemporaries had Greek philosophy and all the various Roman and foreign pagan cults on offer; our generation has many other religious faiths, a casual or aggressive secularism, or an undefined sense of 'spirituality'. Moreover Augustine's Church and our own share similar distractions, spending considerable time and energy arguing with itself about a number of conflicts which seem arcane to the rest of the population.

It is also clear that *City* is about much more than the sack of Rome and getting Christians out of blame for causing it. It has to do with the character of the world in which Christians are living, and how they should participate in the life of the society around them. How are people to regard the vicissitudes of history and all the triumphs and disasters they might experience in the course of a lifetime? What sort of community do they (both Christians and non-Christians) want to live in, and what will make them happy? These are timeless questions, and the answers that Augustine shaped, for his generation of Christians and for their pagan neighbours, have much to recommend them to our own audiences.

Reading *City* through the lens of public theology as well as in conversation with some of Augustine's leading commentators has provided an opportunity to address some of those issues. For the matters which public theologians are concerned with are those with which Augustine himself had to grapple: the question of what language and what sources to make use of, and how one might draw on the narratives, images, and vocabulary found in Scripture. How does one speak to multiple audiences: to the Church, to its detractors, and to those who fall into neither camp? What is the context of the debate, and what right does the Church have to take part, especially where the location of that discourse is a secular public square? What do Christians, and the Church as a whole, have to offer – and should they be offering it anyway? What does it really mean to be 'in the world but not of it'?

Augustine's treatment of the theme of the two cities (not original to him, but more fully developed by him than elsewhere in antiquity) saw him addressing some of the classic philosophical questions regarding the nature of the *Summum Bonum*, the Highest Good, and the conditions necessary for true happiness. To these enduring questions he gives the same answer to current generations as to his own: the Highest Good and only source of true happiness is God: possessing God and being possessed by God. Augustine is aware enough of the differing worldviews of much of his surrounding culture to realise

that other answers are possible, and yet confident enough to assert that those who are part of the Earthly City cannot know true happiness. This confidence in God, and the life of the City of God, does not make him arrogant. While being sure that happiness, peace, and justice only belong to the City of God in an absolute sense – and therefore that is where the only true commonwealth / *res publica* is to be found – he says that there can still be relative happiness, relative peace and relative justice within the Earthly City. Moreover, these relative goods can be used, and worked for, by those who belong to both cities. That combination of confidence and humility is a helpful one for today and, incidentally, something that encapsulates the spirit in which public theology at its best is articulated.

Augustine's key concept of the two cities, the City of God (*civitas Dei*) and the Earthly City (*civitas terrena*) runs throughout the twenty-two books of *City*, though the work takes its name from 'the better city'. The two cities are temporal identities more than spatial ones, categories of persons or moral communities defined by their members. The City of God exists both in heaven and on earth, and its citizens are angels, saints and human beings; these last live on earth as aliens and sojourners, pilgrims whose real home is above. Its king is Christ. The Earthly City is only on earth, consisting of humans but also of bad angels (demons), and its king is the Devil. The members of this city worship many false gods, who are powerless but nevertheless feared. The city of this world aims at domination but it and its citizens are dominated by this urge to dominate others, the *libido dominandi*.

The key distinction between the City of God and the Earthly City lies in what each of them loves. The City of God and its citizens love God – the one true God – and exist to love and worship God; they live according to God's standards, not human ones. The citizens of the Earthly City have only themselves as their object: their love is *amor sui*, love of oneself, a seeking after their own comfort, riches, and glory. It is that love of the wrong things that characterises the Earthly City and its inhabitants, who live by human standards to please themselves.

The two cities are fundamentally different but – and this is crucial to Augustine’s treatment of the theme – they are interwoven and intermixed, *perplexae* and *permixtae*. They exist alongside each other. Like the wheat and the weeds in the parable, their members are intermixed, only to be separated at the last judgement. The region where this takes place is a temporal, not a spatial, one: *in hoc saeculo*, in this age. This is the notion of the *saeculum*, the time between the first and second comings of Christ. The *saeculum* is an intermediate realm in which the categories of sacred and profane overlap, an area sometimes called ‘the secular’. Markus, and those who have followed him, see the secular as neutral, a shared overlap between insider and outsider groups.⁵⁹⁴ This is the context in which the life of humanity takes place, in which the members of the City of God and the Earthly City pursue their intertwined courses, the public sphere where Christians and non-Christians interact.

Augustine sometimes speaks of the City of God as the Church, but the two are not identical. The City of God is best understood in terms of the communion of saints. The Church currently on earth is but a sign and an anticipation of the *civitas Dei*. It is a *corpus permixtum*, a mixed body, of the saved and others. Within it there are some who have been baptised and who participate in the Eucharist, but who will not, in the end, be part of the City of God, just as there are some who appear to belong to the Earthly City but who are really citizens of the *civitas Dei*.

Likewise the Earthly City is not to be understood as the city of Rome, or the Roman Empire, or any actual human society: it is wider than that. Nor is the *civitas terrena* the State (anachronistic though that term is for Augustine). Augustine’s attitude to the Roman Empire, or to the state in general, is ambivalent; he recognises its positive as well as negative aspects. He came to reject both the imperial theology of Eusebius, under which the empire was an instrument for the salvation of humanity, and the apocalyptic condemnations of Rome during the pagan persecutions. My reading of *City* follows

⁵⁹⁴ Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 5-6.

Markus and others who conclude that the state exists in the region where the two cities overlap, that it is part of the *saeculum*, and therefore that it is essentially neutral, of itself neither holy nor diabolical. One of the consequences of this attitude, for those who are alive today, is that no particular form of the state should be regarded as divinely sanctioned, and Christians should be wary of attempts to endow any political arrangement with absolute value, in a positive or a negative sense. They should neither love the state overmuch, nor fear its power and influence.

The *saeculum*, the overlap between the two interwoven cities, is deeply ambiguous. It contains all that is noble about the world, all the gifts of God, the peace and the beauty which Augustine loved, the goodness of the created order. It also contains all the ugliness, vice, and disorder caused by the Fall. This is what makes life in the *saeculum* so challenging and confusing, because it means living within the tension of what is possible in the Earthly City and the promise and hope which the City of God holds out. It means living in the eschatological tension between the already and the not yet.

This is our setting. It means that those who are Christians find themselves 'living in two cities' at once, existing as both citizens in temporal society and as members of an alternative society, the Church. One of the lessons from *City* is that engagement with the surrounding culture is necessary and appropriate. Withdrawal, into a sort of 'holy huddle', is not an option: citizens in the *civitas Dei* do not have the right to opt out from involvement in the day-to-day business of life. Such separatism surely misses the point of the incarnation, for God did not remain apart from humanity.

Neither should the role of Christians within contemporary society be one of accommodation, adjusting their values to fit in with the surrounding culture, or else reading it through the lens of the biblical story while continuing to stay outside that culture. What is needed is a form of engagement which does not see members of the Christian community as unconnected from their non-Christian neighbours. Instead, Augustine's approach would have them remain part of their surrounding society, reading

and using its literature, accepting the good in its secular culture, and looking for opportunities for constructive dialogue. Involvement in the institutions of the state is part of this engagement: public service (in both political and civil service forms) is to be undertaken for what it can achieve to benefit society. Christians can serve in the political realm, while recognising that their primary citizenship is elsewhere. Moreover, all types of work can be seen as loving service of one's neighbour, a way of 'seeking the welfare of the city'. For Augustine, citizens of the *civitas Dei* are those who follow the two principles of 'help, not harm'.

In contemporary New Zealand, Christians necessarily encounter, in increasing numbers, those who profess other faiths or none at all (including those casually or aggressively secular or vaguely 'spiritual'): we have noted Augustine's model for dealing with these forms of otherness. Real respect, a humility which acknowledges that Christians also can get things wrong, a willingness to learn from the other, plus a recognition that the work of conversion is, properly speaking, God's task and not humanity's, are all instructive. *City* can be viewed as an *apologia*: we see Augustine attacking paganism and defending Christianity, responding to negative criticism of the faith and setting out its teachings. In doing so, and aware that he is writing to multiple audiences, he seeks to interpret Christianity to the Romans and also to show his fellow Christians how they can relate to Rome. The challenge of pluralism must be met with genuine engagement.

This process of engagement with the other is carried out by both words and actions. The answer Augustine gives in *City* to the question of which language to use in interacting with secular society is an example of the approach advocated by Miroslav Volf: to speak in a Christian voice, out of the centre of that faith and its fundamental convictions about reality. Augustine does this, and in a way which neither ignores the differences with other religions nor sees these as a barrier to all dialogue.

Another of the lessons from *City* is to encourage a deeper relationship between Christian faith and public engagement. This can take several forms, from being active in the

political process (as candidates, lobbyists and voters), to praying, to helping to shape or to reshape the cultural norms of society by living intentionally as members of an alternative community. Public engagement as a characteristic of life in the *saeculum* applies both to individual Christians and to the Church as a whole, as members of the City of God work for the peace of the Earthly City and of all its citizens.

It is clear that the Church has a place in the conversations that occur in the public sphere. Sometimes this place will involve witnessing to alternative possibilities, offering a different perspective on what human flourishing and the Common Good might look like. At other times the Church's role will be to critique the work of the state or its rulers, speaking truth to power. When it does this, however, the Church should be wary of allowing itself to be defined, or defining itself, as merely another interest group or voluntary association. A reading of *City* encourages the Church to see itself as an authentic public space in its own right. As public space, it is constituted by the Eucharist, and can speak through that and through other concrete practices, taking its place alongside the other public spaces of civic society. How this might look will differ according to the context, but one example is that of Anglican Bishop of Wellington Justin Duckworth, who spent a week living on the steps of the Cathedral in a space the size of a prison cell, and praying for all prisoners, their families and their victims in a public plea for changes to the New Zealand prison system.⁵⁹⁵

Seeing itself as authentic public space, with a voice and practices of its own, will also enable the Church to be more openly committed to and more confident about Scripture. The way Augustine inhabits the Bible is another of the lessons that can be drawn from *City*. It is a means by which humanity can get to know God's wisdom, justice and grace, and is a gift worth sharing. Augustine is realistic about the nature and character of the Church. He does not romanticise the Body of Christ. He encourages the Church to find its unity in the midst of its diversity, and so mirror the City of God, but he is well-acquainted with the difficulties attendant upon being part of a *corpus permixtum*. Much of what he

⁵⁹⁵ See *Anglican Taonga*, News 13 October 2013 <<http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/Features/Extra/cell>> (11 November 2013).

says in *City* is an invitation to the Church to be true to its calling, even as he realises that the sins of pride and self-love are present there as in the Earthly City. The visible Church on earth is a provisional body: acknowledging this can help its members refrain from rushing to judgement, of themselves and others.

Augustine's insistence that citizens of the *civitas Dei* on earth are here as strangers and pilgrims is a crucial one. Realising that the City of God – and no other entity – has their primary allegiance is a source of comfort and freedom, for it can teach them to value triumphs and disasters, joys and sorrows as all of less than ultimate significance. This pilgrimage is a collective one, a journey its members make together: no-one is a pilgrim on their own. Another of *City's* lessons for the Church is this sense of being on a journey (and a demanding one) to somewhere else, having a hope and a focus beyond the minutiae of daily life.

A recurring theme in *City* centres around the contrast between what is eternal and what is merely temporary. It is this that explains the life of the citizens of the City of God, living as strangers and pilgrims in this world, *in hoc saeculo*, encouraged by the eschatological hope they share with the angels and saints. The *civitas Dei* cannot exist without God, its founder and eternal sustainer; its members are destined for eternal life, peace and happiness. The *civitas terrena*, by contrast, is of human origin, and one day will come to an end. All dimensions of Christians' lives have to be contextualised by the eschatological imperative.

This focus on eternity leads to the Church's unique point of reference, its calling to witness to a reality that lies beyond this world. It is this that sharpens its participation in the public sphere, and encourages it to work for a better peace and a purer justice, even though there can be no lasting peace and perfect justice in the *saeculum*. The eschatological hope is what inspires the Church's efforts to bring an end to evils, even though evil will not end until the world itself does. The eschatological lens is the key to reading *City*. In an age where eschatology is either focused on 'end times' fiction of

dubious biblical literacy or else almost entirely absent, the Church can benefit from Augustine's wisdom.

City offers a set of paradoxes: the Christian is focused on eternity, on what will happen after '*in hoc saeculo*' comes to an end – and yet recognises that daily work matters, for it is undertaken 'for the claims of human society' and can be of holy significance. The Christian is a stranger and pilgrim, passing through this world on the way to somewhere else – and yet is to be actively involved in this world, committed and engaged. This is Augustine's understanding of what it means to be 'in the world but not of the world'.

Augustine lived in the midst of plurality and diversity, and was aware of the complexities involved; today we have many of the same complications. His 'two cities', so radically different from one another, could lead to an approach to life which is profoundly dualistic. Yet it does not. His theological view of work, of family life, and public service depends upon engagement. He is addressing his multiple audiences here, reminding members of the surrounding philosophical and pagan culture and members of the church that they are connected. He assures both groups that Christians do have a stake in what happens to the empire. Augustine's approach in *City* lifts our contemporary conversations about the place of Christians within the life of the state onto a new plane.

His counsel to members of the City of God on earth is to get their priorities right, to ensure that their loves are rightly ordered. Ultimately they do not 'belong' here: they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and so worship – the foretaste of life in the heavenly city – takes precedence. It is not, however, their only activity. They should love God and love their neighbours, and this means that the option of withdrawal is simply not there. They should go to work: go to the market place and the law courts, be active in political life. They should 'seek the welfare of the city' where they live.

The eschatological lens through which we read *City of God* gives to the Church a confidence about the future which it needs in order to be deeply engaged with the

policies and institutions of the country in which we live. For 'living in two cities' is not merely a description of what it (unfortunately) feels like, in the ambiguous world which is the *saeculum*: it is an indication of how our life is actually meant to be.

He is the Way.
Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness
You will see rare beasts
And have unique adventures.

He is the Truth.
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety
You will come to a great city
That has expected your return for years.

He is the Life.
Love Him in the World of the Flesh
And at your marriage all its occasions
Shall dance for joy.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁶ W.H. Auden, "From the Time Being: a Christmas Oratorio", *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage International, 1976,1991), 400.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Augustine

Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*. trans. by Henry Bettenson. London: Penguin, 2003 ed.

_____. *Enarrationes in psalmos (Expositions of the Psalms). 73-98 III/18 The Works of Saint Augustine* trans. by Maria Boulding, ed. John E Rotelle. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002.

_____. *Enarrationes in psalmos (Expositions of the Psalms). 121-150 III/20 The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Maria Boulding, ed. Boniface Ramsey. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004.

_____. *Letters 1-99. The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Roland Teske. ed. John E. Rotelle. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001.

_____. *Letters 100-155. The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Roland Teske. ed. Boniface Ramsey. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003.

_____. *Letters 156-210. The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Roland Teske. ed. Boniface Ramsey. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004.

_____. *Letters 211-270, 1*-29*. The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Roland Teske. ed. Boniface Ramsey. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005.

_____. *Retractationes (Revisions). The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Boniface Ramsey, ed. Roland Teske. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010.

_____. *Sermons III (51-94). The Works of Saint Augustine*. trans. by Edmund Hill, ed. John E Rotelle. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991.

Other Works

Ambrose of Milan, "The Story of Naboth". trans. by Paul Arnold *et al.* in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625*. ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids, MI.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999. 75-79.

Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, The. *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*. Christchurch: Genesis, 1989.

Anglican Taonga. News 13 October 2013.

<<http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/Features/Extra/cell>> (11 November 2013)

Archbishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. *Pre-Election Statement*. 28 August 2014.

Archbishops' Council, The. *Mission-shaped church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context*. Brookvale, NSW: Willow Publishing. 2004.

Atherton, John. "Marginalisation, Manchester and the Scope of Public Theology." *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17:2 (2004). 20-36.

Auden, W.H. (Wystan Hugh). "From the Time Being: a Christmas Oratorio". In *Collected Poems*. ed. Edward Mendelson. New York: Vintage International, 1976,1991.

Ayres, Lewis. *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Barmen Declaration. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm>> (9 May 2014) .

Beilby, James K. *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. trans. by Reinhard Krauss et al. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

Bradstock, Andrew. "'Seeking the welfare of the city': Public Theology as Radical Action". In *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Zoë Bennett and David B. Gowler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 226-40.

_____. "Using God-talk in a Secular Society: Time for a new conversation on public issues?" University of Otago Winter Lecture 2010
<<http://www.otago.ac.nz/ctpi/otago015731.pdf>> (4 November 2014).

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. 2nd ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2000, 1967.

_____. "The Later Roman Empire" in *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.

Brown, William P. and John T. Carroll, "The Garden and the Plaza: Biblical Images of the City". *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*. (Jan 2000). 3-11.

Cavanaugh, William T. "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space". *Political Theology* 7.3 (2006). 299-321.

_____. "Is Public Theology Really Public? Some Problems with Civil Society." *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*. 21 (2001): 105-123.

Chadwick, Henry. *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Chaplin, Jonathan. *Talking God: The Legitimacy of Religious Public Reasoning*. London: Theos, 2008.

Clark, Mary T. *Augustine*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1997.

Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Conybeare, Catherine. "The City of Augustine: on the Interpretation of *Civitas*". In *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, ed. Carol Harrison, Caroline Humfress, and Isabella Sandwell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 138-155.

Cranz, F. Edward. "De Civitate Dei, XV,2, and Augustine's Idea of the Christian Society". In *Augustine: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus. New York: Anchor Books, 1972. 404-421.

Davidson, Allan. *Christianity in Aotearoa*. Auckland: Education for Ministry, 1990.

Dixon, Nigel. *Villages Without Walls: an Exploration of the Necessity of Building Christian Community in a Post-Christian world*. Palmerston North: Voxhumana, 2011.

Doak, Mary. *Reclaiming Narrative for Public Theology*. Albany: SUNY, 2004.

Dodaro, Robert. *Christ and the Just Society in Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

_____, "Church and State", in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 176-184.

Richard J. Dougherty, "Citizen", in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 194-96.

_____, "Fall of Rome" in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 352-53.

Drew, Gavin. "The Gospel as public truth in a pluralist world". *Stimulus* 13.3 (August 2005). 21-30.

- Dyson, R.W. "Introduction" *Augustine The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by R.W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. x-xxix.
- Eames, Archbishop Robin. Foreword to *The Windsor Report*. 2004. London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2004.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.
- Epistle to Diognetus*, trans. by Roberts-Donaldson.
<<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/diognetus-roberts.html>> (28 March 2014).
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Complaint of Peace*. trans. by Betty Radice. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625*. ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids, MI.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999. 572-580.
- Evans, G.R. "Introduction". Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*. trans. by Henry Bettenson. London: Penguin, 2003 ed. ix-lvii.
- Fergusson, David. *Church, State and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Figgis, John Neville. *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'*. Gloucester, MA: Longmans, Green & Co, 1921; reprinted Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1963.
- Fortin, Ernest L. "Civitate Dei, De" in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 196-202.
- Forrester, Duncan B. *Theology and Politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.
- _____. "The Scope of Public Theology," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17:2 (2004): 5-19.
- Gibbs, Jeremiah and Jason Byassee. "Explain Yourself: Making Belief Intelligible". *Christian Century*. (September 23, 2008). 26-29.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011.
- Griffiths, Paul J. "Secularity and the *saeculum*". In *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*. ed. James Wetzel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 33-54.

- Harrison, Carol . *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Hauerwas, Stanley and William H. Willamon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People who Know that Something is Wrong*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Hollerich, Michael J. "John Milbank, Augustine, and the 'Secular'" . *Augustinian Studies* 30:2 (1999). 311-26.
- Hollingworth, Miles. *The Pilgrim City: St Augustine of Hippo and his Innovation in Political Thought*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.
- Human Rights Commission, *Human Rights in New Zealand 2010 Ngä Tika Tangata O Aotearoa*. Auckland: Human Rights Commission, 2010.
- Jenson, Robert. "Eschatology" in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 407-20.
- Jerome. Ep 127, 11 and 12. in Stevenson, J. ed. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*. New edition revised by WHC Frend. London: SPCK, 1966.
- _____. Preface to Commentary on Ezekiel in Richard J. Dougherty, "Fall of Rome" in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 352-53.
- _____. *Ep 123.16*. in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. 2nd ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2000, 1967. 288.
- Johnson, Kristen Deede. *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism: Beyond Tolerance and Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2008.
- Kirwan, Michael. *Political Theology: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Lancel, Serge. *St Augustine*, trans. by Antonia Nevill. London: SCM Press, 2002.
- Levering, Matthew. *The Theology of Augustine: an Introductory Guide to his Most Important Works*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Luther, Martin. *Trade and Usury*, trans. by C.M. Jacobs, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625*. ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids, MI.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999. 602- 608.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. London: Penguin, 2009.

Maddox, Marion. "Religion, Secularism and the Promise of Public Theology", *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 (2007). 82-100.

Markus, Robert A. *Christianity in the Roman World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974.

_____. "Life, Culture and Controversies of Augustine", in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 498-504.

_____. *Sacred and Secular: Themes in Late Antiquity*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1994.

_____. *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Marshall, Chris. "What language shall I borrow? The Bilingual Dilemma of Public Theology". *Stimulus* 13.3 (August 2005), 11-18.

Mathewes, Charles . *A Theology of Public Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Milbank, John. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Mugerwa, Yasiin and Ismail Musa Ladu. 'URA boss Kagina leaves office this October' *Daily Monitor* (Uganda) 24 July 2014 <<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/URA-boss-Kagina-leaves-office-this-October/-/688334/2395052/-/bij6ir/-/index.html>> (6 November 2014)

Nelson, Richard D. "The Old Testament and Public Theology," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 36:2 (April 2009). 85-94.

Newbiggin, Lesslie. "Church, World, Kingdom". In *Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Augustine's Political Realism". In *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey and Craig Hovey. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012. 223-239.

NZ Herald 'religion ban fears grow' 1 March 2014.

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11211823> (25 March 2014).

O'Daly, Gerard. *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Desire of the Nations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

_____. "The Political Thought of *City of God*". In *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics Past and Present* ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 2004. 48-72.

O'Meara, John J. *Understanding Augustine*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997.

Pearson, Clive. (n.d.) "What is public theology?" Available at:

<http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/theology/pact/documents/What_is_Public_Theology.pdf> (9 May 2014).

Pelagius, *Ep ad Demetriadem*, 30. Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. 2nd ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2000, 1967. 287.

Quicke, Michael J. *360-Degree Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.

Rashbrooke, Max. ed. *Inequality: a New Zealand Crisis*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2013.

Roxburgh, Alan J and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Satterlee, Craig A. "Patristic principles for post-Christendom preaching: an example of the history of preaching in service to the church". *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35.4. (August 2008). p 268+ .Academic OneFile Web (2 Nov. 2014).

Shepherd of Hermas . trans. by Roberts-Donaldson.

<<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd.html>> (28 March 2014)

Sider, Ronald J. *Just Politics: A Guide for Christian Engagement*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012.

Spencer, Nick. *"Doing God": A Future for Faith in the Public Square*. London: Theos, 2006.

_____. Neither Private nor Privileged: The Role of Christianity in Britain Today. London: Theos, 2008.

Spufford, Francis. *Unapologetic*. London: Faber & Faber, 2012.

Statistics New Zealand. Institutional classification.

<<http://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/classifications-and-standards/classification-related-stats-standards/institutional-sector/appendix2.aspx>> accessed 28 October 2014.

_____. 'Religious Affiliation' statistics. <<http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/religion.aspx>> (3 November 2014).

Stevenson, J. ed. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*. New edition revised by WHC Frend. London: SPCK, 1966.

Supporting the Pike River miners. Facebook page.

<<http://www.facebook.com/#!/PikeRiver>> 4 July 2013. (12 May 2014).

Symmachus. *Epistulae* i.52, quoted in Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974. 90.

Taylor, Charles . *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass. & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

TeSelle, Eugene. *Augustine the Theologian*. London: Burns & Oates, 1970.

Tertullian, *De Corona*, XIII 1-4. Trans probably by Roberts-Donaldson.

<<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian04.html>> (28 March 2014).

Urban Vision. <<http://www.urbanvision.org.nz/about-uv/where-is-uv/>> accessed 29 October 2014.

Volf, Miroslav. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011.

Wade, Amelia. "Anger at Te Papa ban on pregnant women", *NZ Herald*, 12 October 2010, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10679873> (4 November 2014).

Ward, Graham. *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens*. London: SCM Press, 2009.

Weithman, Paul. "Augustine's political philosophy". In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 234-252.

Wetzel, James. "A Tangle of Two Cities" in *Augustinian Studies* 43:1/2 (2012) 5-23.

Wilken, Robert Louis. "The Church's Way of Speaking". *First Things*, 155 (Aug-Sept 2005). 27-31.

_____. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Williams, Jeremy. "Barbarian Invasions". In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. General ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009 edition. 92-94.

Williams, Rowan. "Faith Communities in a Civil Society", in *Faith in the Public Square*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. 302-09.

_____. "Politics and the Soul: a Reading of the *City of God*". In *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey and Craig Hovey. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012. 731-48.

_____. "Secularism, Faith and Freedom". In *Faith in the Public Square*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. 23-36.

Willow Creek. Speaker Profile Allen Catherine Kagina.

<http://www.willowcreek.com/events/leadership/speaker_Allen_Catherine_Kagina_rsp.asp> (6 November 2014).