

# Justice in Augustine's *City of God*

by  
Amy Lydia Daniels

*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at  
Stellenbosch University*



Supervisor: Dr Annemaré Kotzé  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

December 2012

## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Amy Lydia Daniels

F gego dgt'2012

Copyright © 2012 Stellenbosch University

All rights reserved.

# Summary

---

This thesis outlines Augustine's thought on justice as articulated in *The City of God: against the Pagans*. The purpose of the study was to investigate the place and role of his convictions about justice in his apologetic project.

To this end, Books 19-22 of *The City of God* were read within the historical, religious and ideological contexts of Augustine's day. Aspects deemed relevant to the stated goals of the thesis and which were therefore surveyed, were pagan-Christian relations and Neo-Platonism in the fifth century; the sacking of Rome in AD 410, a perceived injustice which occasioned rampant calumnies against the Christians and questions regarding the justice of God; secular jurisprudence and legal practice, with a focus on the role of bishops in dispensing justice; biblical perspectives on justice.

A reading of Books 19-22 of the *City of God* was then done, in which it was found that justice was viewed by Augustine as subordinate to, but straining toward the Supreme Good, identified as peace. Moreover, it was shown that Augustine's perspective on justice is inextricably linked with his eschatological convictions. These are that God is set to establish an eternal City, composed of those who, throughout history, have pledged allegiance to Him. That city is characterised by peace and justice, as determined by God. Any peace or manifestation of justice in the present age was shown to flow from humankind's predisposition toward self-love (egotism). As such, they are presented by Augustine as a poor reflection of the perfect peace and justice that will be established by God.

With regard to Augustine's defence of the Christian faith, it was found that he employs a model of argumentation which takes as its point of departure the worldviews of his opponents, showing up cracks in their thinking. He then presents his own perspective as the better alternative. The juxtaposition of the current age, fraught with injustice and chaos, against the eternal peace and justice to be established by God, were shown to be important selling-points for Augustine. For him, life in the eternal City of God was an irresistible offer, which he sought to hold out to his opponents.

# Opsomming

---

Hierdie tesis skets Augustinus se denke oor geregtigheid soos geartikuleer in *Die Stad van God: teen die Heidene*. Die doel van die studie was om die plek en die rol van sy oortuigings oor geregtigheid in sy apologetiese projek te ondersoek.

Met hierdie doel is Boeke 19-22 uit *Die Stad van God* geles binne die historiese, godsdienstige en ideologiese kontekste van Augustinus se tyd. Aspekte wat as relevant beskou is tot die vermelde doelwitte van die tesis en wat dus ondersoek is, is verhoudings tussen heidene en Christene asook Neo-Platonisme in die vyfde eeu; die plundering van Rome in 410 n.C., 'n vermeende onreg wat aanleiding gegee het tot onbeteuelde laster teenoor die Christene en vrae oor die geregtigheid van God; sekulêre wetsgeleerdheid en regspraktyk, met die fokus op die rol van biskoppe in die beoefening van regspraak; bybelse perspektiewe op geregtigheid.

'n Vertolking van Boeke 19-22 uit *Die Stad van God* is daarna gedoen, waarin daar bevind is Augustinus het gemeen dat geregtigheid ondergeskik is aan, maar wel streef na, die Hoogste Goed, wat naamlik as vrede geïdentifiseer word. Verder is daar getoon dat Augustinus se perspektief op geregtigheid onlosmaaklik verbind is aan sy eskatologiese oortuigings. Hierdie oortuigings is dat God 'n Ewige Stad sal vestig wat saamgestel is uit dié wat deur die geskiedenis heen trou aan Hom gesweer het. Daardie stad word deur vrede en geregtigheid gekenmerk, soos dit deur God bepaal is. Daar word gewys daarop dat enige vrede of manifestasie van geregtigheid in daardie tyd bloot voortgevloei het uit die mens se geneigdheid tot selfliefde (egotisme). Dít word deur Augustinus voorgehou as 'n swak weerspieëling van die volmaakte vrede en geregtigheid wat deur God ingestel sal word.

Wat betref Augustinus se verdediging van die Christelike geloof, is daar bevind dat hy 'n redeneringsmodel gebruik wat die wêreldbeskouings van sy opponente as uitgangspunt gebruik, en só die foute in hul denke uitwys. Hy bied dan sy eie perspektief as die beste alternatief aan. Die naasmekaarstelling van die huidige era, vol ongeregtigheid en chaos, teenoor die ewige vrede en geregtigheid wat deur God ingestel sal word, is uitgewys as belangrike verkooppunte vir Augustinus. Vir hom was die lewe in die Ewige Stad van God 'n onweerstaanbare aanbod wat hy aan sy opponente wou voorhou.

# Acknowledgements

---

*Praise be to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who graciously provided the people and means I needed to undertake this journey. Soli Deo Gloria.*

I would like to try to express my thanks to the following people, who made it possible for me to undertake and complete this journey. I thank God for every one of you.

Dr Annemaré Kotzé, my advisor and mentor, who went far beyond the call of duty, and without whose guidance I would not have discovered the rich and beautiful writing of Augustine; without whose wisdom, encouragement, support (academic, emotional and financial), superhuman patience and faith in my abilities, I would not have found the courage to complete this work.

Stellenbosch University's Department of Ancient Studies, under the headship of Prof. Johann Thom and Prof. Izak Cornelius, who saw fit to provide the financial support without which, attainment of this degree would not have been possible; who gave me extraordinary grace; whose teaching staff sparked and nurtured my interest in and love for the ancient world.

My Family: Mom, Dad and Lisa, whose loving support and patience are impossible to describe.

My Friends, whose love, prayers, generosity and technical support have blessed my heart and humbled me (beyond any telling of it).

# Contents

---

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Biographical notes .....	2
1.2. Rationale.....	3
1.3. Overview of literature .....	5
<b>Chapter 2: Context .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1. Contextualising Augustine .....	7
2.1.1. <i>Pagan-Christian Relations</i> .....	8
2.1.2. <i>The Philosophical Framework of Late Antiquity: Pervasive Platonism</i> .....	12
2.1.3. <i>The Sacking of Rome</i> .....	15
<b>Chapter 3: Justice in the Age of Augustine .....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1. Justice in Practice .....	18
3.1.1. <i>Secular Jurisprudence</i> .....	19
3.1.2. <i>The Role of the Bishop</i> .....	23
3.2. The Bible on Justice .....	24
3.2.1. <i>Justice Determined by God</i> .....	26
3.2.2. <i>Biblical Justice in Action</i> .....	32
<b>Chapter 4: Justice and the City of God .....</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1. The City of God.....	35
4.1.1. <i>Brief outline of Contents</i> .....	35
4.2. Exploration of the Theme of Justice .....	43
4.2.1. <i>Justice and the Supreme Good</i> .....	43
4.2.2. <i>Justice in the Earthly City</i> .....	53
4.2.3. <i>Justice as it is in Heaven</i> .....	64
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix A: Summary of <i>civ. Dei</i> 19-22.....</b>	<b>76</b>

<b>Appendix B: James Sire’s seven basic questions of world view .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Appendix C: The “peace tabulation” of <i>civ. Dei 19.13-14</i>.....</b>	<b>87</b>

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Augustine's *City of God* presents an impressive canvas of themes. Yet at its core it is the tale of two cities – the City of Man and the holy City of God – and their origins, development and ordained ends (*civ. Dei* 11.1. trans. Bettenson 2003: 430). An important distinguishing factor between these two cities, or kingdoms, is the extent to which justice is manifest in each. At the very beginning of Book 4.4 Augustine asks, “Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale?” The assumptions behind this question and the statements that follow it are that earthly kingdoms do exist, and therefore that justice does exist in these earthly kingdoms. Throughout the *City of God*, however, the City of Man (constituted of the kingdoms of this world) is depicted as pervasively corrupt and bound to decay. The City of God, on the other hand, is shown to be perfect, enduring unto eternity. It follows, therefore, that the two cities display and exercise justice to varying degrees, with only the City of God possessing said ‘virtue’ in perfect measure.

Considering Augustine's view that the cities in question are comingled (interwoven) in this present age, the assertion that the manifestation of justice distinguishes one city from the other seems to be a helpful one at first. That the reader is not given a coherent theory of justice, however, complicates matters. At a most basic level, then, this thesis serves as an attempt at gathering the main tenets of Augustine's understanding of justice and its working in the two cities. This will be done by looking primarily at the final section of the *City of God* (Books 19 to 22).<sup>1</sup>

Of course, if anything valuable is to be gained from looking at this, arguably Augustine's most preeminent work, it is not enough simply to systematise his thought. The exploration of the theme of justice in the *City of God*, therefore, will be carried out and situated within the framework of Augustine's apologetic project; it will be approached, bearing in mind the discourse in which Augustine was engaged, with a view to persuading his interlocutors of the legitimacy – indeed the verity – of the Christian perspective.

It dare not be assumed, however, that Augustine's own views came about or functioned in a vacuum. The stance taken throughout this thesis, therefore, is that even as Augustine sought

---

<sup>1</sup>A summary of the *City of God* 19-22 has been included as *Appendix A* to aid the reader in following my arguments.



to counter the claims of his non-Christian contemporaries throughout the *City of God*, he will have been susceptible to the very same forces that influenced them, whether forces of circumstance or thought. It makes sense to ask therefore, what shaped Augustine's ideas regarding justice.

In summary, this thesis will focus on how Augustine believed justice to function in the Cities of God and Man, and how this understanding of justice fitted into his defence of the Christian faith. This will be done after looking at Augustine's philosophical and situational contexts. Chapter 2 will deal with contextualising Augustine in this way, while Chapter 3 will deal with perspectives on justice – secular and biblical – and the role of the fifth-century bishop in the law courts. Thereafter, a discussion of the *City of God* and the theme of justice will constitute Chapter 4. The concluding chapter will present the findings of the rest of the thesis and so bring the study to a close.

## **1.1. Biographical notes**

Before plumbing the depths of Augustine's complex thought, a cursory look at his life should provide clues as to where the focus of the contextual study ought to lie. Although there are a number of biographies available to us, the most important source of information regarding his life remains the *Confessions* and it is from this influential work that the following outline is primarily taken.

Aurelius Augustinus was born in 354, in Roman-occupied North Africa, to a Catholic Christian mother, Monnica, and a pagan father, Patricius. Although this was not at all unusual at the time, it is probably this diversity in the nuclear family, combined with the eclecticism that characterised North Africa in the fourth and fifth centuries, that set the boy Augustine on the whirlwind path his life was to take. He went from leading an otiose youth in Thagaste, to dabbling in Manichaeism during early adulthood in Carthage.

After disillusionment with the Manichees and their complex doctrines, he embarked on a more fervent search for truth while teaching rhetoric in Milan. This developed into an insatiable appetite for philosophy. He found himself attracted to the teachings of the Platonists, which became an inroad to his return to the teachings of Christianity. Of these last

teachings he came to be convinced under the guidance of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan at the time.

Around AD 390, he entered the priesthood and shortly afterward, in AD 395, he took up the office of bishop at Hippo Regius, a position he held for forty years, until his death in 430. What this office meant and entailed in Augustine's day is discussed later on. That it gave him an authoritative platform from which to speak and write is evident from many of his writings, including letter exchanges with prominent men seeking his council or entering into debate with him.<sup>2</sup> It makes sense, in light of his prominence, that he would have been called on to comment on the harrowing events of AD 410, when Rome was brought to its knees during a three-day sacking by the Visigoths, and it is at this point in his life that we enter into Augustine's story and thought-world.

## 1.2. Rationale

With the sacking of Rome, certain proponents of Roman traditional religion pinpointed Christianity's prohibition of pagan cultic activity as the reason for the city's misfortune. One way of interpreting this hostility is within the framework of divine retributive justice being upheld, with Rome getting its 'just desserts' for ignoring the gods of its illustrious past, in favour of Christian monotheism. Far from writing a merely occasional work in the face of this, however, Augustine chose to answer the charge by presenting the reader with what has been described as a compendium of his theology, in which previous thought had had the opportunity to mature and settle (Van Oort 1991: 88). Van Oort (1991: 86), with reference to Augustine's earlier sermons and citing Peter Brown, describes the *City of God* as "the careful working out, by an old man, of a mounting obsession [with the two cities]". Thus, after a long process of maturation, what had been thought of extensively and enunciated often in sermons, is "joined together systematically like polished building stones" in the *City of God* (Noordmans, quoted in Van Oort 1991: 87). He combats temporal accusations regarding the demise of Rome, with the whole spectrum of his theological understanding of the *city*, of both the fallible City of Man and the eternal City of God.

---

<sup>2</sup> One letter referred to later in this thesis (*Ep. 133*) was part of an exchange between Augustine and Marcellinus, brother of Aspringius the proconsul of Africa. This exchange is illustrative of the influence he wielded as a prominent bishop and has been taken from an anthology of his political writings, filled with other such examples, and compiled by Atkins and Dodaro (2001). The sermon on the sacking of Rome (*De excidio urbis Romae*), referred to in Chapter 4, has also been taken from this anthology.

As Augustine argues the case for God and His city as perfectly just in the face of every accusation, he considers justice extensively, both from man's grounded perspective and within an eternal framework. The first ten books deal directly with the beliefs of his accusers and his answers to them. It is impressive apologetic writing, which Dulles (2005: 85) describes as "the most brilliant of all the Christian refutations of pagan religion [until that time]". If one were to envisage this section of the *City of God*, it might bear some resemblance to the lively public debates in which Augustine was often engaged.

In contrast, the second half might be better envisaged as a lecture, with Augustine on the podium, laying the foundations of what Dulles (2005: 85) has called a "total theology of history". It is to the latter, more dogmatic section that we turn to unravel something of his understanding of justice. In contrast to Dulles (2005: 85), however, it will be contended throughout this thesis that the second half of the *City of God* is, in fact, part and parcel of the very same apologetic project. It contributes to the goal of refuting pagans' accusations against the Christians, while seeking to persuade them to abandon their religious and ideological commitments in favour of Christianity. Where Books 1 to 10 conform to the first necessary technical requirement of apologies, in that they are primarily "a response of some sort to criticism", Books 11 to 22 constitute extended fulfilment of the other defining characteristic of apologetics, by addressing outsiders' "misconceptions" while advancing "positive views of [its] own" (Price 1999: 105-106). The question that will be addressed in Chapter 5, then, is how Augustine's presentation of the workings of justice fit into this project.

Thinking about justice is not, of course, confined to the realm of theology or Christian philosophy. Rather, it has been addressed by theorists in disciplines such as philosophy and sociology, even though it is, first and foremost, the playing field of Law. Although Augustine's contribution to the complex discourse was influential and ought to be acknowledged, an exhaustive inter-disciplinary overview is not the chosen route of this thesis. Instead, a close reading of the final books of the *City of God* is offered in Chapter 4. What Augustine asserts about justice in this important work is also placed in its immediate situational, philosophical and theological context, with Chapters 2 and 3 focussing specifically on the relations between pagans and Christians, and the philosophical framework which shaped the thought and discourse of the day. This should bring to light – if only implicitly – what Augustine has to say about Natural Justice; Retributive Justice and its place in the Cities of God and Man; Restorative Justice and the possibility of its existence in the City of Man; and Social Justice.

### 1.3. Overview of literature

When approaching Augustine and the subject of Justice, one is likely to be left bemused and intimidated. This is not only due to the importance of Augustine in the history of Western thought (Rist 1996: 18) and the tomes written by and about him as a result, but is also due to burgeoning scholarly interest and writing about the period in which he lived (Maas 2010: lxvii) and the myriad emphases one might choose in a field as broad as this. The difficulty in undertaking a study of this nature, therefore, is to remain true to the subject at hand, and not allow oneself to be distracted by the many interesting subjects and issues that are only of peripheral importance to this thesis. For this reason, the secondary sources consulted have been chosen in line with close readings of relevant primary texts, namely the *City of God*, other texts by Augustine, and the Bible.

As regards primary sources referred to in the following discussion, Bettenson's translation of the *City of God* has been chosen on account of its availability and accessibility. When other works<sup>3</sup> by Augustine – and his contemporaries – are cited, the books from which they have been sourced are clearly indicated. Furthermore, quotes from the Bible have been taken from the *English Standard Version* (ESV), unless otherwise indicated.

An excellent point of departure for orientation in thought and writing about Augustine is Fitzgerald's *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. Admittedly, having been published in 1999, this indispensable resource will be in need of an update in the near future. Nevertheless, a number of entries from Fitzgerald's encyclopaedia have provided good insights into and explanations of Augustine's thought, which have aided this reading of the *City of God*. The *Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Stump and Kretzmann 2001), furthermore, provided longer reflections and summaries of specific aspects areas of interest, such as Augustine's ethics, political philosophy and biblical interpretation.

Unfortunately, although much literature exists concerning both the *City of God* and Augustine's views on justice and politics, studies dedicated specifically to how he works it out in the *City of God* are few and far between. One essay by Eugene TeSelle (1993) has however provided much meaningful insight into the three interconnected concepts which make up its title, *Justice, peace, love*. Furthermore, Johannes van Oort's (1991) investigation of the origins of doctrine of the antithesis between the City of God and the City of Man has

---

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations of titles are taken from Fitzgerald (1999: xxxv-il).

proven indispensable for getting a handle on this mammoth tome. Indeed the antithesis between the two cities is central to this thesis, precisely because it is the central theme of the *City of God*, as the numerous studies of the doctrine attest. Van Oort's study of the possible sources of the doctrine provides an excellent and convincingly-argued model of where to turn to when seeking better understanding of this work and the context in which it was born.

The importance of Augustine's context to achieving the goals set for this thesis cannot be overstated. For this reason, in addition to following Van Oort's lead, a number of other sources have been consulted in order to better understand the worldviews of Augustine's detractors. The most important of these critics are those clumped together under the umbrella term "pagan". To seek to understand the pagan polytheism that Augustine specifically counters, Stephen Mitchell and Peter van Nuffelen's diverse collection of essays, *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (2010), was consulted in conjunction with a number of reference works. Other works relied on heavily include Michael Maas's sourcebook for Late Antique primary texts, *Readings in Late Antiquity* (2010), and – specifically with reference to the functioning of justice in Augustine's day – Kevin Uhlade's *Expectations of Justice in the Age of Augustine* (2007). With regard to biblical concepts that influenced Augustine and the basics sketched in Chapter 3.2, Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* was extensively consulted alongside shorter works and articles.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> At this point, my own theological biases must be mentioned. Let it be noted, therefore, that discussion of the Bible has been influenced by a conservative, reformed perspective. As far as possible, I have tried to steer clear of issues that demand such alliances and have consulted diverse sources. While consulting these sources, it has become clear that presentation of too many perspectives in this section would divert focus from the goals of this thesis unnecessarily. By and large, the outline of the biblical perspective on justice is my own close reading, and takes a number of cues from my own reading of the *City of God*.

## Chapter 2: Context

### 2.1. Contextualising Augustine

At the beginning to an elucidating introduction to Bettenson's translation of the *City of God*, Evans (2003; ix) makes two fundamentally important points regarding the composition of Augustine's great work. These are that it is a work of Augustine's maturity, addressing themes and issues dealt with elsewhere, but more coherently and extensively so in the *City of God*; and that although the work is not purely occasional, it will have been partly occasioned by the arrival of refugees from the disturbing events at Rome in AD 410 – i.e. the sacking of the city by Alaric the Visigoth – and their angry charge to the Bishop of Hippo, to explain the collapse of a Christian empire. In addition, if one turns to Augustine's own preface in Book 1, it becomes clear that he was spurred on by accusations levelled at Christians by “those who [preferred] their own gods” to the God of the Bible, i.e. those who had not been persuaded by the truth claims of Christianity (*civ. Dei* 1. preface). Among these, was the charge that Christianity's institutionalisation and the subsequent discontinuation of pagan cultic rituals were to blame for the weakness of the empire and the sacking of *Roma aeterna*.

Even from this very basic information, a picture of Augustine and his world in the years he penned the *City of God* already begins to emerge. Thus it makes sense to ask what led to the formation of Augustine's ideas and doctrines of Justice and the City of God, to describe the specific events that eventually moved Augustine to write, to explore the relations of Christians and pagans in the empire of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Although the period

---

<sup>5</sup> Although this thesis focuses solely on the fourth and fifth centuries, let it be noted that these will be considered against the backdrop of the era known as Late Antiquity. This period, although its bounds are hardly set in stone, spans roughly four to seven centuries. Brown (1998: 1) has offered a delineation of the time from the reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180) to that of Justinian (AD 527-565), but has elsewhere described it as continuing to the rise of Islam in the seventh century, or to its triumph in the Eastern Empire, and the coronation of Charlemagne in AD 800 (Reflected in Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad*. 1971). These differences are probably indicative of the complexity of the changes that marked the Empire at the time, as it dealt with all manner of pressure, which whittled away at the more homogenous classical culture. The pressure in question originated both from outside the Empire's borders (in the form of the growing strength of barbarian forces on every front) and from within (the most important example being the rapid spread and eventual institutionalisation of Christianity). For the purposes of this thesis, although the terms “Late Antiquity” and “late antique” will appear from time to time, it is not necessary to take any definitive stance on the matter. This is because its use throughout the following discussion merely

under consideration is notoriously complex, these questions should enable us to focus the following discussion only on those aspects which stand in specific relation to the historical, situational and philosophical context of the *City of God*. Having reconstructed the mood of the Western empire of the day, and situated Augustine therein, it should become possible for us to comment on the *City of God* meaningfully, and to distil a coherent view on justice in relation not only to the happenings of the day, but also to the ideas in circulation at the time. The three issues outlined above will shape this chapter. Thus we shall look first at pagan/Christian dynamics, before moving on to discuss the secular thought of Late Antiquity, which influenced Augustine and against which he sought to argue<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the sacking of Rome will be outlined briefly.

### 2.1.1. Pagan<sup>7</sup>-Christian Relations

It is generally agreed that the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity – when considered against the preceding era – was characterised by relative instability and fluidity. The face of

---

serves to highlight the possible influence of its characteristic dynamism and complex national relations on the *Zeitgeist* of the fourth and fifth centuries. See also Maas (2010: lxiii, lxxi-lxxx).

<sup>6</sup> There is ever the danger of presenting a false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular when treating of each separately. For all their differences, it must also be affirmed that worldviews present at the same time and within the same locality necessarily influence one another, with perspectives and emphases either overlapping – i.e. concepts from each worldview become part of others' ideological toolboxes – or causing sharp and definitive differentiation. The separation of the dominant philosophy of the era and the religious currents with which it interacted in this reading of Augustine's context should, in fact, present us with the conceptual tools to dig effectively through Augustine's own thought, without detracting from our awareness of the interconnectedness described here.

<sup>7</sup> The term "pagan" must be understood as shorthand for every ideology apart from Christianity – or, for Christians of the time, in reference to everyone other than Christians, Jews and Samaritans, as all of them opposed the religious syncretism and emperor worship that had been so important to Roman 'unity' in preceding centuries (Maas 2010: 174; Evans 2003: xviii-xxii). Brown (2007: 248) notes that the term "paganus" used in this way was an innovation of the Latin church in the fourth and fifth centuries, and originally denoted "that which is inferior". That this attempt at lexicographical self-differentiation from the pre-Christian Roman Empire and its religion has stuck, bears testimony to the rootedness of our own perspective in the seeming triumph of Christianity, even in societies which feel the need to define themselves as "post-Christian". From our Christianised perspective, then, it is easy to assume that the institutionalisation of Christianity will have brought about a drastic decline in non-Christian religious belief and custom. Yet, Maas (2010: 174) describes the religious mood of Late Antiquity as one in which the majority of people did have something of a religious consciousness, as they believed in the participation of divinities in all aspects of life, but that not most of these would not have identified themselves as followers of any particular faith or even as devotees of any particular god(s).

Roman society took on a more markedly heterogeneous character than before. This was due in part to mounting pressure on all fronts, as a result of the growing strength of barbarian forces. Furthermore, by the time Augustine wrote, the empire had experienced a slow shift in the forms of public community. Where every Roman's cultural identity and pride had previously been rooted in the history of the ancient city, the Christian church now altered the tone and emphasis, and as Peter Brown (1998: 1) notes, no aspect of life lay unaffected by the change. For "the life of the individual, the life of the family, even matters as intimate as the perception of the body itself came to be seen in relation to changing social contexts, associated with the rise of new forms of community" (Brown 1998: 1). Of course these shifts in societal foundations were the result of a number of interesting political, cultural and religious developments. The finer details of these developments fall outside the scope of this thesis; suffice it to say that the tensions resulting from the institutionalisation of Christianity and the empire's descent into chaos by the third century and into the fifth, are essential to understanding Augustine's own views and the points of view he addressed.

First, let us bear in mind that although the establishment of Constantinople as a capital under Constantine and the cultural diversity across the empire had stripped Rome of much of its former glory, it remained a symbol of stability and longevity for Augustine's compatriots in the Western empire, regardless of their religious persuasion. In the late fourth century, the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus (*History* 14.6.3-6) described aged Rome in most elevated terms, as having come to "ultimate supremacy" and as "destined to live as long as men shall exist", even amidst the numerous wars carried on about her walls. This, he puts down to the shared favour of Virtue and Fortune, bestowed on Rome since her foundation (cited in Maas 2010: 48).

Whatever one chooses to make of this, it was an unquestioned part of Roman cultural identity, for patriots from across the empire thought of themselves as standing on the shoulders of the conquerors and victors of old, despite the influence of Christianity. By AD 200, Rome's dominion stretched from Spain to Mesopotamia and from Britain to North Africa, with vast differences in the conquered cultures of every region. By Augustine's day, however, that unified diversity had turned to division which, though it mostly bubbled unnoticed beneath the surface, would come to the fore under pressure (Brown 1971: 14-16; Cameron 1993: 3-4). Political instability however, as much as it permeated the very air breathed by Augustine and his contemporaries, is only of peripheral importance to this thesis. With the *City of God*, this North-African bishop takes a stance primarily against the pagans.



Considering his pre- and post-conversion concern and engagement with competing claims to religious authority<sup>8</sup>, this is not surprising and also makes the tension between Christians and their counterparts of special interest.

The tensions between Christians and pagans often came to a head in heated intellectual debate (Brown 2007: 248) and even outbursts of physical violence (Maas 2010: 175). By the time Augustine wrote his great defence of the faith, then, he had lived through the brief but inevitable attempt at a return to paganism under the emperor Julian in AD 361 to 363, and the official ban on pagan worship throughout the empire thirty years later. In 384, he also witnessed – possibly only indirectly – the dispute regarding Gratian’s order to remove the Altar of Victory from the Senate house<sup>9</sup>, between his patron, the pagan aristocrat Symmachus, and Ambrose Bishop of Milan, who would soon be instrumental in Augustine’s own conversion to Christianity (Evans 2003: xv; Maas 2010: 199-200). Neither of these events is dealt with by Augustine in any notable depth in the *City of God*, yet they are helpful to us inasmuch as they provide some insight into the climate in which Augustine lived and wrote.

Closer to home, as the bishop of Hippo, he had experienced and commented on the open conflict between Christians and pagans in the face of the Christianisation of the empire. In a letter written in 408, he wrote a dismayed account of an uncurbed pagan ritual at Hippo that had led to the stoning and burning of a church building, as well as the death of “one of the servants of God” (cited in Maas 2010: 198). This kind of hostility from non-Christians is understandable, of course, for any enforcement of Christian mores and ideology necessarily meant violence against the pagan gods and their rites.

Furthermore, most especially in North Africa, Christians did not present a united front, as the church wrestled with doctrinal and practical differences within the fold, e.g. between

---

<sup>8</sup> In his *Confessions*, Augustine sought to chronicle his search for the truth, sparked by an encounter with Cicero’s *Hortensius* and during which he moved through something like Christian Deism, Manichaeism, and after a period of disillusionment, to Neo-Platonism and Christian Theism. More detailed description of this development may be found in *Conf.* 1-9.

<sup>9</sup> Gratian (emperor from 375-383) ordered the cessation of pagan religious practices, including the removal of the Altar of Victory, which had known the Senate house as its home since the glory days of Augustus (Maas 2000: 190). After much dispute and public outcry – including an official plea to the new emperor Valentinian II by Symmachus (Maas 2000: 190-191) – the altar was eventually removed in 384.

Catholics and Donatists, who were not drastically different from Catholic Christians (Miles 2008: 80-81) although they espoused a hyper-realised eschatology (Miles 2008: 83). In addition, the existence of groups beyond the bounds of orthodoxy, but who used the same or similar language to the Christians – most notably such Gnostic sects as the Manichees (*Conf.* 3.3-10) – added to the perceived diversity of Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

This appearance of disunity, it is fair to assume, will have confused observers of the church and possibly fuelled their hostility. From these examples, it becomes possible to infer that religious intolerance as the cause of civil unrest in the empire will already have been widely discussed and will have influenced much public discussion by 410. Taken with the instability caused by the barbarian invasions of the Western empire – however glacial the pace thereof – and the disruption of Rome's stabilising function in the Western empire, it seems clear that late antique psychology was partly shaped by fear, suspicion and prejudice.

One dare not assume, however, that Augustine was only engaging with naïve or uninformed religious zealots, hell-bent on seeing the downfall of the Christian church. Certainly zeal will have had much to do with the wild accusations of Christian culpability in Rome's weakness and sacking, however the level at which Augustine addresses these grievances is more sophisticated. For all its civil and religious discord, the climate in the empire of Augustine's day was also fairly sober, providing the perfect space for both verbal and written debate, making for well-informed, questioning and critical upper classes. As our discussion progresses, it will become clear that Augustine's *City of God* engages with Platonism, for it

---

<sup>10</sup> This has contributed to the view of many scholars that this perceived diversity is the most accurate possible picture of early Christianity (e.g. Margaret Miles whose work has been indispensable in the preparation for writing this thesis). Concentrating specifically on Christianity in the fifth century, Miles (2008: 71) makes the point that reference to fringe groups as “heretical” or denial of their legitimacy as permutations of Christianity is both misguided and unthinkingly follows in the tradition of Church history's tendency to begin with “the hindsight of a late-fourth-century triumphant church and [...] reach behind that *fait accompli* to identify its development or emergence”. This may be, but to ignore the fact that we do now, in fact, stand as observers from beyond the establishment of Christian orthodoxy and its amendments, reforms, revivals etc., is to underestimate our own rootedness in time and culture. To differentiate between what was to become orthodox Christian doctrine and fringe movements is not, as has been alluded to, a failure to take the “intellectual and ethical commitments of the full spectrum of North African Christians” into consideration (Miles 2008: 71). Instead, we try to evaluate movements in relation to the orthodoxy to which Augustine contributed and held – fully aware of our own Christian and post-Christian biases.

had filtered down from the intelligentsia and permeated the popular worldview.<sup>11</sup> Platonism provided a degree of philosophical (intellectual) legitimisation of pagan religion with which many of his interlocutors would have been acquainted. The acceptance of these philosophical trends was possible, because the philosophers consistently acknowledged divinity, even as they redefined it (Siniosoglou 2010: 127-128).

Part of the goal of this thesis is to identify the rhetorical devices and weapons used by Augustine in the face of pagan religious and philosophical opposition, to persuade proponents of such views of Christian truth claims. This requires some understanding of the thought world of the fourth and fifth centuries.

## **2.1.2. The Philosophical Framework of Late Antiquity: Pervasive**

### **Platonism**

Augustine was acquainted with, and influenced by secular writers and philosophers. Although some have contended that his familiarity with secular (Greek) philosophy was largely mediated by Ciceronian translation and interpretation of Greek philosophy and popular reception thereof (Rist 1996: 8-9), Augustine's understanding and ability to use the structures and concepts of Greek philosophy should not be underestimated. This should not

---

<sup>11</sup> Although Platonism will be referred to repeatedly throughout this thesis, it is worth noting that the permutation of Platonism prevalent by Augustine's day is more precisely referred to as "Neoplatonism". This terminology was, however, a later development, which Augustine and his contemporaries will not have been familiar with. Furthermore, Augustine does not distinguish too sharply between the doctrines of Plato and those of Neoplatonists (although he does mention some differences via Varro, in *civ. Dei* 19.1). Following closely on the heels of Middle Platonism which sought, in part, to return to "Platonism-proper" of the Old Academy after a brief departure by the New Academy (Blackburn 2005: 233), Neoplatonism would carry on this project, although it added religious elements and Pythagorean and other classical doctrines (Blackburn 2005: 249). The religious tenets of Neoplatonism were, however, incongruous with – even hostile toward – Christianity (e.g. Porphyry, in *civ. Dei* 19.23). Many of Augustine's opponents will have been well-versed in the ideas/doctrines of Platonism, as it seems to have been a shaping force in fourth and fifth-century thought. Indeed Augustine has been described by many, such as Dulles (2005: 75) as a Platonic Christian, or at least as one heavily reliant on his Platonic philosophical heritage and the thought of his mentor, Ambrose of Milan. This is not a new insight into Augustine's 'thoughtworld', for in *Conf.* 7.9-10, we read his own account of how he became acquainted with platonic philosophy. Instead of showing its every error as one might expect of an apologist, he praises it for aiding his understanding of the eternal, divine nature of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God as expressed, for example in John 1:1-18 (*Conf.* 7:9 trans. Pine-Coffin 1961: 144f).

surprise us, for Roman education even into the fourth and fifth centuries focussed on a number of standard texts in both Latin and Greek. Moreover, those, such as Augustine, who chose to deepen their understanding of the art of rhetoric with a view to entering the public (political) arena, were trained in every manner of argumentation and exposed to the works of great orators and writers. Indeed Rist (1996: 19) notes that the youth Augustine would have had his mind steeped in the likes of Cicero, Vergil, Terence and Sallust. As a rhetorician, with a focus on teaching and dismantling rhetorical devices, he will no doubt have been further engaged in wrestling with these and other writers. Even after his conversion to Christianity, there can be no doubt that Augustine's knowledge of pagan philosophy still had some shaping influence on his thought. Yet, even as the reader is treated to a show of the whole spectrum of his vast repertoire in the *City of God*, his focus remains on the views held most strongly by his accusers.

It has already been mentioned that this thesis will show that Augustine uses the ideas that had already become embedded in the collective consciousness of his contemporaries as a launch pad as he seeks to counter the accusations of his detractors. He responds to and plays with all manner of ideas, a number of which are found in other works of his. These are always presented with new twists, however, and highlight different aspects, dependent on the context and his purpose (MacCormack 1999: 203). The scope of this thesis does not allow for thorough exploration of all the streams of thought that Augustine chose to entertain, often with the express purpose of rejecting them. Diverse as the profile of Late Antiquity was, the one school of thought that most shaped the intellectual landscape was Platonism as it had developed by Augustine's day. So pervasive was its influence that Bouman (1987: 46) is able to assert that parties on either side of the sacred-secular divide staked claims to a platonic heritage. Platonic connections with Christianity go beyond mere cultural influence in reading biblical texts, however.

Indeed Augustine notes that Plato was read as affirming some level of monotheism in his *Timaeus*, for Plato writes about a creator god in similar fashion to the creator God of Genesis (*civ. Dei* 8.11). Theories about where these parallels originated from were also widespread, such as those rejected by Augustine that Plato had met the prophet Jeremiah or had come across and read some Old Testament books of the Prophets at a point during his travels (*civ. Dei* 8.11). However Plato and his successors down to Augustine's day also supported polytheistic worship (*civ. Dei* 8.12-13). Of course theology was not the primary occupation of the philosophers. Yet the tension between mono- and polytheism was as important to the

Neo-Platonists who sought to reconcile the two ideas, thus providing pagan religion with sophisticated intellectual backing, as it was to Augustine's arguments against the pagans. When we look at the *City of God* and how Augustine chose to go about defending his faith in it, therefore, it is worth exploring the contents of adversaries' ideological toolbox.

In short, Neo-Platonism asserted that the universe ought to be conceived of as a living emanation of the One, which was derived from the transcendental, omnipresent God described in Plato's *Parmenides* (Blackburn 2005: 249). The One, it was taught, had given rise to the "realm of 'nous'" (ideas, intelligence), which then gave rise to soul/s (Blackburn 2005: 249). These souls either sank into bodies or remained celestial (Blackburn 2005: 249). This aspect of Neo-Platonic natural theology achieves two things, i.e. the affirmation of a supreme deity in the "One" and an explanation for the origin of pagan gods as those souls who remained celestial. Cerutti (2010: 18) argues that, because these Platonists shaped popular philosophy to such a large degree, this is probably where the hierarchical organisation of the pagan pantheon of late antiquity has its roots.

The hierarchy of incorporeal (spiritual) over corporeal also had some bearing on Christianity of the time, as is recognisable even in Augustine's *Confessions* (*Conf.* 3.7.12; 1.2.2-1.3.3.) for example, where God is characterised as incomprehensible spirit. However, the nature of the "One" of Neo-Platonism does not agree entirely with the God of the Bible, who reveals Himself (makes Himself known and accessible) to various people, especially in the Old Testament. The "One" of Neo-Platonism is no longer physically present to the universe to which it first gave rise – it is entirely other and unknowable, except as an object of worship (Blackburn 2005: 280). *Nous*, though accessible through contemplation by the souls to which it gave rise, resides in the mind of the One, but is still entirely other (Blackburn 2005: 280). The souls mentioned before, unlike their parent, *nous*, and the One, are capable of transmigration. This explains why these immortal, incorporeal, but substantial entities are able to sink into terrestrial bodies within this complex system (Blackburn 2005: 280) and also alludes to the nature of humankind and the mind/body dualism that dominated Platonic thinking about humanity. These, like many other religious tenets of Platonism, were incongruous with – even hostile toward – Christianity (e.g. Porphyry, in *civ. Dei* 19.23). Many of Augustine's opponents will have been well-versed in the doctrines of Platonism and its many intricacies.

In the face of the hostility levelled at the faith Augustine defended against his Platonist detractors, however, it will be illustrated in greater detail in Chapter 4 below, that he was able to meet them at their level and move with relative ease from the Platonic philosophical framework, into the realm of Christian theology. Indeed Augustine has been described by many, such as Courcelle (cited in Van Oort 1991: 48) and Dulles (2005: 75) as a Platonic Christian, or at least as one heavily reliant on his Platonic philosophical heritage and the thought of his mentor, Ambrose of Milan. This is not a new insight into Augustine's thought (theology), for in *Conf.* 7.9-7.10, we read his own account of how he became acquainted with Platonic philosophy. Instead of showing its every error as one might expect of an apologist, he praises it for aiding his understanding of the eternal, divine nature of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God as expressed, for example in John 1:1-18 (*Conf.* 7.9). In the *City of God*, however, his acquaintance with Platonism serves the purpose of what he sees as the correction of false conclusions.

At this point in the discussion, what should be clear about the general tenets of the Platonists with which Augustine engaged is that although their views allowed for Christian conclusions, they were nevertheless utterly opposed to them. Platonists operated from within a well-developed, hierarchical, metaphysically dualistic system. As such, the eternal One and its direct emanations in the realm of 'nous' are far superior to the corporeal bodies which some *sink* into in order to inhabit. This low view of the corporeal world – and, by logical extension, of the human body – will come into play in 4.2.3 (below), for it is an important part of the Platonic critique of the Christian worldview and eschatology that Augustine worked hard to defend. Furthermore, a basic inkling of the hierarchical structure of the pagan pantheon, which found its intellectual roots in Neo-Platonism, provides a good foundation for understanding the way Augustine chose to dismantle the worldviews of those he sought to persuade of his own (4.1.1 below).

### **2.1.3. The Sacking of Rome**

Of course, Augustine did not operate within a purely abstract framework. His thought was not confined to the religious and philosophical perspectives that dictated the interaction of people with the world. As was stated at the outset of this study, it was the sacking of Rome and all that followed in its wake that provided an opportunity for Augustine to put his theology of the

two cities on paper in the *City of God*. When Rome eventually fell – if only temporarily – to the Visigoths in 410, it seemed that the end of the world had come. One need only consider the reaction of Jerome<sup>12</sup>, as described and quoted by Van Oort (1991: 57), to get a feel for the shockwaves that shook the entire empire:

At Bethlehem Jerome, who had just finished his commentary on Isaiah and was about to start an exegesis of Ezekiel could not work for days; for him the fall of Rome had inaugurated the end of the world. “After the most radiant light of all the nations had been extinguished, what is more, after the head of the Roman empire had been cut off and, to be more precise, in one city the entire world perished, I fell silent and was humiliated and unable to speak of goodness.”

(In *Ezech. I, praef*)

Considering all that had come to pass during the years leading up to 410, it is almost unthinkable that the sacking of the city should have come as a surprise. Reactions such as the one above and those of Augustine’s interlocutors – as deduced from his *City of God* – speak volumes about the prevailing worldview of the time. Indeed such patriots, so dismayed at Alaric’s conquering force, seemed to have romanticised the fact that their own territories had once been conquered by Rome. Thus the pagan historian Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, writing an elegy after being forced to leave Rome in 417, describes Rome as the unifier of distant nations who profited by becoming her captives, and as the giver of rights and law to “men who have never known justice” before having been conquered (cited in Maas 2000: 23). From this and the reaction of Jerome described above, one gains a sense of the views of Augustine's compatriots, regardless of religious commitment: Rome, having grown from

---

<sup>12</sup> Born ca. 347 into a wealthy Christian family, Jerome was an Illyrian monk, educated in Rome (Vessey 1999: 460). He was converted to asceticism around 370 and held various offices within the Christian church at Antioch and Constantinople (Vessey 1999: 460). Upon his return to Rome (ca. 382), after seeking like-minded Christians in the places mentioned as well as Aquilea, it was his hard and earnest work in the Scriptures, literary gifts and extensive knowledge of the biblical languages which sustained him, as he revised the Latin New Testament among other things. His passionate advocacy of asceticism and the life-long virginity of Mary mother of Jesus, however, would see him booted from Rome around 385, so that he sojourned in Egypt and Palestine, finally settling in Bethlehem where he continued to write – his commentaries on the Prophets being most noteworthy – and translate the Old Testament (Vessey 1999: 460). Jerome was often drawn into controversy and debate, and his written correspondence with Augustine is peppered with disagreement and debate on various issues of the Faith, so that – it would seem – these church fathers influenced and refined one another's theological understanding and ways of engaging in debate as public interpreters of the Bible and Christian tradition (Vessey 1999: 461).

strength to conquering strength, bestowed good gifts on her subjects out of the overflow of her virtue, so that all men under her yoke would know goodness and taste the sweetness of justice. Furthermore, as one reads the *City of God*, it is clear that Rome was meant to hold this position unto and into eternity, under the watch of the pagan gods, who were believed to have sustained and supported Rome all along. These are the beliefs from which Augustine launches into his apologetic project.



## Chapter 3: Justice in the Age of Augustine

Augustine's context at the time he composed the *City of God* having been sketched, the next necessary step in this endeavour to systematise Augustine's thought on justice and uncover what influenced him, is to understand Justice as it functioned apart from Augustine. The goal for this chapter, then, is to reach into Augustine's jurisprudential toolbox and lay out the concepts and ideas that may have been used to construct his own views on justice. For the intents and purposes of this thesis, however, questions belonging to the realm of Jurisprudence proper require, at most, only superficial treatment, for Augustine was not concerned with the debates and problems of legal philosophy as such. This section, therefore, focuses primarily on the expectations of justice around the fifth century and the bishop's role therein, before looking at the concept from a biblical perspective. By doing this, it is hoped that the most pertinent questions will emerge, and that the most important concepts will solidify, thus making meaningful discussion of the *City of God* and the concept of Justice in it possible in Chapter 4.

### 3.1. Justice in Practice

Let us begin by considering the expectations of Augustine's contemporaries – both pagan and Christian – and what they understood justice to be. The importance of this exercise lies in the idea expressed at the outset, that Augustine, the public figure and most prolific writer, was regularly engaged in larger public discourse. In the preceding chapters, it was mentioned that as he engaged in public discussion, part of Augustine's rhetorical arsenal was his immense skill at a brand of persuasive apologetics which used the views of his opponents as a springboard. This method of argumentation falls under the umbrella of *protreptic*<sup>13</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup> A very helpful overview of the genre of protreptic, including a discussion of the definitions available for it and its characteristics, may be found in Kotzé (2003: 50-62). This thesis follows a definition which emphasises the communicative purpose of the "speech of exhortation", given by David Aune (1991: 91-124; quoted in Kotzé 2003: 54) as "a lecture intended to win converts and attract young people to a particular way of life [...] by exposing the errors of alternative ways of living by demonstrating the truth claims of a particular philosophical tradition over its competitors." Admittedly, Aune's definition refers specifically to the "spoken ancestor" of the genre of protreptic. Kotzé (2003: 54) convincingly argues, however, that "the aims and characteristics it expresses are the same for both versions, spoken and written." The purpose of protreptic may be widened, furthermore, to include both the conversion of non-believers and encouragement of people to progress in their chosen worldview, and focuses on both the belief *and* conduct of its audience (Kotzé 2003: 56)

Considering the complexity of the topic at hand, Augustine's *modus operandi* in arguing a case for Christianity must shape this outline of fifth-century views on justice. Bearing the characteristics and purpose of Augustine's chosen apologetic tactic in mind as we engage in the larger project of unravelling the threads of his discussion of justice, therefore, fifth-century expectations of justice with which Augustine was confronted and with which he would have had to engage, must be traced.

### 3.1.1. Secular Jurisprudence

Across the empire, Roman legal culture served something of a unifying purpose, despite the changes in legal code that came with changes of emperor (Maas 2010: 285). It is worth noting, however, that although it continued to develop in many directions throughout Late Antiquity (Maas 2010: 285), this happened on the back of the so-called classical period of Roman law, which extended from about the end of the Republic to the death of the emperor Severus Alexander in AD 235 (Johnston 1999: 1).<sup>14</sup> As Maas (2010: 285) introduces a selection of excerpts from juridical works from the late antique era, he notes that throughout this period, emperors issued laws in great numbers. If one recalls the fluidity that characterised Late Antiquity even at the level of governance, the implication must be that the number of laws passed and abolished by the time Augustine wrote are too numerous to consider. Instead of looking at the specifics, therefore, this part of our discussion will seek to reach into the collective cultural consciousness and 'sense of citizenship' (*Bürgersinn*) of the empire, for that, according to Rehfeldt (1978: 140), lies at the heart of traditional Roman ethics.

It is reasonable to deduce that what is meant by this 'sense of citizenship' is an awareness of what is best for the empire. Belonging to Roman society – being able to claim Roman citizenship – may be seen as that which informed the national sense of what is right/just and wrong/unjust. Indeed, it not a stretch to consider the implementation of new laws by successive emperors as the stamping of their authority by tapping into the people's sense of citizenship. Allegiance to the laws of the emperor meant allegiance to the empire, and an emperor who dispensed justice in the face of flux and uncertainty upheld the ideals of Rome.

---

<sup>14</sup> Of course, legal activity long preceded the era in question. Johnston (1999: 2-3) discusses the most important known sources of law for the classical period. These include the *Twelve Tables*, which were promulgated around 450 BC and are the earliest known example of Roman private law.

Rule was both enforced and perceived on the back of loyalty to the empire, whose health and longevity was inextricably linked to the establishment and maintenance of justice.

This attitude is reflected to some degree in a definition of justice first summarised by the third-century jurist Ulpian (though presumably the principles expressed by him were already part of Roman legal consciousness), and which was later recorded in Justinian's *Digest* (1.1.10) and *Institutes* (1.1). The following excerpt is taken from the latter (in Maas 2010: 285-286):

*Justice is an unswerving and perpetual determination to acknowledge all men's rights. [...] The commandments of the law are these: live honourably; harm nobody; give everyone his due.*

From this, it becomes clear that for Ulpian, justice is an attitude or internal orientation toward doing right by others or, as Wolterstorff (2008: 22) translates it, by “rendering to [each person] the rights or deserts that are theirs, that they possess”. The fact that people are seen as already *having* rights (*ius suum*)<sup>15</sup>, which the just individual is to acknowledge – or better, grant or bestow (*tribuere*) – already gives some indication of what gives content to those rights and, by extension, to justice: the “precepts of the law” (*juris praecepta*). As Rehfeldt (1978: 140) expresses it, the law teaches that to which justice strives: to do what is right<sup>16</sup>. Whether or not Ulpian had in mind only legal justice is not clear, as Wolterstorff (2008: 22) notes, before arguing a case for Ulpian's definition as an explanation of the *virtue* of justice, from which keeping the law necessarily flows.

Now, considering Ulpian's influence into the sixth century, due in no small part to its prominence in Justinian's legal project, it is safe to assume that these ideas would have been

---

<sup>15</sup> The Latin given in brackets throughout this section is taken from the Justinian's *Digest* 1.1.10, where the definition and exhortation appear together: “*Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi. Juris praecepta sunt haec: honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere.*” (Penington 2012). There are only a handful of instances throughout this thesis when the original Latin is given or referred to. The reason for this that the nuances lost in translation are important to the argument in this section. A similar principle is employed and explained in 3.2.2 above.

<sup>16</sup> Rehfeldt continues this thought and argues that in light of the law giving content to justice, they show themselves to be the very same. I shall not take this position in this thesis. Ulpian's definition clearly separates the two, justice being painted as a right orientation or attitude toward the law. It is a ‘sense of right’ / ‘sense of law’ (what Rehfeldt calls “*Rechtsinn*”), informed by legal code.

shared by Roman citizens of Augustine's day, at least to some measure. It will be assumed throughout this thesis that this is indeed the case, though not blindly so, for as much as this ideal will have persisted, a number of factors are at play in forming ideas of this nature. Furthermore, as will be expanded on shortly, it was not possible for anybody – especially from the poorer classes – to put too much hope in the law and its power to ensure justice (Uhlade 2007: 23-24). For although some sense of citizenship remained on account of Rome still being regarded as the head of the empire and the symbol of civilisation and the ideals that lay at the heart of Roman cultural identity (Van Oort 1991: 58), the legal system was severely flawed (Uhlade 2007: 16-20). Thus, the ideal expressed in Justinian's *Digest, The Whole Body of Law* 6 (in Maas 2010: 287), that legal practitioners would be “servants of justice”, “successful everywhere and at all times” was not realised. Reality necessarily deviated from the ideal and many other factors, in addition to a sense of citizenship, influenced the implementation of law.

No doubt the diversity that characterised the empire throughout Late Antiquity helped to re-define Roman identity. An important factor will presumably have been that, where justice had always been considered in close connection with the law which flowed out of a ‘sense of citizenship’, another force now gave external content to the concept of justice, namely Christianity. This fact in itself is possibly problematic, for Christianity had many faces throughout the empire, with differences between variants and offshoots being more marked in some parts of the empire than in others, and with conflict between Christian groups also varying in ferocity (Maas 2010: 110). Outsiders, therefore, were not faced with a unified front. By the time Augustine wrote the *City of God*, however, the bounds of orthodoxy had already been decided on to a large extent (Miles 2008: 71). For the purposes of this thesis and for the sake of brevity, we shall focus only on the Catholic orthodoxy to which Augustine adhered, despite the Catholic Church enjoying less support in North Africa than the more conservative Donatists (Miles 2008: 80-81).

Nevertheless, the role of Christianity in shaping the public and private life of the average Roman citizen throughout Late Antiquity should not be underestimated. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, considering the core Christian teaching that “one did not have to be Roman to be Christian” (Maas 2010: 111), the Christianisation of the empire did not clash with the ‘sense of citizenship’ that shaped the traditional culture and its conceptions of justice. Instead, even as it turned classical *mores* on their heads by “loosening the boundary between the ‘inner

barbarians'<sup>17</sup> of the empire and classical civilisation”, people became more inward-looking and identified “with an urban way of life” (Brown 1971: 112). In other words, although Christianised Romans no longer oriented their conduct or measured justice according to the standard set by lawmakers only, they still ascribed importance to their cities – most especially to the “Holy City” of Rome, the centre of the [Christian] world<sup>18</sup> – and so, citizenship still had a hand in shaping the identity of Roman patriots, as well as their understanding of justice.

The importance of the city as the seat of law and justice, then, renders understandable the shock and disappointment elicited by Alaric’s 410 Roman offensive, across the religious divides of the empire. The earthly centre from which justice was meant to ring out had been shaken. Yet even in Rome, the implementation of just ideals had always been fraught with difficulty, and breakdowns in justice were as common then as they are for us today. What is interesting, however, is that legal matters were not only handled by lawyers schooled in Jurisprudence, as it would have been in the classical age of Roman law. Rather, bishops shared that responsibility, dividing their attention between the tasks of pastoring and teaching their congregations and acting as legal counsellors and arbiters (Uhlade 2007: 3, 29; Van Dam 2007: 358). Augustine’s position as the bishop of Hippo, therefore, stood him in good stead to answer the burning questions of justice. In the following subsection, 3.1.2, we shall see how and why that is.

---

<sup>17</sup> Peter Brown’s terminology has been adopted here. When Brown refers to the “outer barbarian”, it is with reference to peoples in the unconquered territories surrounding the empire. In contrast, the “inner barbarian” is a way of referring to the non-Roman within the empire’s borders. The “loosening” of barriers between Romans and the “inner barbarian” comes, by logical inference, from the fact that one could live in the empire without being a citizen, and hold to Christianity. This would put one in the position of being linked to Roman citizens as “brothers and sisters in Christ” (citizens of the City of God), while still being entirely other at a cultural and political level. This idea is also picked up by Augustine at the beginning of *civ. Dei* 19.19, where he makes the point that the attire and chosen way of being in the world are almost inconsequential within the context of the church.

<sup>18</sup> This was mostly the average lay Christian’s perspective on Rome, even after the events of 410 (see Brown 1971: 121-122). Jerome expressed a similar emotional tie to the city in reaction to its sacking, as was noted in Chapter 2.1.3. above.

### 3.1.2. The Role of the Bishop

Under Constantine, Christian bishops were first given legal authority to judge cases, only if both parties wished their case to be tried in an Episcopal court (Maas 2010: 130). By the time Augustine was consecrated as bishop of Hippo, however, he and his colleagues found themselves constantly involved in disputes of every kind, as they took on the responsibilities of intellectuals, legislators, patrons, judges, and pastors (Uhlade 2007: 3). Thus, bishops did not hide themselves in ivory towers as did certain of their counterparts – monks or other members of the educated elite – but interacted with people from every walk of life.

Uhlade (2007: 16) argues that Christians experienced justice in precisely the same way as anyone else in Late Antiquity, for although the empire ‘belonged to them’, they were not excluded from the consequences of the manipulation, perversion or inept application of the law, to their detriment. As shepherds of God’s flock, it was the bishops’ job to protect such Christians. Many of them took this burden seriously, some going so far as to push for legal reform in favour of God’s flock, but still, these Christian leaders were forced to face the limits of their ability to offer security or hope of justice to the ordinary Christians in their care (Uhlade 2007: 16). This will undoubtedly have been a difficult reality to accept, for as the ‘representatives of God on Earth’ and as expounders of the faith, bishops may have been expected and perhaps put pressure on themselves to judge *like* God (Uhlade 2007: 44-46).

According to his contemporary and biographer, Possidius of Calama, Augustine viewed this practical involvement in legal matters as an unnecessary evil, which diverted his attention from better things (cited in Uhlade 2007: 11). Because the primary task of bishops remained spiritual leadership and service in the way of preaching and celebration of the liturgy (Van Dam 2007: 344-345), it is perfectly understandable that the bishop of a large port city like Hippo Regius may have been overwhelmed and frustrated by his split focus. The irony, however, is that it is precisely his involvement in varying aspects of civil life that shaped Augustine’s understanding of people and the world in relation to Scripture, and allowed him to expound his theological views in ways his readership would understand. For example, Uhlade (2007: 3) notes that in the *City of God*, Augustine used a classical text<sup>19</sup> as something of an “intellectual sounding chamber” for his theories of justice, while his experience in the practical application of the legal system and its failings will have brought him to question the

---

<sup>19</sup> Cicero’s *De republica*.

possibilities of justice in this world even with God's own representatives in prominent positions, thus affording him a "practical sounding chamber" for his theories and theological persuasions.

In short, then, bishops were tasked with reconciling the abstract ideals of justice and the often disparate application thereof (Uhlade 2007: 8). As a prominent writer and bishop of his era we would do well to pay attention to the view taken by Augustine if we are to understand justice in the fifth-century context. From our own vantage point, deeply rooted in a [post-]Christian ethical meta-narrative, discrepancies between the application of the law, and both the perception and experience of justice by the man on the street are similarly prevalent. For this reason, there may be real benefit in considering how the founding fathers of common law as we know it in the West (Uhlade 2007: 7 in reference to Lupoi and Wormald) dealt with the questions levelled at them. Of course, as has already been iterated above, the practise of law was not the primary concern of these bishops. At least those, whose thinking and priorities squared with Augustine's, will have seen themselves as servants of God, with the responsibility of expounding the Bible and guiding their flocks in accordance with it. In light of this, and because Augustine's *City of God* is definitively shaped by his reading of the Bible, it makes sense to look at what the Bible has to say about justice.

### **3.2. The Bible on Justice**

Although, as Rist (1999: 11) and others aptly put it, Augustine wrote as a controversialist, it must be remembered that he was – and indeed considered himself to be – first and foremost, an exegete of the Christian Scriptures. That he took his task to heart is evident in a letter to Valerius cited by Van Oort (1991: 46). In this letter, written before he was ordained to the position of bishop, Augustine begs for leave to become better acquainted with the Scriptures and the church's handbook of procedures. Even after taking up office, he continued in the endeavour to understand and expound the Scriptures, and to follow the prescriptions of the church as faithfully as possible.

This concern for intimate acquaintance with Christian source texts is what Rudolph Lorenz (cited in Van Oort 1991: 46) pinpoints as the most important contributing factor in the development of Augustine's thought. Thus Lorenz posits that Augustine was taken from

“neoplatonic introspection” to the realities of church life: the church, the Word of God, the sacraments. Although this is valid, Augustine’s reading of Scripture certainly emphasised platonic elements of the faith as late as the *Confessions* and even the *City of God* (Van Oort 1991: 91). Yet his biblical focus no doubt also took him far beyond the realm of church life, for it will have become the primary shaping force on his post-conversion worldview. He brought to his exegesis the full measure of his Christian belief and so *expected* to find a great deal in the Scriptures, to be changed and moved to praise and to have his readers similarly affected when faced with the meaning of a given text (Williams 2001: 60). Furthermore, as a presbyter and bishop, he was expected to interpret human history and experience through the lens of Christian truth claims and so, his desire to steep his mind in the Scriptures is an understandable one.

When approaching his interpretation both of the events of 410 and human history more generally, in relation to justice, it makes sense to take a moment to reflect on some of what is written on the subject in the Bible. Of course there is always a danger that an investigation of this kind might unearth conclusions not factored into Augustine’s own readings of a given biblical text. Fortunately, Augustine’s extant works are thoroughly soaked in the Christian Scriptures, making it possible with the aid of notable Augustinian scholars to pick up his characteristic emphases. Indeed Williams (2001: 59) points out that Augustine started writing Bible commentary soon after his conversion and continued to do so throughout his life. Of course, none of this guarantees the possibility of an independent systematisation of any biblical concept that is perfectly harmonious with Augustine’s thought.

Unfortunately, except perhaps bearing his generally accepted views in mind and steering clear of trends that are obviously at odds with his thought as one approaches a text, there is little that may be done about the distance between us and Augustine, and the assumptions and biases that accompany each as the Bible is approached. For the intents and purposes of this study, then, the goal is not to present a detailed and airtight theology of Justice against which to measure Augustine’s thought. Rather, because of the appearance of certain biblical principles as he writes about the subject, his convictions about the centrality of God’s eternal law to just living in the City of God, and the resultant weight and colour of his vocabulary as he writes about justice, some of the sources, truth claims and principles applied by Augustine are looked at here in their biblical theological context.



For the sake of brevity and because this excursion into the biblical thought-world is but a bridge to greater understanding of Augustine's own thought, only a few points will be considered. Furthermore, these will be considered in relation to a framework provided by Augustine in *civ. Dei* 22.30, i.e. his division of history into six periods: (i) from Adam to Noah, (ii) from Noah to Abraham, (iii) from Abraham to David, (iv) from David to the Babylonian exile<sup>20</sup>, (v) from the exile to the birth of Christ and (vi) from Christ's first coming to His second.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2.1. Justice Determined by God

In the first period of world history, from the very beginning of the Bible, God is shown to be the author and dispenser of justice, with Genesis 2-3 giving an account of the first instance of the establishment of law, of transgression and of punishment.<sup>22</sup> At the Fall (Gen. 3), a redefinition of moral and legal standards is attempted (Gen. 2: 17 cf. 3: 5-6), which flies in the face of the moral law of God, essentially making the primal human pair guilty of mutiny, thus incurring the penalty of death (Gen. 3: 11-13, 16-18 and especially 3:19; *civ. Dei* 11.1). The pattern is repeated throughout Genesis, with individuals<sup>23</sup>, whole nations and all humankind, in the case of the Great Deluge<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, as one moves through the stages of

---

<sup>20</sup> The Old Testament historical and prophetic books record the exiles of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC (2 Kings 17) by the Assyrians, and then the Southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BC (2 Kings 23:36-25:21) by the Babylonians, after their kings "do evil in the sight of the LORD". The exile and the destruction of the temple are presented as the penalty for disdaining God's rule and pursuing earthly politics and idolatry.

<sup>21</sup> See also Van Oort (1991: 94), who, drawing on Augustine's earlier works, posits that Augustine had had this arrangement in mind for a long time.

<sup>22</sup> God creates everything and puts boundaries for right living in place (Gen. 2). Adam and Eve grasp at God's authority to know (and determine) good and evil (Gen. 3:4) and, along with the serpent – the tempter and catalyst to their rebellion – are punished (Gen. 3:14-24). They are sentenced to hard labour, are exiled from Eden and are denied access to the tree of life and immortality.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Cain: Gen. 4 records how Cain showed contempt for God and His word, by ignoring God's admonishments and determining to end his brother's life (Gen. 4:2-8). As in Eden, the transgression is met with punishment, this time, of restlessness and fruitless labour (Gen. 4:10-16).

<sup>24</sup> The well-known accounts of the Great Deluge (Gen. 6:5-8:19) and of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18: 19-19: 29) are better-known examples in which God judged the wickedness of humankind to have spiralled beyond redemption and pronounced the judgement He deemed fitting to their crimes.

human history according to Augustine, the establishment of law and the pattern of transgression and punishment are key factors.<sup>25</sup>

This pattern of dealing out punishment for transgression, however, is not the only sense in which the Bible uses the language of judgement; it should not even be considered to be its primary meaning. By disregarding God's rule, essentially individuals and nations are shown to have disregarded God's judgement, as the verb often used by biblical writers, translated in terms of judgement, is "to rule/govern" and in so doing, to restore justice where it has been lost (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 745). All other functions of God's judgment flow out of this and in Augustine's *City of God*, it is submission to and rejection of God's rule/judgement that – in a legal sense – distinguish the two cities from one another (*civ. Dei* 14.3).<sup>26</sup> For this reason, the nature of justice as determined by God will be the primary focus of this chapter.

Returning to the examples given of human transgression against God's primary judgement, actual guilt is only one aspect of human culpability before God the law-giver and judge. Indeed, a much-debated doctrine is that of original sin or, as Grudem (1994: 496) has helpfully termed it, "inherited corruption". According to this doctrine, the generations succeeding Adam and Eve share in a now-perverted nature (Ps. 51: 5; Eph. 2: 3; *civ. Dei* 14.1). For Augustine, this corruption is rooted in an understanding of the Genesis account as historical, and that the corrupt nature is passed down through the generations succeeding Adam *biologically* (Rigby 1999: 611). Furthermore, as Rigby (1999: 610) reads Augustine's extensive writing on the subject, he notes that Original Sin (inherited corruption) is bound up with pride and the hatred of God. These two concepts, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 below, are central to understanding the City of Man and the justice of God and His judgements, according to Augustine.

In addition to inherited *corruption* and closely related to it<sup>27</sup>, biblical teaching regarding human failure to conform to the moral law of God also includes a doctrine of inherited *guilt*,

---

<sup>25</sup> At every stage, God (re-)establishes order, law or covenant, often in reaction to wilful human failure to uphold His standards. As this thesis will show, Augustine sees only the coming of Christ and His return at the end of time as the final and definitive resolution of the cycle.

<sup>26</sup> This is further discussed in 4.1.1. below.

<sup>27</sup> So closely related are these notions of inherited corruption and imputed guilt, that Augustine does not seem to separate it. Indeed, in *civ. Dei* 14.1, it seems that it is corrupt human nature that incurs God's wrath and punishment. This reading is objectionable, however, for the corruption of human nature is essentially the explanation given by Augustine for the hostile stance of humankind towards

or more accurately, imputed guilt. According to this doctrine, the guilt incurred by Adam has been transferred by God to all who come after Adam. This is the natural implication of the notion that God “regards the human race as an organic whole, a unity, represented by Adam as its head” (Grudem 1994: 495-496; Rom. 5: 12, 18-19a).

Whether both or only one of these explanations for the repeated failure of humankind to attain to God’s standard of justice is accepted, all are guilty. Thus, according to the precedent of Genesis 3, all deserve the penalty of a frustrated existence<sup>28</sup> and mortality; a penalty which God’s justice demands.

However, God’s role as the supreme judicial authority is not so one-dimensional that He only deals out punishment. He is also presented as rewarding right (just) character and conduct with blessing. Indeed this principle is foundational to Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities<sup>29</sup> and lay at the heart of the outcry from Christians in the wake of Rome’s sacking.

This expression of God’s justice brings us to another aspect of His character, namely His mercy. In light of the doctrines of imputed guilt and inherited corruption, all humankind finds itself at the mercy of God and, by rights, nobody deserves blessing. When it is said that God will have mercy on the pure and upright, or give grace to the humble, it must not be forgotten that mercy (or grace), by its very nature, cannot be earned; mercy presupposes punishable transgression or some other form of vulnerability and dependence on another’s will. That mercy is synonymous with the Lord as He revealed himself to Moses, is the cornerstone of the faith of the Jews and, more importantly to this discussion, to Christianity, the faith which Augustine sought to defend. It is fair to say that the rest of the Bible’s stance on God’s merciful character is rooted in the well-known account of God’s revelation of Himself to Moses at Sinai:

---

God and specific “instances” of the rejection of God’s law and judgement (rule). Yet, all humankind is held legally responsible for Adam’s transgression, for all share in the penalty of death.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Rom. 8:18-22 describes creation as in the bonds of frustration and “futility”, “groaning together in the pains of childbirth”. This is the state into which it was thrown when Adam sinned (Gen. 3:17-19; Schreiner 2008: 2171).

<sup>29</sup> From the very outset (*civ. Dei* preface), Augustine states his belief in the principle that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. This reference to Prov. 3:34 (also Jas 4:6 and 1 Pet. 5:5) appears numerous times throughout the *City of God*.

*And [God] said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Ex. 33:19)*

*<sup>6</sup>The LORD passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation. (Ex. 34:6-7)*

The excerpt from Exodus 33 shows that God determines the extent of his mercy as he pleases; God determines the bounds of justice. That this is not a hint at precariousness is seen in Exodus 34, where God's mercy is shown to be bound to his *steadfast* love and faithfulness (v. 6). In addition, this steadfast love and mercy are not incongruous with the employment of the legal currency explained above.

It may be asked, however, "How do these two aspects of God's character co-exist in the Bible? How is it that God is able to show mercy to those who would be delivered into the hands of their inherited sinful nature, without violating His own standards of justice?" Although it may seem a redundant turn in light of the assertion that God is the very author of justice, the question will become important to this thesis if Augustine, famed for presenting God as Love, is to be proved successful in defending God's justice. One way of answering this question, is to turn to the rest of the events at Sinai and then to the New Testament, i.e. to the giving of the Mosaic Law – God's formal legal code – and to the Incarnation and work of Christ<sup>30</sup>.

In their overview of possible models with which to read and understand biblical soteriology, Clifford and Anatolios (2005: 763) categorise Augustine as holding to a "sapiential" model. Essentially, this soteriological model – as well as their "prophetic" and "liturgical" models –

---

<sup>30</sup> "The incarnation and work of Christ" is used here as shorthand for the biblical interpretation of the canonical accounts of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection for the rest of this section. One of the plainest summaries is 1 Tim. 1:15: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners [...]." The workings of this claim are manifold, but include the imputation of human sin to Jesus, who was perfectly just – the natural implication of His divinity (see John 1:1-5, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13) – but incurred penalty of death as a result (Is. 53:5), as well as the subsequent imputation of Christ's justice (righteousness) to corrupt humans.

seek to show certain biblical patterns in God's salvific work (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 740-741). The sapiential model specifically emphasises the knowledge of God by revelation of some sort, be it through the making of a covenant, the giving of law, or personification or incarnation (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 763). Wisdom in biblical literature, most especially in the Old Testament, is decidedly practical, enabling one to please God, on account of it being a gift from God to that end (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 760). Indeed knowledge of God (illumination) is tantamount to salvation (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 739 and 763).

Both Christ and the Law give content to what biblical Wisdom literature calls the "fear of the LORD", which is essentially submission to God's kingship. They may be understood as the vehicles of God's mercy, for they are the Old and New Testament revelation of His standard of righteousness and what it takes to attain it (Deut. 6:24-25; Rom. 3:24-25). In the Law and in Christ, God reveals the truth about human sinfulness, instead of allowing humanity to wallow in damning pride (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 765). The means by which a transgressor grasps hold of righteousness, then, is by faith (Rom. 3:21-31). Indeed, the writer of the book of Hebrews states that the faith that has always made God's people righteous – even before the giving of the Law, in the case of Abraham (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3) and the other patriarchs – also helps them to understand God's Word and works, and helps them to live rightly (Heb. 11-12:2). In return, the faithful wo/man is restored to blamelessness, and enjoys God's forgiveness (mercy), blessing, unswerving love and faithfulness in this life (Prov. 3:5-6; Hos. 14; 2 Sam. 22:21-31).

Although Augustine affirms all of this throughout the *City of God*, he is also radical in his Christocentric hermeneutic and so, with Christ as the manifestation of wisdom, it is by faith in Christ or the mystery of His incarnation that people are saved to become the people of God, both in the historical periods before and after the Incarnation (*civ. Dei* 10.25). Prior revelation (e.g. in the Law) simply pointed ahead to God's self-presentation in Christ, who was to present the fact of human sinfulness in a definitively saving way (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 765).

In the final analysis, a biblical stance of God as the author of justice and its outworking starts, for Augustine, with the Gen. 1-2 account of Creation. God's judgement (rule) is legitimated by His authorship. However, starting with the primal human pair, humankind rebelled against God's rule, incurring guilt both by the corruption of human nature and by the imputation of guilt by God. The penalty for this rebellion is death and a frustrated earthly existence. As the

biblical narrative is followed, the possibility of justification within God's legal system is revealed. The principle is that of God punishing wrongdoing (injustices) and rewarding just conduct, with the Mosaic Law and the Incarnation and work of Christ giving content to life acceptable to God.

The life accepted by God as just and so earning His pardon and reward, according to the elucidating work of Clifford and Anatolios (2005), may be described in terms of a model of salvation emphasising Wisdom. As such, Augustine's own interpretation of Christian salvation may be looked at and described in terms of this sapiential model. According to this model, justification is made possible, ultimately, by God's gracious (merciful) revelation of His wisdom and Himself in Christ. This mercy is meant to be taken hold of by faith.

Although the principle of punishment for wrongdoing and reward for just conduct was undoubtedly accepted by Augustine's pagan detractors as an expression of the classical model of justice as giving each their due, the bounds set by God and His condition for justification were a stumbling block for them. At a most basic and obvious level, this is because it leaves them in the camp of the damned. Even if this implication were accepted by the pagans – as was undoubtedly Augustine's hope – the step of faith was an enormous obstacle. In 2.1.2 above, it was stated that sophisticated Platonism pervaded the philosophical landscape. According to this system, God is entirely other and unknowable, while knowledge of the *Nous* (which encompasses Reason/*logos* and Wisdom) is knowable by the souls to which it gave rise. Wisdom is completely abstract, and considered by Platonists to be on a plane much higher than profane humanity. That God should have “stooped” to reveal both Wisdom and Himself through Christ's Incarnation was unthinkable to Augustine's Platonic opponents (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 763-764). Nevertheless, Augustine argues for the verity of his worldview using every rhetorical tool at his disposal, including a common understanding of what justice ought to be.

One way of winning over his opponents was to show them what the positive, practical implications of this Christian perspective might be. This he does in the *City of God*, as will be discussed in 4.2.1.ii below. The following section (3.2.2) offers some technical background on what Augustine has to say in the final books of the *City of God*.

### 3.2.2. Biblical Justice in Action

When considering the practical implications for a view of justice like the one explored above, the temptation may be to look at descriptions of praiseworthy actions or to extract principles from these. A study of that kind would, however, require tomes of its own, not least because of the diversity of cultures in the Bible itself. A viable alternative is to look at the words used by biblical writers to describe just living and conduct, particularly because of the cultural weight and nuances acquired by words as they are used.

Unfortunately, the nuances are often lost in translation. For this very reason, it was Augustine's view that, whenever possible, one ought to study texts in the original languages to gain the best possible, unmediated understanding of a given text (Williams 2001: 68). This is sensible advice that has the potential for yielding interesting results. This section, therefore, will begin with a look at two important words used to express aspects of justice in Old Testament ethics, viz. *mishpat* and *tzadeqah*<sup>31</sup>, in order to expand on what has been discovered thus far. Of course, this course of action is somewhat problematic, as Augustine did not know any Hebrew and knew Scripture chiefly in Latin (Williams 2001: 70n8). Despite the discrepancy between Augustine's precept and practice, however, the principle is a sound one and will be taken seriously here.

Old Testament scholars point out that the first word, *mishpat*, occurs over 200 times in its various forms throughout the Old Testament (Keller 2010: 3), indicating that it is a central concept for understanding the biblical view on justice. A concept that is often paired with justice (*mishpat*) in Scripture is that of righteousness, rectitude or "being just" (*tzadeqah*). In fact the two are so narrowly related that it is difficult to draw sharp distinction between them. *Mishpat* is most often translated as "justice" in the forensic, retributive (rectifying)<sup>32</sup> sense and is, as such, a means to maintaining a state of a society<sup>33</sup> (Wolterstorff 2008: 73-74; Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 745). It also has a distributive thrust (Wolterstorff 2008: 69-70)

---

<sup>31</sup> Septuagint and New Testament equivalents: *krisis* and *dikaion* respectively, although translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek did not necessarily hold so rigidly to these (Wolterstorff 2008: 112). For the sake of brevity, it has been decided to concentrate almost solely on discussions regarding the Hebrew, and so get to grips with concepts themselves, by means of analysis of chosen representative signifiers.

<sup>32</sup> Expressed as juridical judgements.

<sup>33</sup> What Wolterstorff (2008) terms "primary justice" throughout his book, *Justice: rights and wrongs*.

and so, one might say that it denotes equitable treatment under the law regardless of individual social standing (e.g. Lev. 24: 22<sup>34</sup>). In addition, *mishpat* includes giving each her/his due, with the latter sense being used both of the wage due to the Levite priests paid by the other tribes (Deut. 18: 3), and of the care due to the vulnerable (Prov. 31: 9) (Keller 2010: 3-4; Wolterstorff 2008: 73).

This way of life was meant to maintain right relationships and order. The notion of “being just” or “being righteous” in this way is what is known as *tzadeqah* (Motyer 1993: 471). Scholars, such as Oliver O’Donovan and Walter Brueggemann<sup>35</sup> (cited in Wolterstorff 2008: 68-78), differ on which aspect ought to be emphasized, but it is not disputed that the faithful should strive toward maintaining a just state of affairs, through just distribution of property (ensuring that individuals and groups are given their due, that their needs are met), and through the rectification of breakdowns in justice (retribution for wrongdoing).

Christopher Wright has expressed this biblical justice in terms of *mishpat* being that which “needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with *tzadeqah*” (cited in Keller, 2010: 195n27). These ideals, in turn, reveal something of the character of the God who was shown in the previous section to determine justice and its bounds and expression. In this line, it may be said that the God of the Bible consistently values the equitable treatment of people, both with regard to their needs being met and under the law, and demands this also of His people (Deut. 1:16-17; Jas 2:1-13). The display of justice thus becomes a matter both of obedience and emulating God’s character.

---

<sup>34</sup> Here, Israel is exhorted to have the same *mishpat* (“rule of Law”) for the foreigner and the native.

<sup>35</sup> O’ Donovan thinks of *mishpat* primarily as “judicial activity” (rectifying or retributive justice) as opposed to a state of affairs, in which property is justly distributed (what Wolterstorff calls “primary justice” throughout his book). The central thesis of O’Donovan’s *The Desire of the Nations* is discussed by Wolterstorff as the sharpest challenge to his own interpretation of the Old Testament writers on justice (Wolterstorff 2008: 68-75). Wolterstorff affirms O’Donovan, but would perhaps play down his emphasis on action somewhat, in favour of justice defined in terms of rights. Brueggemann, also discussed by Wolterstorff (2008: 77-78), is represented as ‘over-emphasising’ the converse aspect of Old Testament justice. Wolterstorff (2008: 78) quotes Brueggemann: “[...] both distributive justice and retributive justice can find warrant in the text of Israel, [but...] it seems unambiguous... that in Israel’s core texts related to the Mosaic revolution, Yahwism is a practice of distributive justice.” This is softened by Wolterstorff, whose inclusive approach has been opted for here.



In conclusion, God's justice and right judgement, although rightly understood in terms of transgression and punishment, as presented in Chapter 3.2.1 above, cannot be confined to mental activity or the legal sphere. Dispensing this justice is two-fold, as He establishes His chosen order (just order) in the world and intervenes in unjust situations, bringing them back in line with His divine will (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 745).

This last, practical aspect of biblical jurisprudence is of critical importance to Augustine's arguments in the *City of God*. Equitable treatment of all members of society was an ideal accentuated in the secular judicial code of Rome. Indeed, as Augustine argues his case for Christianity, he takes it as an undisputed given that justice is to "give to each his due" (*civ. Dei* 19.4). Moreover, he expects his readers to be grieved by breakdowns in this process, regardless of their religious confession.

In the following chapter, it will be shown that Augustine values striving after *mishpat* and perfect *tzadeqah* within the bounds of justice set by God higher than keeping earthly laws for their own sake. This he does by showing up faults in the most basic fibres of secular society and its morality, while expounding his understanding of the "superior way" of pledging allegiance to the truly just City of God.

## Chapter 4: Justice and the *City of God*

### 4.1. The City of God

Before any attempt can be made to present Augustine's understanding of the concept of justice as expressed in the *City of God*, it is necessary to consider this, the definitive work of his maturity, more generally.

First, there is the question of how to handle the length and nature of the work. As noted in chapter 1.2 above, the *City of God* ought not to be seen as a purely occasional work. For although Augustine expressly says that with it he intends to answer the adversaries of the church, he had long busied himself with the theory of the two cities. This is clear from the fact that it touches on many more issues than will have been necessary to answer the accusations of the detractors mentioned by him in the preface to the *City of God*. Regarding the role of the events of 410, J-C. Guy (cited by Van Oort 1991: 86n379) writes that the fateful day was by no means the cause, but rather the opportunity for Augustine's long-pondered reflections to come to the fore. This has led many commentators, such as Van Oort (1991: 88), to assert that the *City of God* be seen as a compendium of Augustine's most developed thought. Whether or not one chooses to accept this position, it does highlight the importance of narrowing one's focus if anything meaningful is to be said within the constraints of length in a thesis of this kind. The following discussion, therefore, will refer mainly to Books 19-22, with reference to excerpts from the rest of the work and a few of his other writings. Of course, while narrowing the focus of the discussion, it is essential that the place of Books 19-22 within the rest of the work – i.e. its place in the argument as a whole – be understood. Thus, following explanatory comments made by Augustine himself in his *Retractationes* (cited in Evans 2003: xxxiii) and a letter to the layman Firmus<sup>36</sup>, a breakdown of the *City of God* now follows.

#### 4.1.1. Brief outline of Contents

The *City of God* may be divided into two principle parts, with the first part of the work comprising Books 1-10 and the second, Books 11-22. In the first part, Augustine deals with the opinions of his counterparts. He does this using reports of certain events from Rome's

---

<sup>36</sup> First noted by Dom C. Lambot and published in 1939 (Bettenson 2003: lxvi).

sacking and other incidents in Roman history and mythology<sup>37</sup> (Books 1, 3, 5, 10), and referring to preeminent figures, thinkers and schools of philosophy (Books 2, 4, 6, 8-10), some of which have been discussed above.

One feature of this section, and one that is important throughout this defence of the faith, is that Augustine uses that which might be interpreted as the pagan equivalents of the basic presuppositions of his own worldview as his point of departure. Thus, where the Christians held the God of the Bible to be the Creator and Sustainer/Helper of creation – something implied throughout this first section, but said explicitly in *civ. Dei* 14.27 – Augustine investigates the pagan belief in the gods' shared responsibility for the upkeep of different parts of creation (Books 4, 6 and 7). This he does with a view to building a strong defence in the face of the accusations of his opponents. In other words, in order to answer the charge that the forced worship of the Christian God at official level, to the detriment of pagan religion, was responsible for the sacking of Rome, he paints a picture of Roman religion and morality, and challenges it at a level related to that which is familiar to him.

With a mind steeped in his own Christian ideas, he looks intently at the pagan worldview, and points out what he considers to be logical inconsistencies or cracks, as it were, in their foundational beliefs. Staying with the example given above, one of the cracks pointed out by Augustine, is the idea that every aspect of the human experience and condition – from the changing of the seasons, to childbirth and even warfare – is governed both by Jupiter, king of the gods, and lesser deities. A significant part of his argument rests on this hierarchical organisation of late antique pagan divinity that some recent scholarship has read as a form of monotheism<sup>38</sup> with Jupiter at the helm.<sup>39</sup> The sheer number of gods governed by Jupiter, he

---

<sup>37</sup> The term 'mythology' is used for the sake of convenience and brevity, as the line between historical truth and myth was decidedly less clear than our post-Renaissance sensitivities might have it. This is evident even in the way Augustine treats events that have slipped beyond the realm of legend and into myth (e.g. the founding of Rome, which Augustine discusses with reference to the stories of Romulus and Remus, as well as Aeneas). That is not to say necessarily that Augustine and/or his contemporaries considered those things which 'ought' to be treated as myth to be true. Instead, the distinction between known history and 'pre-history' was unimportant. Within the context of Augustine's project, this is probably because Augustine was more concerned with his opponents' psychology and worldview than with the events themselves.

<sup>38</sup> Introducing a collection of essays presenting monotheism as a central tenet of Pagan religion during the fourth and fifth centuries, Stephen Mitchell and Peter van Nuffelen (2010: 1) redefine monotheism as "belief in the powers of a unique, supreme divinity, although not necessarily to the exclusion of other gods." As helpful as this is for understanding the nature of fourth- and fifth-century Pagan

argues, renders certain deities superfluous, due to the overlapping of some gods' jurisdictions. In turn, this results in confusion within the divine hierarchy, with some deities even surpassing their king in responsibility and greatness (*civ. Dei* 4.10). Of course, although this demonstrates something of Augustine's important apologetic tactic very clearly, it is not the only issue which Augustine handles in this fashion, even in this first section of the *City of God*. That Augustine's references to the gods act as a rhetorical device can hardly be doubted for, as Khalos (2010: 169) notes, many of the bizarre, ancient, minor gods taken by Augustine from Varro's writings, will scarcely have been known to the average fifth-century Roman pagan. Nevertheless, these suited Augustine's purpose of dismantling philosophical support for pagan polytheism (see Chapter 2.1.2), by drawing out the extreme logical consequences of hierarchical organisation of an extensive pantheon, and also set the tone for his dealings with other aspects of the faith and accusations levelled by his interlocutors.

In the second part of the *City of God* (Books 11-22), Augustine develops his own 'tale of two cities': the City of Man and the City of God. He does this by looking at three things, namely the origins of the two cities (Books 11-14), the development of each city (Books 15-18) and their predestined ends (Books 19-22).

Very important, is that the term "city" should not be understood here in the manner which most political philosophers before and after Augustine<sup>40</sup> have seen it, for neither "city" is

---

theology and its harmonisation with (Neo-) Platonism, and as much as it highlights interesting aspects of the polemic between Christianity and Paganism, this redefinition does away with helpful categories (tools), making meaningful discussion of the confrontation between faith traditions at the time unnecessarily complex (Gasparro 2010: 34-35).

<sup>39</sup> This hierarchy, though not present in earlier – e.g. Homeric – Pagan theology, was embedded in late antique religious understanding, so that divinities ruling in the heavenly realms were necessarily more important than those designated to positions on earth and in the Underworld (Cerutti 2010: 17). Cerutti (2010: 18) describes the hierarchical arrangement of the gods and states that this kind of scheme expresses "not the unity of the divine but rather the uniqueness of the sum of the divine, the result of extracting the one from the many, or, if one prefers, of the elevation of the one above the many. Thus the many gods are not denied as in a completely monotheistic reckoning, but are validated in inferior positions and given the charge of fulfilling compartmentalised roles in mediating between the divine and human levels."

<sup>40</sup> This does not assume, of course, that Augustine should be seen as a political philosopher at all. As Weithman (2001: 234) helpfully points out, it is unlikely that Augustine thought political philosophy to be a discipline in its own right, to be distinguished from other areas of philosophy or of political enquiry. This is evident in the fact that although he wrote much regarding politics, his remarks almost always come to a conclusion that neither he nor we would regard as philosophical. As he treated of

purely physical. Instead Augustine thinks on a more cosmic scale, with the cities in question characterised not by location, economy, walls and the like, but rather by the relation of the wo/men and angels of which they are comprised, to God.<sup>41</sup> Augustine writes that, at the foundation of the City of God, angels were created by God as mutable beings endowed with free-will, who employed their will to choose to honour and serve God, thus fulfilling the role for which they were created (*civ. Dei* 12.6). There was another group of angels, however, which fell and so foreshadowed the path of man and founded the other city. These angels, led by Lucifer, are described as having succumbed to pride and rebelled against God (*civ. Dei* 11.33, 12.1, 12.8). Thus began the perversion of good nature – of God’s perfect design – and this perversion is, for Augustine, the very essence of evil (*civ. Dei* 12.3, 19.13). Following the pattern established by Lucifer and his guerrilla angels, the first human beings also chose to rebel against God, thus asserting their hostile independence from Him. At the heart of this rebellion, once more, is pride. This pride is, according to Augustine (*civ. Dei* 11.13) the very beginning of all sin and the vilest perversion of all, for it is the disordered or perverted “desire to replace God with oneself” (Cavadini 1999: 679).

Preaching in 411, Augustine expressed his views most vividly, saying,

*Pride is [...] the origin and cause of all sins. It is what cast down an angel and made him the devil. Pride was the cup which on being cast down he gave the Man [...] and persuaded him to ignore the law of God, and enjoy his very own power. And how did he persuade him? ‘If you eat,’ he said, ‘you will be like gods.’<sup>42</sup> He had been made man; he wished to be God. (s. 340A.1 cited in Cavadini 1999: 680).*

And in the *City of God* (*civ. Dei* 14.13) he further explains this perverted will and rejection of God as a type of misdirected love. For although humankind was created with and for love of God as the “higher changeless Good” (*civ. Dei* 14.13), all descendents of Adam came to be characterised by self-love instead. Indeed, the great difference “that sunders the two cities” of which Augustine writes, is that in the City of God “love of God is given first place”, while the Earthly City is built on and characterised by love of self (*civ. Dei* 14.13). This distinction, it should soon become clear, is vital for an adequate understanding of justice in the *City of*

---

political matters, he drew extensively on ethics, the philosophy of history, psychology and theology, thus leaving only a loose-jointed set of political views, which his readers are left to systematise.

<sup>41</sup> For an elucidating discussion of the concept of *civitas*, see Van Oort 1991: 102-108.

<sup>42</sup> Gen. 3:5.

*God*, as is some understanding of what Augustine means when he writes about love in this context.

Weithman (2001: 235-236) points out that the loves of which Augustine speaks in this context are not to be understood only as those “transient motives which explain isolated actions” or certain “engrained traits of character that motivate habitual action”, but also as the most “fundamental orientations of the members of the two cities.” It is the latter definition which is most important to this part of the discussion. In other words, where members of the City of God are fundamentally oriented toward God, the members of the Earthly City turn inward first, and subjugate all else, including God, to themselves. At the outset of an elucidating essay, Eugene TeSelle (1993: 88-89) links these properly directed loves to what he identifies as Augustine’s extension of the *cuique* (“to each”) in the classic definition of justice<sup>43</sup>, to include God. Justice is thereby constituted by giving God His due, by loving Him and loving all else in due proportion to Him.

With reference to *On Christian Doctrine* (1:31), Weithman (2001: 235) notes that Augustine also differentiates between two ways of loving, i.e. that of loving something as means to an end – “use” – and that of loving something for its own sake – “enjoyment” – because it is able to give true happiness and fulfilment. Taking into account what has been said regarding humankind having been created for love of God, along with his famous confession, “our hearts find no peace until they rest in You” (*Conf.* 1.1. trans. Pine-Coffin 1961: 21<sup>44</sup>), it must be concluded that Augustine had in mind that only God is to be loved for His own sake. Nothing else is able to confer on humankind the happiness and contentment found in loving God. To say, therefore, that the Earthly City is built on misdirected (disordered) love is to say, simultaneously, that the members of the Earthly City do not love (“enjoy”) God as they

---

<sup>43</sup>A reference to Justinian’s definition of giving to each her/his rights, due or own (“*suum cuique tribuere*”). Refer to 3.1.1. above for more extensive discussion of this definition, and to n15 for the original Latin, taken from Justinian’s *Digest* 1.1.10.

<sup>44</sup> Since Pine-Coffin’s 1961 translation, a number of updated and improved English translations have appeared. Notable versions include the critically acclaimed offerings by Maria Boulding (1997) and Henry Chadwick (2009). The translation of *inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*, rendered by Pine-Coffin as “our hearts find no peace until they rest in You,” has been chosen on account of his translation of *inquieta*, *inquietus*, as finding no *peace*. This makes the continuity of Augustine’s thought regarding the opposition between peace/rest and disquiet (restlessness or the absence of peace) more explicit. The connection is relevant, as the *Confessions* and *City of God* both tell of the journey from a state of restlessness to one of eternal peace with God, and view [wilful] stagnation in the former state as a vain existence.

ought, but seek the fulfilment He ought to bring elsewhere, i.e. within themselves and in other created things. This is where the City of Man has its roots, how it has always functioned, and is precisely what will cause its end.

The origin of the City of God, however, is somewhat more difficult to pinpoint. It has, as its foundation, the immutable will of God (*civ. Dei* 22.2), the adherence of angels to their ‘good’ (God-given) nature (*civ. Dei* 22.1), and in the case of humankind, the faith of the [true] church in Christ Jesus as God (*civ. Dei* 22.6). Yet if Augustine’s account of the inheritable nature of Original Sin, the perversion of the human will, and the resultant stance of enmity with God<sup>45</sup> is accepted, how is it that anyone is able to turn to God in faith? How is it that God was able to establish a city characterised by love of Him, when all people are naturally oriented away from Him? For Augustine, this is possible only through God’s grace (*civ. Dei* 22.22). In line with what Clifford and Anatolios (2005: 763-767) termed the sapiential model of Christian soteriology and attributed to Augustine<sup>46</sup>, TeSelle (1993: 89) vividly describes the process as “presided over by grace, the love of God going forth to illumine the minds and inflame the wills, first of the angels, then of the human family.”

As Augustine traces the unfolding of God’s eternal plan to call a people to himself, he chronicles God’s election of wo/men for His city, starting with Abel and tracing the development of the city through Noah, the patriarchs, Israel, Judah, the prophets, and to the church<sup>47</sup>, who attain Heavenly citizenship through Christ (Books 15-18)<sup>48</sup>. It is interesting to note Augustine’s effort to play up the humanity and imperfection of the biblical figures he discusses alongside the sovereignty of God. He does this by repeatedly coming back to the

---

<sup>45</sup> See 3.2.1 above, where the biblical framework drawn on by Augustine is discussed.

<sup>46</sup> This model and Augustine’s categorisation under its label is briefly discussed under 3.2 above.

<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that although Augustine holds a high view of the church, he does acknowledge that there is a mixture of both the elect and reprobate in the visible church (*civ. Dei* 18.49). Ultimately, the elect will only be revealed in full with the final establishment of the City of God, at the end of this age (*civ. Dei* 22).

<sup>48</sup> That he also occupies himself with numerous calculations based on biblical accounts (including accounting for the long lives of the antediluvians and speculation about the age of the earth) and looks into the existence of monsters/giants in the Old Testament is, admittedly, very interesting. These issues, however, fall outside of the scope of this thesis. The very same applies to Augustine’s allegorical readings of Old Testament narrative – at least at this stage of the discussion – and so, these issues are not mentioned or investigated here.

separation of the “children of grace” and the “children of the flesh” (*civ. Dei* 15.3), as another way of referring to the citizens of the Heavenly City and the City of Man respectively.

Another feature of these chapters<sup>49</sup> of the *City of God* is how readily and fluidly Augustine relates the principles distilled from his accounts of the ancient biblical figures back to the Christian era in which he stands, often through reference to New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament passages. This is an indication of the fact that Augustine is always aware of his readership as he writes, and his agenda is clear, i.e. to persuade his detractors that his proposed alternative to life in the Earthly City holds far more merit than any other worldview or religion. By regularly mentioning Christ as the founder of God’s city due to his status as the vehicle of grace, moreover, he is also engaged in an evangelistic effort. In other words, Augustine lays bare the claims of the Christian gospel, in the hope that his readers will respond in faith and so enjoy the kind of felicity offered exclusively to citizens of the Heavenly City.

The preceding chapters of this thesis have shown, however, that even with the City of God manifest on earth, the injustice that so naturally flows out of the pride of the City of Man was still rife, and the cause of much woe even within the church<sup>50</sup>. How does Augustine address this state of affairs? Books 19-22 provide his answer to questions flowing from observations of injustice in a Christian era, for in them he describes the destiny of the two cities. As we shall see later on, he claims that the future eradication of injustice and the establishment of God’s perfect, eternal justice really ought to inform the beliefs, attitudes and actions of people in the present age. This eschatological perspective, it will be contended throughout the

---

<sup>49</sup> In fact this is characteristic of the entire work. The fact that this section (Books 15-18) and the preceding section (Books 11-14) deal mainly with events and figures rooted in contexts far-removed from Augustine’s interlocutors and therefore, from the stated aims of the *City of God*, make it all the more noticeable.

<sup>50</sup> The redeemed have never been exempt from temporal ills. Furthermore, North African Christians were divided, despite the differences between Catholic and Donatist Christians not being noticeable at the level of core-doctrine. Indeed Donatists were welcomed into the orthodox fold without rebaptism, and were able to retain their ranks in church leadership. What set Donatists apart – besides the politics that first split them from the Roman church – was a hyper-realised eschatology, by which they saw the church as needing to be the pure and spotless bride of Christ now, instead of being presented to Him as such at the final judgement. This meant that they put greater emphasis on ritual purity (Miles 2008: 80-81). Textual evidence (e.g. Augustine’s *ep. 133* and *134*) makes it clear that relations between these two groups were often strained and sometimes erupted into physical violence.



rest of this thesis, is most important for an accurate understanding of Augustine's thoughts on justice.

From the descriptions above, a few things may be noted concerning the section of the *City of God* that will be drawn on most in the remainder of this chapter:

First, it is found in the part of the work that does not have as its principal aim a direct answer to the main accusations mentioned at the beginning of Book 1. In this section, Augustine expounds his cosmic urban theology, his tale of two cities. Furthermore, it is found in the specifically eschatological section of the work, so that what is said about justice is tied to its own place in the predestined end of the two cities (i.e. its ultimate fulfilment at the end of this age and the beginning of Eternity).

Of course, as one reads through Books 19-22, it is clear that Augustine also makes reference to mankind's striving toward justice and peace, and breakdowns in justice in this age. That God's eternal plan is key to interpreting injustices perpetrated in this age is not surprising. It must not be forgotten that Augustine writes as a Christian controversialist, engaged in conversation with his direct interlocutors, his earlier self, and other voices of his age (Coleman 2000: 313). It is implausible therefore, to imagine that Augustine will have seen his roles as a pastor-teacher, evangelist, apologist and writer as divorced from one another, or that he was ever not at work in any of these fields, even as he penned the last books of *City of God*. Augustine will have had the perspectives, questions and objections of *all* to whom he ministered<sup>51</sup> in mind as he decided what to include in his work.

The *City of God* will, therefore, be treated as *one* project throughout this chapter, with the two principal sections seen as the two parts of Augustine's apologetic-evangelistic-pastoral goals. Having put forth the basic assumptions of his opponents and worked to chip away at them along the way in Books 1-10, Augustine is in a good position to put forward his case for Christianity. This is the project of the second part, even as he answers the distressed calls of the people, who saw their empire being overrun by barbarians, and who were faced with and lived out the hostile relations between pagans and Christians. The refrain which, as we shall

---

<sup>51</sup> This use of the term 'minister' falls within the holistic view taken of Augustine's work, and which seems to flow most naturally from his patristic Christian worldview. In other words, Augustine will have seen himself – primarily – as a servant ("minister") of God and the gospel. Therefore, he will have viewed those he pastored, taught, evangelised, argued with and wrote for, as recipients of some service ("ministry") in line with his service to God.

see, rings out continually as he addresses the concerns of his readers, is that this troubled world is only temporary, whereas the City of God will stand forever.

This reflects the fact that one ought always to expect Augustine's work to be grounded in biblical principles and truth claims, as he has been shown to ground his arguments in these. This includes his views on justice as it manifests itself now and as it will be established in the City of God. Expressed somewhat differently, it will be asked what justice looks like within the Augustinian brand of Christian theism, and what its place in his apologetic enterprise might be, i.e. what it is that Augustine believed an understanding of God's justice could offer a disgruntled, fluid and diverse society.

## 4.2. Exploration of the Theme of Justice

### 4.2.1. Justice and the Supreme Good

Returning to the question posed at the outset of this thesis now, we turn to explore an important idea that shaped Augustine's conception of justice and its functioning in the two cities. As he launches into the final section of the *City of God*, he sets his own discussion within the context of the already ongoing philosophical conversation about the Supreme Good and Evil<sup>52</sup>, i.e. those things which, in the final analysis, are respectively desired and shunned for their own sakes (*civ. Dei* 19.1). This ought not to be confused with what was discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, in which the two cities discussed by Augustine were said to be distinguished by what they love ("enjoy") for its own sake. Rather, it ought to be seen as an expression of each city's *prime reality*, a term used by James Sire (2009: 22) to denote that which sets the boundaries for all other parts of a given worldview<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>52</sup> Throughout the *City of God*, as translated by Bettenson (2003), the terms "Supreme Good" and "Supreme Evil" are used interchangeably. For the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion, this concept will only be referred to as the "Supreme Good". Similarly, "Supreme Evil" / "Supreme Evil" will be referred to only as the "Supreme Evil".

<sup>53</sup> Worldview is understood here in terms expressed by James Sire (2009: 20), as "*a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which one holds (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which one lives and moves and has one's being.*" As Sire (2009: 18, 19n4) notes, however, worldview analysis has potential for overemphasis of the intellectual cum abstract nature of worldview, while ignoring any cultural-historical development. Still, isolation of this frame and inclusion of Sire's vocabulary allows for clarification of and meaningful distinction between closely related ideas, as well as for a description of how Augustine's views are woven together. This

This prime reality is to be found in the God of the Bible and in the subjective Self, for the inhabitants of the cities of God and man respectively. As that according to which the individual and the city orientate life, movement and being, it makes sense that *prime reality* ought to determine the nature of good and evil, and by logical extension, Supreme Good and Evil, as the final objects of human desire and aversion.

For the intents and purposes of this thesis, the definition, nature and practical implications of the Supreme Good and Evil make up what is possibly the most important frame within which to view justice. This is because, as was seen in Chapter 3 above, the pervasive understanding of justice by Augustine's day was to give each man his due or right. Justice, then, was considered a *good*, with injustice as its evil corollary. If justice is a good, therefore, its essence and functioning are determined by that for the sake of which it is desired. Of course, this statement assumes that justice is not the Supreme Good, for which every other good is sought. In fact for Augustine, it most certainly is not.

During his brief discussion of varying opinions regarding the Supreme Good in Book 19, Augustine passes judgement on the answers put forward by various philosophers, arguing for the rejection of their views. With reference primarily to Varro once more, he distinguishes between two main groups of desiderata, i.e. virtue (the "art of the conduct of life" which is imparted through teaching) and four natural objects of human desire (pleasure, rest, a combination of the two, and the "primary natural blessings"<sup>54</sup>) (*civ. Dei* 19.1). Noting the various emphases and opinions of different schools of philosophy on these goods, he also lifts out Varro's arguments against philosophers who would subjugate virtue to any of the goods in the second group of desiderata. Instead, by Augustine's account, Varro views the good life (the truly happy life) as a "life which enjoys virtue and the other goods of soul and body without which virtue cannot exist" (*civ. Dei* 19.2).

Augustine's answer to views such as this, however, is that the human experience is liberally peppered with all manner of ills, most of which are related to the breakdown of the natural

---

should make it easier to follow the thread of justice later on in this investigation. For more on this worldview analysis framework, refer to *Appendix B*.

<sup>54</sup> Although Augustine does not give any concise definition of these "natural blessings" – also known as the "primary gifts of nature" by the Stoics (see Bettenson 2003: 844n4, 852) – it becomes clear through the development of his argument, that it acts as an umbrella term for wo/man's physical, psychological and emotional well-being.

blessings (*civ. Dei* 19.4). In this regard, he gives the examples of amputation, illness and ‘enfeeblement’ as despoiling physical health or well-being, in an extensive reference to Cicero (*civ. Dei* 19.4), while insanity and the loss of sense perception are given as examples of the despoilment of mental and sensual goods (*civ. Dei* 19.4).

A Supreme Good sought in ‘natural blessings’ to any extent then, is susceptible to failure. Augustine does not stop at this point, however, for virtue is also no contender for the title. This is because he understands the function of virtue to be that of keeping vices in check and so, employing ‘the art of living’ (i.e. virtue) is a perpetual battle, with no foreseeable end; virtue is not able to confer any kind of peace or joy to be enjoyed for its own sake (*civ. Dei* 19.4). Above and beyond this estimation of the value of virtue, Augustine does not count true virtue a possibility for any person not in submission to God’s rule (*civ. Dei* 19.25). Indeed, as he makes this point, he argues that the influence of deceptive demons – to whom he gives responsibility for pagan belief in the existence of deities other than the God of the Bible – and human pride turn every virtuous action into a vice. Only God, Augustine argues, can bring about the proper “rule over the body and the vicious propensities” (*civ. Dei* 19.25). Thus one’s ability to practise or exhibit virtue is limited to one’s allegiance, either to the City of Man, or of God.

It is within this context that the virtue of justice is rejected as humankind’s Supreme Good. In his consideration of justice and its unsuitability as the Supreme Good, Augustine’s widely acknowledged Platonic bent becomes evident as he refers to a tripartite division in the constitution of human being (*civ. Dei* 19.4). Of course, considering his rootedness in his time and in a culture which was so well-imbibed in Platonism, as well as the vast contents of his ideological toolbox, this should come as no surprise. After the baptism of certain characteristic Platonic ideas into the Christian worldview, then, he is able to refer to the subordination of the human soul to God, the body to the soul and, therefore, of the whole person to God. For him, this is the “just order of nature” at work in the individual, assigning to each part its due, and at work between the individual and God, assigning God His due, by subordinating every part of one’s being to Him<sup>55</sup>. Considering Augustine’s belief in the inherent corruptness of human nature and its subsequent enmity with itself – i.e. the ‘desires of the flesh’ being at odds with the ‘desire of the spirit’ (*civ. Dei* 19.4 cf. Gal. 5:7) – and

---

<sup>55</sup> See also 4.2 above, where TeSelle’s (1993: 88) interpretation of Augustine’s just order as the expansion of the classical definition of ‘justice’ to include God.

rebellion against God, the “just order of nature” is an impossibility. Justice, as it performs its function, would seem to be constant labouring instead of “resting after reaching its completion” (*civ. Dei* 19.4).

This view of justice as a virtue and entertaining the notion of virtue as the Supreme Good are examples of Augustine engaging in philosophical debate at its most fundamental level. That is to say, he returns to the basic assumptions that preceded the answers of Varro *et al*, to the question of the Supreme Good of humankind. In Book 19.3, Varro is presented as stating that, because the Supreme Good sought for by philosophers is the good of humankind<sup>56</sup>, one ought to begin by defining what man is, and find that Supreme Good there. Answers included that man is either body (which desires physical goods) or soul (as the seat of virtue and desirous of abstract goods), or both. Augustine aligns himself with the more holistic view, yet cannot locate the Supreme Good within corrupt humankind. For this reason, he seeks the Supreme Good in God’s original created order as he understands and interprets it.

#### **4.2.1. i) Creation Made for Peace and Rest**

With reference to the virtue of justice and the just law of nature at work in the individual, it has been shown that part of God’s created order is right relation of parts to each other (within the whole) and of the whole to God Himself. In fact this is what Augustine called the “just order of nature”. Having just seen what that means for the individual in the section above, let us look at what Augustine wrote regarding created order at large – as represented by the cities of God and of Man – and its relation to the Supreme Good.

In this regard, it has already been mentioned that the ends of the two cities differ; the members of God’s City are bound for eternal life and felicity, while their counterparts look forward only to eternal death. This, for Augustine is the key to understanding true Supreme Good and Supreme Evil, for as he begins to offer a Christian perspective to the discussion, he posits that for the righteous person, “eternal life is the Supreme Good, and eternal death the Supreme Evil and that to achieve the one and escape the other, we must live rightly” (*civ. Dei* 19.4).

As his discussion continues, however, it becomes clear that Augustine’s view is hardly so one-dimensional as not to account for manifestations of good among the pagans or for the

---

<sup>56</sup> As opposed to the good of some animal, plant or inanimate object.

parts played by the righteous in temporal ills. The keys to understanding the idea of eternal life and death as the poles determining ethical (virtuous) conduct, are to remember that these are expressed in miniature by the “just order of nature” in the individual and its corruption respectively. Elsewhere, then, Augustine posits that it is the eternal peace that will characterise life in the City of God upon its final establishment that is to direct the hope and virtuous conduct of the Christian, and to be desired for its own sake (*civ. Dei* 19.11). This peace is already part of nature as it was first created however (*civ. Dei* 19.13), and although it has been marred as a result of the Fall in Genesis 3, it is still apparent enough for Augustine to recognise and describe it to some degree. For Augustine (*civ. Dei* 19.13),

*[t]he peace of the body [...] is a tempering of the components of the part in duly ordered proportion; the peace of the irrational soul is a duly ordered repose of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul is the duly ordered agreement of cognition and action. The peace of the body and soul is the duly ordered life and health of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, in subjection to the everlasting law; peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind with mind; the peace of a home is the ordered agreement among those who live together about giving and obeying orders; the peace of the Heavenly City is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and a mutual fellowship in God; the peace of the whole universe is the tranquillity of order – and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal in a pattern which assigns to each its proper position.<sup>57</sup>*

In a nutshell, then, God – as the prime reality which determines every other aspect of a theistic worldview – created the universe and everything within it to exist in orderly rest. If this is that good which is to be desired for its own sake, then by logical extension, restlessness and disorder must constitute Supreme Evil. As has already been noted above, disorder and disordered desire characterise life in the Earthly City.

Nevertheless, the natural, God-given drive toward peace permeates every aspect of human life; that is to say, even the vilest offender against the “everlasting law” of God carries out

---

<sup>57</sup> This excerpt forms part of the “peace tabulation” (TeSelle 1993: 92), which summarises Augustine’s view of ideal peace, as expressed in *civ. Dei* 19.13-14. See Appendix C for the full tabulation.

her/his actions with a view to establishing some kind of peace (*civ. Dei* 19.12). Both the just and the unjust naturally strive for peace, although, due to the corruption of created order at the Fall, peace in the Earthly City – determined solely by the most dominant Self in a given context (*civ. Dei* 19.17) – is volatile and leads wo/man to determine other goods and evils to suit her/himself. Two sterling examples of the workings of this earthly peace are those of the family and of warfare.

Within the context of the family, the *paterfamilias* seeks to maintain peace through the subjugation of all other members of his domestic society to his sole headship (*civ. Dei* 19.12). In and of itself, this reflects a biblical pattern of male headship that Augustine will have identified with. The problem with its earthly variant, however, is that where heavenly peace in the home entails like-mindedness regarding the giving and obeying of orders (above), the household governed by a desire for peace determined solely by the will of its head is marked by conflict. Members of that household might be at odds with their *paterfamilias* and so, fail to obey him. In order to establish the desired peace, then, this man might resort to scolding, punishment or even what Augustine calls “savage measures” (*civ. Dei* 19.12). As the complete antithesis, Augustine would have the punishment warranted by the disruption of peace within a Christian household, characterised by fair proportion and legitimacy, and have as its goal the eternal benefit of the offender, keeping her/him from sinning, and deterring witnesses of this treatment from doing the same in future (*civ. Dei* 19.16). In both of these cases, the goal is a form of domestic peace. That the means by which this peace is sought differ is indicative of men’s allegiances, i.e. of their cosmic political stance.

A similar principle applies to war, for the goal of the warlord is to bring the opposing side under his dominion, to impose his peace on the other. In this regard Augustine (*civ. Dei* 19.12) notes that “peace is [always] the desired end of war” and “even when men wish a present state of peace to be disturbed they do so not because they hate peace, but because they desire the present peace to be exchanged for one that suits their wishes.”

Regardless of these different forms of peace, however, it remains, for Augustine, Supreme Good for both the righteous and the unrighteous. This is the point of departure for Augustine as he addresses proponents of secular philosophy and places himself squarely within that conversation. Its implications for a study of justice are manifold, for it calls into question, not only the possibility of justice in the City of Man and the participation therein of the citizens of

God's City in this age, but also casts a bright light on the very justice of God. It is the latter which will now be discussed.

#### ***4.2.1. ii) In Defence of the Justice of God***

Having put forward the theory of the just order of being as straining toward the peace of God, with room provided for action straining toward an earthly peace contrary to God's law, Augustine was fully aware that he needed to give an account of how an omnipotent God is able to allow the earthly state of affairs and still retain His justice and goodness.

This problem had plagued generations before Augustine – indeed still plagues many critics of monotheistic faith traditions today – and, as was noted at the very outset of this project, also plagued many in Augustine's day. Augustine wrote variously of his living in 'Christian times' especially between 405 and 415 (Rist 1996: 208)<sup>58</sup> and although the Christian assumptions regarding the place of the empire in Eternity, as propagated by Eusebius, had to be re-examined and softened by the fourth and fifth centuries, this notion of 'Christian times' was still widespread. Why, then, had God allowed Rome, the centre of Christendom, to fall to barbarians? This was probably the guise of the age-old question of God's justice in the wake of the events of 410. It will also undoubtedly have been asked more broadly (i.e. with reference to more than just the sacking of Rome), considering the political, economical and cultural flux which affected the empire throughout Late Antiquity.

To see most clearly how Augustine tackles this question, it is necessary to turn our attention away from the final section of the *City of God* for a moment. In a sermon given in response to

---

<sup>58</sup> Augustine's use of the term "Christian times", although certainly rooted in history and related to Eusebius' idea that Christianised Rome was a continuation of biblical history, is by no means a simple case of referred conviction. His convictions regarding Christianity as it is manifested in space and time are rather more nuanced. Rist (1996: 208) summarises Augustine's understanding and use of "Christian times" as an allusion to an era in which pagan philosophy has been superseded (*Cons. Ev.* 3.3) or in which paganism was actively suppressed and many heresies put down, under Theodosius and his sons. This, though less radical than Eusebius, reflect an idea that Rome was God's tool in this world, to hold up and spread Christianity. A much broader sense in which Augustine used this terminology – though not one which would explain Christians' vexation in the face of temporal woes, unless it were on account of a hyper-realised eschatology – is in reference to the entire period between the Incarnation and the Second Coming, i.e. that of the Church on earth as prophesied in the Old Testament (*civ. Dei* 18.27-36).



the sacking and with reference to the account of Genesis 18: 22-33<sup>59</sup>, Augustine states the question as follows:

*So weren't there fifty just individuals in Rome? The vast number of the faithful, all those consecrated women, all those celibates, all those servants and handmaids of God – and yet not fifty, not forty, not thirty, not twenty, not ten could be found who were just? But if that can't be believed, then why didn't God spare the city for the sake of those fifty, or even those ten? (exc. urb. 2)*<sup>60</sup>

For Augustine, such questions betray not only an unbelieving heart, but also a misunderstanding of God's dealings with humankind. He also notes (*exc. urb. 2*) that this line of questioning God's justice is limited, inasmuch as it considers only the human perspective and standards of fairness and justice, whereas God will have been looking for people who are just by His own transient, divine standards.

In addition to human and divine standards of justice and fairness being at variance, Mann (2001: 44) points out that perspectival prejudices necessarily blind human beings to the contribution(s) of some immediate privation of good to the greater good. If one laments the demise of some ephemeral thing and desires that it should have lived eternally, it is not that thing, but something entirely other (i.e. something not characterised by temporality) that is desired (Mann 2001: 45). With reference to Augustine's *On Free Will*, Mann continues, we fail to see the order and beauty of this "dynamic passage", analogous with the passage of notes and phonemes in the production of music and speech (Mann 2001: 45).

Returning to the objection raised against God's justice, it is worth noting that Augustine never entirely rejects the possibility that God may well have found righteous (just) individuals in the city of Rome. Indeed, in light of his views on the constitution of the Heavenly City, he cannot. As was shown above (3.2.1 and 4.1.1), God had identified and chosen the righteous

---

<sup>59</sup> In Genesis 18, Abraham pleads with God on behalf of the city of Sodom, which God has chosen to raze to the ground on account of its pervasive wickedness. During their conversation God is recorded as saying, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake" (Gen. 18: 26) And again, having gone backwards and forwards with Abraham, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it" (Gen. 18: 32).

<sup>60</sup> Although there are some doubts, the sermon *De excidio urbis Romae (On the Sack of the City of Rome)* appears to be Augustine's (Fitzgerald 1999: 344). This is the assumption behind the inclusion by Atkins and Dodaro (2001:205-214) in their anthology of Augustine's political writings, from which this and other references to the work have been taken.

throughout history, imputing justice to His people by grace and through His Son. Thus, although not on their own merit, God will undoubtedly have found ten, twenty, fifty or possibly more, for the sake of whom He should have spared Rome<sup>61</sup>. In light of the city's sacking, how is it that Augustine is still able to cling to the concept of God's unwavering justice? Having affirmed the idea – if only implicitly in this instance – that God rewards just behaviour and brings destruction on the unjust, it must be that he interprets the events of 410 differently to his opponents.

At the very beginning of the *City of God*, Augustine makes frequent reference to the mercy of the Visigoths on all who took refuge in the city's basilicae and professed faith in Christ Jesus, regardless of the sincerity of their professions (*civ. Dei* 1.1). Furthermore, he places the atrocities committed within the context of the history of warfare (*civ. Dei* 1.5) with all cruelty shown to be within the bounds of convention (*civ. Dei* 1.7) and, most soberly, never affirms that Rome was ever destroyed. The sacking is viewed as a temporal ill; like a corollary to the common graces reminiscent of an unfallen world order – e.g. physical wellbeing, civil peace – the sacking of Rome was a common affliction, i.e. the deprivation of common graces<sup>62</sup>. And, he argues, it was mercy that moved God to moderate the destruction of the unjust as the city was being overrun by Alaric's forces (*civ. Dei* 1.34).

The important question for Augustine pertains to what this kind of temporal evil brings about, if it is not understood as judgement for some or other wrongdoing. For him, it is the “nature of the sufferer, not the nature of the sufferings” that matters most, as affliction and pressure serve to highlight both righteousness, in the way of prayer and patient endurance, and unrighteousness, expressed in blasphemy and execration of God (*civ. Dei* 1.8)<sup>63</sup>. Thus, in

---

<sup>61</sup> See also *exc.urb.* 5.

<sup>62</sup> Though Augustine (*civ. Dei* 1.8.) refers to Matthew 5: 45 – [...] *For He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.* – as illustrative of God's common grace, the examples given above serve the intents and purposes of this discussion more effectively. Thus the deprivation of physical wellbeing includes sickness and injury, and ultimately extends to death (the deprivation of life); in this context, the deprivation of civil peace might include chaos, violence, general civil unrest and the like. These ills, all experienced during the sacking of Rome, are described and commented on by Augustine in the *City of God*, Book 1.

<sup>63</sup> In both the *City of God* and the sermon on *The sacking of the city of Rome.* (*exc. urb.* 3), the archetype for suffering despite blamelessness is Job, while his wife is described and the Devil's own feminine accomplice. Having lost all material wealth, his children and his physical wellbeing, Job is recorded as never having sinned in what he said or did, acknowledging instead that God not only allows temporal sorrows, but also provides every good thing (e.g. Job 1:10). In contrast, his wife

answer to the question of the function of suffering, the reasons Augustine gives differ according to the standing of the sufferer before God. For the righteous person, such common ills are meant to act either as a refining fire or test, while they are meant to drive the unrighteous to repentance or make their damnation all the more certain (*civ. Dei* 1.8). This principle appears later in the *City of God*, if from a different perspective, and is thought of by Augustine as one aspect of God's Natural Law (*civ. Dei* 19.13). According to this law, the individual eventually attains to the nature s/he deserved by her/his free choice, by God's ordinance and despite any disturbances.

This notion is expressed within the context of Augustine's description of orderly peace, which is the natural, God-ordained goal of all Creation. He chooses, therefore, to view the just and unjust actions of the individual and her/his lot within a more cosmic context, giving little importance to their synchronic significance and immediate effects, as he defends God's inscrutable justice. Furthermore, he identifies the inclination of all humankind – including its redeemed representatives – as that of loving the things (comforts) of this world, even at expense of love for the world's Creator (*civ. Dei* 1.9).

Thus, as was seen in 3.2.1 and 4.1.1 above, all people have a penchant for stepping outside of the "just natural order" and so, instances of suffering constitute reminders of the fragility of earthly peace and the mutability of the objects of wo/man's misdirected love. These are allowed in accordance with the Natural Law and so, are meant to restore that order in a more ultimate sense. In other words, temporal ills serve to highlight the consequences of deviation from God's natural order. These consequences, to be sure, do amount to a type of judgement. In fact Augustine writes that "it is by God's deep and just judgement that the life of [...] men on this earth is most miserable, [...] full of errors and anxieties" and that "[God] also judges the particular actions of individuals performed by the decision of their will" (*civ. Dei* 20.1).

This indicates both that God *does* punish specific wrongdoing or injustice and that, given the general misery with which human life is seasoned regardless of individual deeds, this is not always the case. Indeed, as we have seen, when the righteous (just) endure seemingly undue suffering, it is meant to act as refinement. For much like a parent might discipline a child as s/he thinks best, God was understood to discipline His people (children), that their faith might

---

urges him to curse God, so that his suffering might be brought to an end in death (Job 1:9). Job is eventually restored, while his wife is left shame-faced. This is a perfect miniature for God's legal economy.

be proven and refined, and that they might eventually share in His holiness and perfectly just character (*exc. urb. 9*)<sup>64</sup>. Ultimately, however, Augustine admits to the limits to his understanding of the diversity of human fortunes by conceding that God's "judgements are inscrutable and His ways untraceable" (*civ. Dei* 20.1-2; Rom. 11: 33). His comfort is found in the conviction that all that is not understood in this life will be revealed at the Final Judgement and understood fully in the life to come (*civ. Dei* 20.1-2).

Thus we see that Augustine's worldview hinges, at least partly, on eschatological sensitivity and hope. Of course, although Augustine's perspective is grounded in Scripture, both his experience and the discourse in which he was engaged were bound to his own time and location. As a theologian and philosopher, it was his job to interpret this world in light of what he understood from Scripture and Christian tradition. What, therefore, were Augustine's views regarding the possibility of justice in the Earthly City, and the participation of God's people therein? This is the next question to be addressed in the pursuit of clarity regarding the place of justice in Augustine's apologetic project.

## **4.2.2. Justice in the Earthly City**

### **4.2.2. i) *The Origin and Nature of Earthly Justice***

Within a context characterised by self-love, the problem of authority is an important hurdle to be cleared, before investigating and evaluating the mechanics of justice in the City of Man. This is because the point of reference has been decentralised, taken from God and given to humanity, necessitating the conception and implementation of some other means to order and peace. According to Coleman's (2000: 317) excellent reading of the *City of God* and a number of Augustine's other works, trust in another's authority is "a necessary condition of human life in the family and society." For Augustine, the shift from the family-oriented model of social organisation, as in the age of the Old Testament patriarchs, and pastoral expressions of authority and dominion (i.e. rule only over the irrational creatures of the earth), to monarchy (i.e. the dominion of man over man) is symptomatic of this state of affairs in the face of population growth (*civ. Dei* 15.1 and 19.15).

Indeed, Coleman (2000: 322) goes so far as to present Augustine as holding the view that political organisation of every earthly kind is a consequence of sin. At first glance it may

---

<sup>64</sup> See also *civ. Dei* 1.8 and Heb. 12.

seem that this takes Augustine's negative valuation of the decentralisation of authority too far; however it is borne out by observations made in the *City of God*. For example, both the very first city and Rome itself are said to have been founded on fratricide (*civ. Dei* 15.5) – Cain is said to have founded a city after killing his brother Abel, while the murder of Remus by Romulus was an important part of Rome's founding mythology – and so, the political institutions that were subsequently established might be seen as rooted not in justice, but in domination by force or the threat of the use thereof (Coleman 2000: 322).

As noted in the previous section, the order by which that unstable earthly peace is attained, is determined by the most dominant self – or selves – to secure her/his own needs, comfort and idea of peace (*civ. Dei* 19.12). Consequently, as Coleman (2000: 333) writes, “every political system is constituted by some hierarchy of power, ultimately achieving a shaky peace through force when persuasion's success in instilling plausible beliefs proves to be insufficient to achieve the same end.”

Despite this sorry state of affairs in the Earthly City, however, Augustine does make the point that politics and the laws that govern the city are sanctioned by God as a tragic necessity. He does this on at least two levels, viz. with reference to this very rootedness in domination by force and a platonic notion that the laws that govern human society are pale reflections of God's perfect, just order.

First, then, how is it that God sanctions any human political system, if it is so deeply rooted in human oppression? Augustine's thoughts on this matter may be found in his brief discussion of slavery as the just deserts of sin (*civ. Dei* 19.15). Starting with a short exposition of slavery as the subjugation of man to man “in the condition of bondage,” he moves on to assert (with reference to John 8:34) that one who commits sin is effectively a slave to sin or to some or other lust. To the possible objection that these comments are specifically made in reference to slavery and not politics, an answer lies in the way in which slavery is defined, i.e. as human beings bound in subjugation to others. This is simply one expression of an inherent human tendency toward forcing one's own earthly peace on others, which is the goal that Augustine ascribes to warfare and other shifts in political power (*civ. Dei* 19.12). In other words, slavery may be viewed as an extreme expression of human beings asserting dominance on others of their kind, and each instance as a small-scale example of what is expressed, on a grander scale, as worldly politics.

Indeed Augustine often explains the whole with extensive reference to its parts. One might say that the general penchant of fallen humankind for lording it over those weaker than her-/himself is expressed in hierarchical social organisation at various levels, earthly politics – in its varying manifestations – slotting in at a level which brings the *status quo* to the surface. Slavery, in turn, being a most overt expression of dominance, lifts this aspect of human being clear out of the murk, for all to perceive and evaluate.

Considering the mechanics of the Fall as they are understood by Augustine, when humankind originally succumbed to pride and grasped at God’s own power and authority, thus inviting God’s judgement on itself, it makes sense that he would declare that “the most pitiless domination that devastates the hearts of men, is that exercised by his very lust for domination” (*civ. Dei* 19.15). Of course, this does not directly account for the idea that God sanctions worldly politics; it simply iterates somewhat differently the point made by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 1:18-32<sup>65</sup> that God, as an expression of His wrath against those who exchanged His rule for their own, handed humankind over “in the lusts of their hearts” (Rom. 1:24) to “a debased mind to do what ought not to be done” (Rom. 1:28).

We see, therefore, that humankind is given what it grasped at – in the case of slavery and, by extension, political authority – but in the process, becomes subject to the perverted desires of the heart. According to Augustine, this punishment should be interpreted in terms of the Natural Law which ensures the eventual attainment of divine order and peace, despite any disturbances. Indeed “if nothing had been done to contravene the law [of nature],” Augustine writes, “there would have been nothing to require the discipline of slavery as a punishment” (*civ. Dei* 19.15). Thus, in virtue of the choice made either to love and submit to the rule of God as the Supreme, meaning-giving Good, or to stage a mutiny fuelled by self-love (the natural post-Fall tendency of humankind), the individual is either emancipated from bondage

---

<sup>65</sup> Although Augustine does not make explicit reference to this passage of Scripture at this point, it is not unlikely, considering his affinity and great respect for Paul’s New Testament contributions, as well as how his thought is imbibed in Biblical teaching, that he will have drawn on the ideas raised by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Another concrete Biblical example of God’s sanctioning of human politics as a way of handing people over to their ‘sinful desires’ may be found in 1 Samuel 8. Although it is not mentioned in Augustine’s own argument, this account does fit the mould he makes. In that passage, God sanctions the appointment of a king over Israel upon His people’s request. He does this even though their request is an outright rejection of His own kingship (1 Sam. 8:7). The king God will give them in response will be a greedy, war-mongering king, under whose yoke the people are warned they will suffer. Despite this warning, Israel insists on the instalment of an earthly monarch and God gives Saul to them.

or continues to face God's judgement of slavery to the lust for domination and of subjection to others' domination.

God handing humankind over to its lust for domination, however, is only one aspect of His sanctioning human political organisation and the laws which govern it. As has already been mentioned, Augustine held that temporal laws could and should be reflective of God's own, perfect, moral law. Of course, this perspective ought to be read within the context of what has just been noted regarding political organisation as condemnation. Rist (1996: 209-210, 215) notes that the idea of earthly law imaging God's eternal moral code is far more prominent and strongly held in Augustine's earlier works and claims that Augustine's views had softened by the time he penned the *City of God*. He grounds this claim in the conviction that Augustine had grown in pessimism through his observations of and interaction with the injustices so rife in his context (Rist 1996: 210-214).

As one reads the *City of God*, in fact, it is difficult to miss Augustine's deprecation of life under the sun and, more specifically, of Rome's history as he reads and interprets it. He denies any possibility that Rome could have attained to the ideal commonwealth Cicero conceived of, i.e. "the weal of the people" (*civ. Dei* 2.21, 19.21). According to this definition, a people is defined as "a multitude united in association by a common sense of right and a community of interest" (cited in *civ. Dei* 2.21, 19.21). If one takes into consideration the long tradition into which Augustine slots, and according to which 'right' is understood as rendering to each her/his due, it is evident that some consensus did exist. This definition, also present in biblical literature, came to be the standard by which pagans and Christians alike measured just conduct. It had attained the status of assumed universal truth, probably in part through the work of Ulpian and Justinian. Despite this consensus, Augustine does not believe any 'state' to be capable of acting on this. For him, every political constitution is underpinned by the misdirected love of self in which every aspect of life in the Earthly City is rooted, regardless of any claims to fairness and equity (Coleman 2000: 322).

If Augustine's negative valuation of humanity's ability to live out any consensus of right is taken seriously, we must surely ask ourselves how it is possible to speak of, or strive for justice at all. The answer lies in Augustine's views on the natural (i.e. pre-Fall) working of the universe instead of humanity's 'second' nature, as well as his Platonic tendencies. With reference to both the *City of God* and *On Human Responsibility*, Rist (1996: 215) highlights Augustine's claim that "human law could and should be an evident image of divine law". In

other words, God's law is, for Augustine, the measure of authenticity of laws made and enforced in a fallen world. Despite the pervasive perversion of humankind, which makes it impossible to attain to perfect justice, earthly laws image their heavenly counterpart to varying degrees. It is the work of the Christian to seek to use earthly structures – as far as possible – in ways as close as possible to the will of God. In the first place, this responsibility falls to bishops and other Christian legal practitioners. Thus, in a letter to Marcellinus, brother of Apringius, Augustine urges him to act mercifully toward Donatists convicted of murdering one Catholic priest and mutilating another (*ep.* 133.2, Atkins and Dodaro 2001: 62):

*Christian judge, fulfil the duties of your devoted father. Condemn injustice without forgetting to observe humanity. Do not indulge a thirst to revenge the horrors inflicted by sinners, but rather apply a willingness to heal the wounds of sinners. Do not abandon the fatherly care that you maintained in the investigation itself. Then you dragged from them a confession of their outrages without stretching them on a rack or scoring them with hooks, or burning them with flames, but only beating them. [...] There is a greater need to investigate than to punish; in order to discover who should be spared, even the mildest of men will examine a hidden offence thoroughly and with urgency.*

It is clear that Augustine has a desire for truth to be exposed and for justice to be done, and even encourages the use of coercive force allowed by the law to see these done. Yet, even as he advocates this way of conducting an investigation, and even as he urges that the guilty be brought to book<sup>66</sup>, he is always concerned for the rehabilitation (salvation) of the guilty party. These sentiments are echoed in Augustine's sorrowful reflection on the workings of the law-courts and mistakes of human judgement and judges when the truth is more difficult to uncover (*civ. Dei* 19.6). Still, that engagement in these earthly legal procedures is not derided must mean that authentic/just laws are sanctioned by God.

This begs the question: why would a perfectly just God advocate the laws of men opposed to Him? Taking a cue from Coleman (2000: 323) once more, it is worth considering what the outcome might be if the laws of the Earthly City were treated with indifference or contempt. Laws are put in place to maintain order and peace (i.e. that to which all things necessarily

---

<sup>66</sup> This may be seen as an expression of Augustine's desire to see God's 'legal economy' (3.2 above) manifest in Christian legal proceedings.



strive) and so support the Supreme Good. By extension, the absence of law and disregard for existent law – both manifestations of lawlessness – would surely cause a descent into chaos. Thus, authentic temporal laws inhibit the manifestation of Supreme Evil. At this point, an answer to the idea that God also sanctions unjust earthly laws (i.e. laws which go against the principle of each person being awarded her/his just desserts), thereby bringing God’s own justice back into question, is provided. The accusation holds little water, for God has determined the Supreme Good and has ordained that it be desired for its own sake, while Supreme Evil is to be avoided.

The line of argument followed above does, however, raise an important question. If temporal laws do not measure up to God’s eternal moral code (that law which it is meant to image, i.e. love of God and love of neighbour), falling so far short as to cause physical, mental, emotional and spiritual hardship (e.g. dictatorships, foreign occupation or laws hostile toward God’s people), but still manage to maintain a worldly peace, does that not mean that God does in fact, stand behind them? At this point it is worth remembering that earthly peace is always coupled with some degree of hardship on account of humankind’s sinful over-desires (misdirected loves). The fact that a tyrant may come to power and people suffer on account of her/his heavy hand does not discount God’s sanctioning of her/his rule. Earthly politics, we have seen, is both an expression of God’s grace which provides the authority people need<sup>67</sup> and of His judgement, as he hands people over to their “depraved minds” and lusts (specifically the lust for domination). One need only refer to the biblical example of Daniel, who Augustine describes as “a man of God, who in captivity confessed to God his own sins and the sins of his people, and in devout grief testifies that they are the cause of that captivity” (*civ. Dei* 19.15).

It has been argued in previous sections, moreover, that the Earthly City is set apart from the Heavenly City by its perversion of natural order. Thus, it ought to be expected that no city should measure up to the heavenly ideal in this intermediate age. Yet, because “politics [does provide] a *tolerable social living* [by virtue of] man’s final ignorance of who will be saved and who will be damned” (Coleman 2000: 323, emphasis is my own), and because Augustine believes that reliance on the authority of others is a necessary condition of human life, the laws of the Earthly City must be taken seriously and used, ultimately, for the benefit of the City of God (*civ. Dei* 19.26; Coleman 2000: 323).

---

<sup>67</sup> See Coleman (2000: 322-323).

#### 4.2.1. ii) *The City of God “Doing” Justice in the Present Age*

When Augustine advocates the people of God using earthly law to the benefit of the City of God during their pilgrimage in this age, he is also echoing the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 2: 2; Christians are urged to pray for those in authority, so that they may lead peaceful and quiet lives, “godly and dignified in every way.” As Augustine picks up on this idea of earthly peace belonging to the righteous and the unrighteous alike as long as it prevails (*civ. Dei* 19.26), he is careful to mention that the people of God ought to take hold of it only in light of the eternal peace with God, enjoyed even now through faith (*civ. Dei* 19.27). Indeed this is the resounding refrain throughout the *City of God*. Augustine describes this life as one “of misery, a kind of hell on earth, [from which] there is no liberation save through the grace of Christ Jesus our God and our Lord” (*civ. Dei* 22.22), and therefore it is opposite to the felicity and rest to be enjoyed in the Eternal City of God. This view, if carried through to its extreme logical consequences, could lead down the slippery slope to reclusive monasticism, to Christians shutting themselves off from the world and focussing on their personal “holiness” in preparation for the life to come.

To be sure, Augustine does seem to distinguish between higher and lower orders of Christians, with unmarried ascetics outstripping those “tangled in the bonds of marriage” in some respects (*civ. Dei* 1.9). There is, nevertheless, a real sense that the faithful endurance of God’s people must extend beyond the private sphere, and that it includes *active* engagement in the life of the Earthly City. This engagement, meant to bring about just order, is what is meant by the idea of “doing justice.” The basis for this way of life is the two great commandments given in Matt. 22: 37-40, i.e. love of God and love of neighbour as oneself (*civ. Dei* 19.14). Moreover, drawing on Jas. 2:17 and Gal. 5:6, he holds that anyone who professes faith, but does not enact that faith through love, possesses only a dead faith (*civ. Dei* 19.27).

Bearing these directives in mind, it is clear that the peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified life Augustine has in mind for the Christian sojourning in the Earthly City, will not entail shutting oneself away to pray for those in authority. Instead, the lives of the faithful, while prayerful, are also inherently social. The primacy of love of God, who is the primary object and director of Christian affections, has already been discussed. Love of God and, by extension, peace with God then lead to peace within the individual (*civ. Dei* 19.14). This is the just, natural order, where the individual’s bodily appetites submit to the rational soul, which exists in

submission to God (*civ. Dei* 19.27). The order also extends to wo/men relating peacefully to one another as they submit to God's Law.<sup>68</sup>

This begs the question, however, as to how far the exhortation to love one's neighbour extends. Who precisely is this neighbour and how should s/he be loved? Augustine is very clear on these points. Within the framework of Roman society, although one's household constituted one's immediate neighbours, everyone was to be considered a neighbour (*civ. Dei* 19.14). Van Bavel (1999: 512) summarises the motives for the love of all humankind as (a) that all human beings share in the same human nature, (b) that God commands it, and (c) that God is present in them. Whether Christian or non-Christian, righteous or sinner, prostitute, stage-player or charioteer, "every human being is the neighbour of every human being" (*disc. Chr.* 3.3. quoted in Van Bavel 1999: 512). On the third point raised, Van Bavel (1999: 513) argues from the point of view that in Christ, God identified himself with human beings and indeed, clove himself to them.<sup>69</sup> For Augustine, therefore, God's presence in all human beings – though marred by the Fall stands as the grounds for considering everyone a neighbour on account of humankind having been made in His image (Gen. 1: 26-27; Kent 2001: 214).

As Augustine goes on, in the *City of God*, to define what loving one's neighbour looks like, he confirms and bolsters the idea of the extent of love for every neighbour, as the following excerpt shows:

*[The one] who loves God is not wrong in loving himself. It follows, therefore, that he 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 of his concern for [...] members of his household, and for all other men, so far as is possible. And, for the same end, he will wish his neighbour to be concerned for him, if he happens to need that concern. For this reason he will be at peace, as far as lies in him, with all men, in that peace among men, that ordered harmony; and the basis of this order is the observance of two rules:*

---

<sup>68</sup> See 4.2.1.i. above.

<sup>69</sup> This is linked to the doctrine of the "the whole Christ", apparently found in some of Augustine's sermons (s. 25.8.8; 239.6.7) and in the *Tractates on 1 John* (ep. Jo. 10.3; 20.55). According to this idea, because Christ loved all humanity, and free love is seen as a cohesive, even unifying force, all human beings are part of Christ. The biblical references given by Van Bavel (1999: 513) in support of this include Matt. 25:31-46 and Acts 9:4, which speak about boons and persecutions enacted on Jesus' followers / those belonging to Christ, as having been enacted on Jesus Himself.

*first, to do no harm to anyone, and, secondly, to help everyone wherever possible.*  
(*civ. Dei* 19.14)

The neighbour is “all other men” and “everyone.” And, even if only this excerpt is considered, loving that neighbour is multi-faceted. First, there is the interesting observation that the command of Matt. 22: 39 not only presupposes love of oneself, but positively affirms it and has important implications for love of one’s neighbour. At first, this may seem jarring on account of Augustine’s view that the Earthly City is rooted in self-love. It is worth noting, therefore, that he is not here referring to that very specific and perverse brand of self-love that “leads one to arrogate to oneself a place that properly belongs to God” (Kent 2001: 218). For Augustine, proper self-love flows directly from love of God and serves as the measure for loving one’s neighbour. In turn, love for one’s neighbour is first expressed in the concern Augustine expects one will have, that one’s neighbour would love God, the prime, defining reality, who alone defines and gives perfect peace.<sup>70</sup>

Although the practical implications of this concern are not immediately worked out, one need only think on the mechanics of justice in the City of God and how it is only through the redeeming work of God through Christ, that humankind is justified and gains entrance into that fellowship. With this in mind, a distinct evangelistic suggestion emerges. Thus, according to this excerpt, the work of telling one’s neighbours about God and labouring toward the end that they too might love Him is an important aspect of love for one’s neighbour.

As a presbyter and bishop, this application will have been especially important for Augustine. This is, however, a very narrow application. Another application of this first line of reasoning is articulated in the excerpt above, and is more clearly iterated in the *Confessions* (10.4) within the context of Christian fellowship. In this regard, the brethren “love in [one another] what they know from [God’s] teaching to be worthy of their love, and [...] sorrow to find in [one another] what they know [...] to be occasion for remorse.” This is picked up on by Wolterstorff, who uses the language of emotional disturbances opposed to emotional equanimity and rest.<sup>71</sup> He interprets Augustine as saying that “loving oneself in

---

<sup>70</sup> See 4.2.1 above.

<sup>71</sup> Thus showing both Augustine’s continuity and break with the Stoics. At this point in Wolterstorff’s discussion, he has already posited that Augustine made a clear break with Classical eudaimonism. This, Wolterstorff (2004: 180) does well in noting, was provoked by Augustine’s reading of Christian

the right way requires [...] desiring one's moral and religious flourishing, the consequences of such desire being that one rejoices in success therein and grieves over failure therein" (Wolterstorff 2008: 194). Following on this and on earlier reference to the *Confessions* 10.4 (Wolterstorff 2008: 193), he then paraphrases the Matt. 22 precept to love one's neighbour as oneself, so that it is seen to express the principle that one's neighbour's moral and religious condition ought to be as "disturbance-worthy" for us as our own would be (Wolterstorff 2008: 194)<sup>72</sup>. This way of thinking about loving one's neighbour permeates the *City of God*, with Augustine looking to the apostle Paul and to Christ, as examples of the righteous experiencing emotional disturbances (*civ. Dei* 14.9). These instances of emotional upheaval, for Augustine, are right and just, for they stem from a desire to see all people attain the Supreme Good, i.e. eternal peace with God.

Love of self and neighbour certainly extends beyond concern only for souls, however, as Augustine writes about living in "ordered harmony" with every neighbour. This harmony consists in doing no harm and helping others where necessary (*civ. Dei* 19.14). It has already been discussed repeatedly and at length that affliction and misery are to be expected during this period of coexistence of the Cities of God and Man. It follows, therefore, that human relationships are also plagued by conflict, a fact which Augustine thinks through in *civ. Dei*

---

Scripture. Still he is careful to point out those doctrines and methods that are shared with the mainstream philosophies that were part of Augustine's ideological toolbox. In the case of the goal of virtuous human being, he begins his discussion with the note that "Augustine shared with the Stoics the thesis that rest, tranquillity, freedom from negative emotions, is necessary for happiness. Our goal [...] is to 'attain the things that make us happy and rest in them' (*doc. Chr.* 1.3.3)." The Stoic's aim was to avoid extreme emotion and its accompanying discomfort as far as was possible. That is not to say that the Stoics did not mean for wo/man to feel any emotion whatsoever; their goal was simply to bring emotion in line, to overcome it and live in peaceful equanimity and contentment (see Seneca *Ep.*9; trans. Campbell 2004: 48; also Wolterstorff 2004: 194n18). On the surface, this goal seems akin to Augustine's own beliefs regarding wise living. Unlike the Stoics, however, who sought to avoid undue emotional disturbance altogether, Augustine allows for emotional disturbance, if it is in line with God's reactions to human conduct (e.g. being grieved by sin).

<sup>72</sup> Wolterstorff (2008: 180-181) says "Augustine shared with the Stoics the thesis that rest, tranquillity, freedom from negative emotions, is necessary for happiness. Our goal, he says, is to 'attain the things that make us happy and rest in them' (*doc. Chr.* 1.3.3.). His view as to how tranquillity is to be achieved was strikingly different from that of the Stoics, however, and closer to the views of the Neo-Platonists. [...] Augustine insists that the way to achieve tranquillity is instead never to put one's emotional life at the mercy of that which can fail one. And where the Stoics said that we put our emotional lives at the mercy of something when we judge it to be good, Augustine says that we do so when we love it. [...] So if tranquillity is what you want, love only that which cannot fail you [...]"

19.5. Yet he exhorts Christians to live peaceably, by *doing* good. This is not an attempt to have heaven realised on earth, for Augustine is constantly aware of the impossibility thereof, as his scathing words for the proponents of such hyper-realised eschatology confirm (*civ. Dei* 20.17)<sup>73</sup>.

Furthermore, he holds to the perspective that both the troubles and goods experienced in this life are insignificant in comparison to those in the life (and “eternal death”) hereafter. Eternity remains his primary concern; still he considers it the work of the people of God to provide consolation to the afflicted in this life (*civ. Dei* 22.22). Not only is it the *responsibility* of God’s people to seek to do good, Augustine also makes it clear that the same empathetic love that guides Christian concern for one’s neighbours’ souls should fuel concern for the physical well-being of one’s friends (*civ. Dei* 19.8<sup>74</sup>).

Interestingly, Augustine blurs the lines between God and His ministers of “holy things,” writing that the alleviations “administered [...] by holy men” are neither granted only to the faithful, nor to all who ask (*civ. Dei* 22.22). The implication, of course, is that God grants good things to people regardless of their relationship to Him (known as common grace), and that He uses His people to bring about these good things. Again, this becomes a question of Christian responsibility and action in line with God’s priorities, a notion that Augustine will have taken straight out of the Bible: “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness<sup>75</sup>, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). In the words of Kent (2001: 215), moreover, “[A]ll true virtues are forms of love rooted in charity, the love of God and neighbour commanded by Christ, virtues are by their very nature other-regarding.”

---

<sup>73</sup> With the usual emotive flair, Augustine writes, in response to any interpretations of such passages as Rev. 21:4 that would have the perfect felicity of the saints made reality in this age: “[...] who could be so absurd, so crazed with love for perverse argument, as to have the hardihood to maintain that in the midst of the troubles of the mortal state [the faithful have] no tears and no sorrows in this life?”

<sup>74</sup> “[...we are] troubled and anxious because [our friends] may be afflicted by famine, war, disease, or captivity, fearing that in slavery they may suffer evils beyond our powers of imagination [...]. And when such things do happen (and the more numerous our friends, the more often they happen) and the news is brought to our ears, who, except one who has this experience, can be aware of the burning sorrow that ravages our hearts? Certainly we would rather hear that our friends were dead, although this also we could not hear without grief.”

<sup>75</sup> NIV: “... to love mercy...”

Doing justice in this age is not an end in itself, however. As emphasised throughout the foregoing discussion, the framework within which Augustine iterates these ideas on temporal justice, is grounded in his apocalyptic theology. Thus everything that has happened since the beginning of creation – the entire antediluvian era, followed by the ages of the Patriarchs, Moses, the Judges, the Kings of Israel and Judah, the Prophets, and Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension – and all that occurs in the present age, strain toward the end of time and the final establishment of the City of God. In that day, Augustine (*civ. Dei* 19.16) believes, all injustice will disappear and all human lordship and power will be finally annihilated, and God will be all in all.<sup>76</sup>

### 4.2.3. Justice as it is in Heaven

Even as Augustine’s eschatology is considered, it must be noted that it cannot, indeed it must not be thought of as independent of what has come before, for God’s Natural Law comes to its full expression and fulfilment in this context. Thus we do well to remember Augustine’s assertion that the individual attains to the nature s/he deserves by her/his free choices and life before the establishment of God’s eternal peace. Those who, in this life, are aligned with God and so live truly virtuous lives, look forward to the perfection of their holy and just natures; those who now align themselves with the City of Man, ignoring God’s standards of virtue, are deprived of true virtue, and so attain to perfect perversion.

Although the virtue of the faithful is seen as a gift from God (Kent 2001: 215), there is never any doubt in the *City of God* that people will be held responsible for their conduct and choices in this life. This tension between God’s complete sovereignty in building His city and human responsibility for the sin that binds the citizens to their Earthly City, is an enormous topic. Although it cannot go unacknowledged, for the intents and purposes of this thesis and for the sake of brevity, it must be placed between parentheses without being addressed.

As pivotal as Augustine’s eschatology is for an accurate and coherent picture of his thought on justice, however, the fascinating and sometimes speculative detail that he goes into is of little to no importance to this study. Thus, brief overviews will be given of Augustine’s understanding of the Final Judgement and of how he envisages God’s justice will be established in Eternity.

---

<sup>76</sup> Augustine makes reference here to 1 Corinthians 15: 24, 28.

Augustine states the subject of Book 20 to be the Final Judgement, when “Christ is to come from heaven to judge both the living and the dead” (*civ. Dei* 20.1). For him, this is the event towards which all human history is working, for it encompasses the ends of both the Cities of God and of Man. How long the Final Judgement is set to last is uncertain (*civ. Dei* 20.1). In keeping with biblical convention, however, Augustine employs the language of the “Day of the Lord” in reference to the *time* of the Final Judgement (e.g. *civ. Dei* 20.1 and 20.2). As such, although Augustine handles the event of Christ passing judgement on the living and the dead, and the eternal outworking of His judgement separately, it is possible to see the latter, not as a separate entity, but as a continuation or extension of the former.

All of human history will come to an end, by the establishment and subsequent eternal enforcement of God’s *natural law and order*; there will be no new judgements, for they will not be necessary, and this is precisely why Augustine calls it the *final* judgement (*civ. Dei* 20.1). If one takes into consideration that biblical use of the word “judge” also encompasses the act of ruling, and bears in mind the magnitude of the influence of biblical paradigms on Augustine (3.2 above), acknowledgement of this interpretation is legitimated. The Final Judgement is seen here, both as a judicial process, as the time when Augustine asserts that “Christ will come to judge both the living and the dead” (*civ. Dei* 20.1), and as the time when Christ will rule over creation for all eternity. The Day of the Lord and the ensuing era (Eternity) are discussed here together.

Before delving into any sort of explanation of how this Final Judgement is meant to play out, the Natural Law of God must be reiterated here. This law, which one might call an Augustinian interpretation and expression of the biblical concept of God rewarding the just and punishing lawbreakers, states that the individual eventually attains to the nature s/he deserved by her/his free choice, by God’s ordinance and despite any disturbances (4.2.1.ii above; *civ. Dei* 19.13).

The end of this law, it should come as no surprise, is the Supreme Good (peace) and the cessation of chaos, for this is what all human activity strains toward, even during the era preceding the Final Judgement (4.2.1.i above). What this means for the citizens of the City of God, is that they will attain to God’s own likeness (*civ. Dei* 20.3) and enjoy perfect felicity and a perpetual Sabbath rest and peace (*civ. Dei* 22.3). For those who in this life chose alignment with the City of Man, however, Augustine describes the attainment of utter “vanity” or “nothingness” (*civ. Dei* 20.3), which is a reference to the book of Ecclesiastes and its



valuation of earthly existence as vanity. Citizens of the City of Man, therefore, attain to perfect, proud worldliness and forfeit eternal peace and felicity, instead receiving death that will be everlasting (22.22), which is really another way of expressing eternal punishment (*civ. Dei* 21. 9).

In addition to these broad outcomes, Augustine also makes the point that God's people are set to rule (judge) the rest of Creation alongside Christ (*civ. Dei* 20.5 and 20.10). This, no doubt, is also a throw-back to God's natural, created order before the Fall of the angels and of humankind.<sup>77</sup> Peace is to be restored, as God had intended from the beginning.

Before this all comes to fruition, there are a number of events that Augustine refers to and explores. One in particular, namely the resurrection of the dead, is of particular interest to this study. Drawing on, among other texts, Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Augustine holds to a firm belief in the resurrection of the dead (*civ. Dei* 20:20; 1 Thess. 4:13-17). Explicit statement of this fact is important for two principal reasons, namely that it is a logical prerequisite for the establishment of the Natural Law of nature to be enforced and eternal justice to be established and, that it is the resurrection of the body and its implications which were a stumbling block for the secular philosophies with which Augustine engages in the *City of God*.

As regards the enforcement of God's Natural Law, this was defined in 4.2.1 above, with reference to *civ. Dei* 19.13, as the individual eventually attaining to the nature s/he deserves by her/his free choice, by God's ordinance and despite any disturbances in the stage of history. It has already been noted what this will look like in terms of the individual's character and essential being, as well as that throwback to created order, by which God's people are completely regenerated into the image of God (Gen. 27), in their capacity as rulers of the rest of creation. It should be added, however, that the dead cannot attain to any perfect nature as they ought to according to the Natural Law, nor can they be subject to eternal suffering.

On the second point, that the resurrection was a problem to those of Augustine's detractors who espouse a Platonic worldview, he shows that he is aware of their objections by answering some of them directly. One such objection is that according to Platonic doctrine, earthly bodies would not be able to exist in Heaven (*civ. Dei* 22.11). As one might expect,

---

<sup>77</sup> Genesis 1: 26-31.

Augustine answers this objection, first by showing his understanding of his opponents' perspective on ontology. Having done so, he presents his own worldview, moving in at the level of basic presuppositions regarding prime reality. Thus he asserts that "the Platonists' arguments for the classification of the elements by weight cannot set the limits on the power of the Almighty God so that he cannot make bodies capable even of a dwelling in the heavens" (*civ. Dei* 22.11; Bovon 2010: 389).

Closing the gap between body and soul created by Platonic abstraction was an essential part of Christian apologetics from the time of Justin Martyr, who devoted much ink and energy to that endeavour (Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 763-764). Augustine, however, conceded that the only way of avoiding this impasse, was a starting point of faith (*Trin.* 1.1.1; quoted by Clifford and Anatolios 2005: 764). As he answers his detractors in this section of the *City of God*, he does so while presenting that which he believes they ought to have faith in. To be sure, this relies on the assumption that they will have accepted other foundational truth claims made by Augustine and been won over by his descriptions of the Eternity which awaits those who share his worldview, truth claims and descriptions which necessitate the resurrection of the unified person.<sup>78</sup>

Ultimately, for Augustine, the "problem" of the resurrection and eternity is an issue of Christological soteriology, with its acceptance dependent on divine revelation. Unlike his opponents, he is not too much perturbed about ontological details. Although he does argue logically for the possibility of bodily resurrection, using the omnipotence of God as his main premise, he also offers an affective argument that belief in Christ's bodily resurrection provides proof of the resurrection of the dead at the Final Judgement (Bovon 2010: 389; *civ. Dei* 22.6-7). Augustine starts at the point of biblical revelation as interprets history and ontology in light thereof.

In the final analysis, although Augustine devotes the last three books of the *City of God* to the matter, the manifestation of justice on Judgement Day and into eternity is rather simple. Most importantly for Augustine, the justice of God and His judgements is set to be revealed fully, leaving no room for questioning or denial (*civ. Dei* 20.1-2). In other words, although

---

<sup>78</sup> Augustine also writes about God's people as having undergone a first, spiritual resurrection, which must precede the second and final resurrection to eternal life (*civ. Dei* 20.7). This, however, is inextricably linked with coming to saving knowledge of God through faith in Christ, which is the real prerequisite for citizenship in the City of God.

people are able now to question God's justice and sovereignty, due to the secret ("inscrutable") nature of God's judgements at present (*civ.* 20.1-3), and to deny His rule without any perceivable consequences, this is only a temporary arrangement. The current order will pass away, but the City of God will stand forever, in perfect justice.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, three questions were articulated, with a view to understanding Augustine's conception of justice within the context of the discourse of his day. These were concerned, first, with how Augustine believed justice to function in the Cities of God and Man, second, with what influenced his perspective, and finally, how his views on justice fit into his apologetic project. Having sought to understand Augustine's situational and ideological<sup>79</sup> contexts and, concentrating primarily on Books 19 to 22 of the *City of God*, having explored Augustine's thought on justice, it is the goal of this concluding chapter to present the findings of this investigation.

First, in terms of justice as it is manifest in the two cities, Augustine, who is perfectly aware of the importance of law and justice in the Roman context, holds a pervasively negative view of justice in the City of Man throughout the *City of God*. The City of Man does have an ideal of justice, which is meant to be embodied and upheld by the law. In the fifth century, throughout the empire, the ideal embedded in the Roman collective consciousness was that justice was doing right by others, by rendering to each person their rights, their due, their desserts (3.1.1. above).

Augustine does not dispute this understanding of justice in terms of its accuracy; in fact, it falls neatly within his own convictions. Whether this understanding of justice ought to be attributed to his birth into Roman-occupied North Africa, or his reading of the Christian Scriptures (3.2. and 4.2.1.ii above) is not clear. Considering his late acceptance of the Bible as his ultimate authority (1.1 above), it is possible to give primacy to the former, with the latter simply affirming his conviction. Most likely, however, Augustine would have preferred his convictions to be read conversely. Nevertheless, that "justice is that virtue which gives to each one his due" (*civ. Dei* 19.21), is part of the common ground from which Augustine departs as he counters his opponents.

The fallacy which Augustine identifies through the course of the *City of God* is that his pagan interlocutors had romanticised the secular era and replaced the reality with the ideal. This is argued both from his personal experience as a bishop in the law courts (3.1.2. and 4.2.2.i above; *civ. Dei* 19.6) and with reference to Cicero's definition of a commonwealth (4.2.2.i

---

<sup>79</sup> "Ideology" is used here as inclusive of both philosophy and theology.

above; *civ. Dei* 2.21, 19.21). He expects his opponents to concede that breakdowns in justice were prevalent both in Christianised Rome and in the preceding era, to which they cast their longing gazes. In fact, Augustine would have his opponents go a step further, for in light of his attack on the pagan pantheon earlier in the *City of God* (4.1.1 above), this ought to have been further proof that their gods were either false or impotent. Augustine turns the interpretation of Rome's misfortune as the meting out of pagan divine retributive justice on its head. Instead, he presents it as an example of God's retributive and corrective justice, as well as His mercy. This is an important aspect of his defence against the charge that the Christianisation of the Roman empire was entirely to blame for both the weakening and subsequent sacking of Rome.

For Augustine, however, Rome's failure to uphold justice is directly linked to its belonging to the City of Man. From its very founding, the City of Man has stood at odds with God (4.1.1), who Augustine believes, on account of his Christian convictions, to be the author and dispenser of true justice (3.2.1 above). As a result, the City of Man must contend with the deprivation of perfect goods and a consequent frustrated existence. Although the existence of laws and an ideal of justice are indicative of remnants of God's created order (4.2.2.i above), the basis of worldly justice is the misdirected love of self, as opposed to love of God.

Nevertheless, we are still able to refer to "worldly justice". To understand this, we must refer to Augustine's view regarding the Supreme Good, as explained in 4.2.1 above. The Supreme (Ultimate) Good is, according to the philosophical conversation into which Augustine steps with the *City of God*, that Good for the sake of which, all other goods are sought. It was shown that Augustine believes the Supreme Good to be *peace* (rest). For this reason, the end of justice, as a virtue or good, must be peace. To be sure, Augustine does state that peace exists in the City of Man. This worldly peace is, however, highly volatile, for it is achieved by human beings imposing their wills on one another, often by force. Heavenly peace, in contrast, is constituted in the God-ordained order of the human self in loving submission to God's will. This, in turn, would cause peace to reign within the individual and eventually in human society. Augustine refers to this ordered and peaceful relation of the parts of creation as the "just order of nature".

Returning to the question regarding the place of justice in Augustine's apologetic project, it was stated in Chapter 1.2 that the *City of God* would be regarded as a unified work, with the purpose of answering the accusations of opponents to Christianity by discrediting their

worldviews and presenting a Christian worldview as the only viable alternative. This manner of argumentation is characteristic of protreptic. As Augustine presents his worldview, he does not shy away from those elements which stand at complete odds with his opponents, such as the human Incarnation of the *logos* in Christ (3.2.1) or the resurrection of the dead (4.2.3). Instead, he tackles these head-on, often in an aggressive polemical style,<sup>80</sup> but also continues to piece together a picture of what he believes justice ought to look like, both in practical terms and with eschatological vision.

To bring across the practical aspect of Heavenly justice, he allows his hostile interlocutors to “eavesdrop”, as he exhorts Christians to live lives that reflect God’s just order, by doing justice in the present age (4.2.1.ii above). By doing good (i.e. loving their neighbours), rectifying injustices and treating others equitably (thus practising *mishpat*, discussed in 3.2.2 above), and to live upright and godly lives among the pagans (displaying *tzadeqah*, 3.2.2 above), a taste may be given of the justice offered by allegiance to the City of God.

His depiction of the final establishment of the City of God in perfect, eternal peace and justice, is however the pinnacle of Augustine’s argument against the pagans. Throughout the second main section of the *City of God* (Books 11 to 22), it is clear that Augustine views all of human history as working toward the Final Judgement. The City of Man has been moving steadily toward destruction and eternal death since its beginning, with the restlessness, flux and chaos that Augustine’s target audience felt acutely providing but a taste of what lay ahead. In complete contrast, citizens of the Heavenly City looked forward to eternal peace and stability, and life characterised by perfect justice.

---

<sup>80</sup> Examples include *civ. Dei* 21.17-21.27 and 22.11-12. These have not been included, due to the length and complexity of Augustine’s arguments in these sections. The example of his tactic provided in 4.1.1 (above) with reference to *civ. Dei* 4 (dealing with the problems Augustine saw with fifth-century polytheism) serves the purpose of illustrating this direct defence tactic.

# Bibliography

## Translations and Texts of Primary Works

Atkins, E.M. and Dodaro, R.J. 2001. *Augustine: political writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bettenson, H. 2003. *St. Augustine: concerning the City of God – against the pagans*. London: Penguin Books.

Campbell, R. 2004. *Seneca: letters from a Stoic*. London, UK: Penguin Books.

Pennington, K. Digest of Justinian: Liber I.

<http://faculty.cua.edu/Pennington/Law508/Roman%20Law/JustinianDigest.htm> (29 August 2012).

## Reference List of Secondary Sources

Aune, D.E. 1991. Romans as a Logos Protreptikos in the context of ancient religious and philosophical propaganda. In Hengel, M. and Heckel, U. *Paulus und das antike Judentum*, 91-124. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck.

Blackburn, S. 2005. *The Oxford dictionary of philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP.

Bouman, J. 1987. *Augustinus – Lebensweg und Theologie*. Giessen; Basel: Brunnen Verlag.

Bovon, F. 2010. The soul's comeback: immortality and resurrection in early Christianity. *Harvard Theological Review* 103 (04): 37-406.

Brown, A. 2007. The intellectual debate between Christians and pagans. In Casiday, A. and Norris, F.W. (eds). *The Cambridge history of Christianity, volume 2: Constantine to c. 600*, 248-278. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P.R.L. 1971. *The world of Late Antiquity: from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

----- 1998. *Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, MA; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University.

Cameron, A. 1993. *The later Roman empire: AD 284-430*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Casiday, A. and Norris, F.W. (eds). *The Cambridge history of Christianity. Volume 2: Constantine to c. 600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cavadini, J.C. 1999. Pride. In Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, 679-684. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.

- Cerutti, M.V. 2010. 'Pagan monotheism'? Towards a historical typology. In Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds). *Monotheism between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, 15-32. Interdisciplinary studies in ancient culture and religion 12. Leuven: Peeters.
- Clifford, R.J. and Anatolios, K. 2005. Christian salvation: biblical and theological perspectives. *Theological studies* 66 (4): 739-769.
- Coleman, J. 2000. *Political thought. From ancient Greece to early Christianity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Dulles, A.C. 2005. *A history of apologetics*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Evans, G.R. 2003. Introduction to Bettenson, H. *St. Augustine: concerning the City of God – against the Pagans*, ix-lvii. London: Penguin Books.
- Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). 1999. *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.
- Gasparro, G.S. 2010. One god and divine unity: late antique theologies between exclusivism and inclusiveness. In Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds). *Monotheism between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, 15-32. Interdisciplinary studies in ancient culture and religion 12. Leuven: Peeters.
- Grudem, W. 1994. *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Johnston, D. 1999. *Roman law in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keller, T. 2010. *Generous justice: how God's grace makes us just*. London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.
- Kent, B. 2001. Augustine's ethics. In Stump, E. & Kretzman, N. (eds). *The Cambridge companion to Augustine*, 205-233. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Khalos, M. 2010. Refuting and reclaiming monotheism: monotheism in the debate between "Pagans" and Christians in 380-430. In Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds). *Monotheism between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, 15-32. Interdisciplinary studies in ancient culture and religion 12. Leuven: Peeters.
- Kotzé, A. 2003. The protreptic-paranaetic purpose of Augustine's *Confessions* and its Manichaean audience. DLitt dissertation, University of Stellenbosch.
- Maas, M. 2010. *Readings in Late Antiquity: a sourcebook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London; New York: Routledge.
- MacCormack, S. 1999. Classical authors. In Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, 202-206. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.



- Mann, W.E. 2004. Augustine on evil and original sin. In Stump, E. & Kretzman, N. (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 40-48. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds). 2010. *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 12. Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters.
- Miles, M.R. 2008. *Rereading historical theology: before, during and after Augustine*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- Motyer, J.A. 1993. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: an introduction and commentary*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press.
- Pine-Coffin, R.S. 1961. *Saint Augustine: Confessions*. London: Penguin Books.
- Price, S. 1999. Latin Christian apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian. In Edwards, M., Goodman, M. and Price, S. (eds). *Apologetics in the Roman empire. pagans, Jews and Christians*, 105-130. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rehfeldt, B. (ed. Rehbinder, M.). 1978. *Einführung in die Rechtswissenschaft: Grundfragen, Grundlagen u. Grundgedanken des Rechts*. 4<sup>th</sup> revised edition. Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Rigby, P. 1999. Original sin. In Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, 607-614. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.
- Rist, J.M. 1996. *Augustine: ancient thought baptized*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schreiner T.R. 2008. Romans. In Dennis, L.T., Grudem, W. et al (eds). *The ESV study Bible (English Standard Version)*, 2151-2185. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles.
- Siniooglou, N. 2010. From philosophic monotheism to imperial henotheism: esoteric and popular religion in late antique Platonism. In Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds). *Monotheism between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, 15-32. Interdisciplinary studies in ancient culture and religion 12. Leuven: Peeters.
- Sire, J.W. 2009. *The universe next door*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity-Varsity Press Academic.
- TeSelle, E. 1993. Justice, love, peace. In Neuhaus, R.J. (ed.). *Augustine today*, 88-110. Encounter Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Uhlade, K. 2007. *Expectations of justice in the age of Augustine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Van Bavel, T.J. 1999. Love. In Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, 509-516. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.

- Van Dam, R. 2007. Bishops and society. In Casiday, A. & Norris, F.W. (eds). *The Cambridge history of Christianity. Vol. 2, Constantine to c. 600*, 343-366. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Oort, J. 1991. *Jerusalem and Babylon: a study into Augustine's City of God and the sources of his doctrine of the two cities*. Leiden: Brill.
- Vessey, M. 1999. Jerome. In Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.). *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, 460-462. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.
- Weithman, P. 2001. Augustine's political philosophy. In Stump, E. & Kretzman, N. (eds). *The Cambridge companion to Augustine*, 234-252. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, T. 2001. Biblical interpretation. In Stump, E. & Kretzman, N. (eds). *The Cambridge companion to Augustine*, 59-70. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolterstorff, N. 2008. *Justice: rights and wrongs*. Princeton, NJ; Oxfordshire, UK: Princeton University Press.

## Appendix A: Summary of *civ. Dei* 19-22

The following summary presents Books 19 to 22 of the *City of God*.<sup>81</sup> They form the final section of the work, following Augustine's own division thereof into five parts, according to a letter to the layman Firmus, as first noted by Dom C. Lambot and published in 1939 (Bettenson 2003: lxvi):

1. Books 1-5: "[...] against those that maintain that the worship of the gods [...] leads to happiness in this life."
2. Books 6-10: "[...] against those who maintain that suchlike deities are to be worshipped by rites and sacrifices in order to secure happiness in the life to come."
3. Books 11-14: The origins of the two cities.
4. Books 15-18: The progress (or development) of the two cities.
5. Books 19-22: The predestined ends of the two cities.

Another common way of breaking up the text is found in Augustine's *Retractationes* (Evans 2003: xxxiii):

1. Books 1-10: "The 'vain opinions' of the adversaries of the <i>City of God</i> ".
2. Books 11-22:
a. Books 11-14: the origins of the two cities; the city of this world and the City of God.
b. Books 15-17: the growth of the two cities.
c. Books 18-22: the 'due ends' of the two cities.

Augustine, reflecting on his life work near the end of his days, says the following regarding his purpose in writing the *City of God*: "Burning with zeal for the house of God I began to write the books of the *City of God* against the blasphemies and errors [of its enemies]" (*Retract.* 2.69; cited in Evans 2003: xxxiii).

### Summary:

---

<sup>81</sup> A few points (those of little importance to this thesis and its purposes) are simply taken from the headings given to the chapters by Bettenson.

**Book 19:**

*What is man's supreme Good? Peace. Everything is directed towards peace, even war. (Bettenson: lxiii)*

1. Discussion of how philosophers had defined the Supreme Good and Evil. *"For our Final Good is that for which other things are to be desired, while it is itself to be desired for its own sake. The Final Evil is that for which other things are to be shunned, while it is itself to be shunned on its own account"*. Philosophers mentioned: Varro, Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans, Plato, Old- and New Academy, Aristotle.
2. Varro: 3 kinds of Supreme Good.
3. Varro influenced by the Old Academy. A discussion of virtue.
4. The Christian view of the Supreme Good and Supreme Evil, contrasted with that of the philosophers, who found the Supreme Good within themselves.
  - Justice considered a "highest good" / discussion of the virtue of justice
5. Social life as both valuable and dangerous.
  - Peace
  - Enmity
6. Earthly judges and the mistakes made by them (to the point of perpetrating injustice in pursuit of justice), when the truth is hidden. See also: *Epistles* 133, 134 and 139.
7. Differences in language divide people.
8. Friendship between men: inevitably plagued by life's trouble.
9. Friendship between men and the holy angels? Obscured by demons' deception.
  
10. Victory over temptation and resultant virtuous living will be rewarded.
  
11. Everlasting peace in the City of God (the City's predetermined end) is the final fulfilment of all the earthly goods of the saints.
12. Peace is every person's/creature's aim, and is even the purpose of war.
  - Analysis of ego-centric peace
  - Natural justice in social context: God-given peace
    - o Note: 'natural' = of God; 'evil' = perverse/perverted/disordered
13. Peace = order. Universal peace (order) kept by a law of nature (God-given nature, not "sinful nature"), despite any disturbances: the individual attains, by God's ordinance, to the nature he has deserved by his free choice.
  - Common grace and temporal peace viewed in the eternal context.

- 14.** Law and order (earthly and heavenly) by which individuals and society (from family to society at large) are governed. The righteous live by the faith and not by sight.
- 15.** Man's natural (God-given?) freedom and slavery/enslavement as the just deserts (wages) of sin.
- order = peace = natural justice
  - 1<sup>st</sup> cause of slavery = sin, which is dealt out ultimately by God, who is perfectly just.
  - most pitiless enslaving lust = lust for power/domination
  - slavery as punishment is ordained by the law which enjoins in the preservation of the order of nature (see 19.13).
  - slavery will come to an end when "injustice is annihilated, and God is all in all."
- 16.** Masters and slaves as equals in the Christian household. Punishment as beneficial to the offender, to keep the peace (and order!). Note also: hermeneutic circle: household order and order of the city determine (and are determined by) each other.
- 17.** Earthly and heavenly peace (within each city) + the origin of peace and discord between the two cities.
- Peace defined again: "[...] for this peace is the perfectly ordered and completely harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of each other in God".
- 18.** Steadfast certainty of the Christian faith (unlike the hesitations of the New Academy).
- 19.** Christian behaviour and dress. (also Bishops as having a task based on love of the Truth.)
- 20.** Peace = Supreme Good of the City of God. The citizens of the City of God are made happy now, by their hope in what is to come.
- 21.** Back to Cicero's Scipio's definition of a commonwealth: was it *ever* a reality in Rome? (not according to Augustine!)
- **Note:** commonwealth = "the weal of the people"(Cicero)
    - A people = a "multitude united in association by a common sense of right and a community of interest." (Cicero)
    - "common sense of right" discussed, showing that a state cannot be maintained without *justice*, and where there is no *justice*, there can be no *right* (the two are inextricably linked).
  - *Extensive discussion of justice*
- 22.** The true God, to whom alone sacrifice is due. (cf. Books 1-5?)
- 23.** Porphyry (an adversary) on the oracles about Christ given by the gods Apollo (pp. 884-887) and Hecate (pp. 887ff) and the conflicting views in them, though Porphyry agrees with both.

**24.** Alternative (Christian?) definition of ‘people’ and ‘commonwealth’.

- **Keywords:** rational beings, love, God, law, justice.

**25.** True virtue is impossible without true (Christian) religion. Without true religion, the soul is subject to the rule of vicious demons.

**26.** Peace in this life, of the people alienated from God, is *used* by God’s People in their pilgrimage.

**27.** Peace of God’s servants – a perfect tranquillity, not experienced in this life, although a life of faith makes some degree of peace possible in this life (peace and justice for the individual, now and in eternity discussed).

**28.** The end of the wicked.

**Book 20:**

*The last judgement. Law and order. More discussion of Scipio's republic. (Bettenson: lxiii)*

1. God judges at all times, but the subject of Book 20 is the Final Judgement, when Christ will come to judge both the living and the dead; good summary of the mechanics of the Judgement.
  - “For as the Apostle says, ‘There is no injustice in God’ (Rom 9:4); and as he says in another place, ‘His judgements are inscrutable, and his ways untraceable’ (Rom 11:33).
2. Diversity of human fortunes (context: theodicy issue); but God’s judgements not absent, rather untraceable.
  - More about God’s just character and the justice of His judgements – all to be revealed at the Final Judgement
  - Set no store to temporal goods, but pursue Eternal Good
3. Solomon (Ecclesiastes!)
4. NT and OT testimonies re. the Final Judgement.
5. Jesus’ statements re. the Final Judgement.
  - Final Judgement
  - Present intermingling of the cities of God and man, and future Judgement
    - o See also letter to Hesychius *On the End of the World* (Ep., 199, 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 letters to Hecychius, bishop of Salona, in answer to a query about the apocalyptic chronology in Dan. 9:24ff)
6. Two resurrections for the people of God: 1<sup>st</sup> of the soul (resurrection of mercy), 2<sup>nd</sup> of the body (final resurrection of judgement).
7. The two resurrections, and discussion of the meaning of the 1000years; the descriptions of John in the Apocalypse, and their interpretation.
  - Also Satan’s seduction of humankind before his binding
8. The Devil bound and ‘unloosed’
  - Aside: Augustine’s strong view of baptism
9. The nature of the kingdom of the saints lasting 1000years (as it is now, while the Devil is bound?), and its difference from the Eternal Kingdom.
10. Resurrection: only of the body, or of the soul too? Also some discussion of millennialism, if the resurrections are only physical.
11. Gog and Magog, agents of Satan, who will persecute until the end of the world.
12. Gog and Magog consumed by fire. The fire of the Final Punishment.
13. The final persecution of the Church (300½ years) and how it fits into the 1000yrs.
14. The condemnation of Satan and his followers. Summary: the resurrection of the body and the Final Judgement.

15. Augustine explains: the dead given up by the sea, Death, and Hades.

16. The New Heaven and the New Earth

17. The *eternal* glory/splendour of the City of God (the Church of God) after the End.

18–30. Biblical statements/references concerning the End:

18. **2 Peter 3: 3-13** (the Last Judgement as certain and the precedents for that certainty)
19. **2 Thess. 2: 1-12** (Antichrist before the Day of the Lord)
20. **1 Thess. 4: 13-17** (the resurrection of the dead etc.)
21. **Isaiah 26:19 [LXX], 66:12-16**; also other passages (the resurrection and judgement of retribution)
22. The saints will “go out” [of the City] and so, know about the punishment of the wicked, who won’t know about the “joy of the Lord” [inside the City].
23. **Daniel 7 and 12** (Antichrist, judgement, reign of the saints)
24. **Psalms** (the End and the final Judgement)
25. **Malachi 3: 1-6** (Last Judgement and the purifying punishments)
26. “Sacrifices pleasing to the Lord” (various Scriptures)
27. **Malachi 3:17-4:3** (God will return to sep. the righteous from the wicked)
28. Mosaic Law to be interpreted “spiritually”, as opposed to literally.
29. Elijah’s return before the judgement, for the conversion of the Jews.
30. OT prophecies of the Judgement don’t mention Christ explicitly. But some passages, where God is the speaker, make it clear that He is identified with Christ.



**Book 21: The punishment of the people of Satan (citizens of the city of man)**

*How is eternal punishment possible? Pain of soul or body? Does temporal punishment exist after death for some? (Bettenson: lxiii)*

1. The punishment of the wicked treated first, because after all are united with their resurrection bodies, it's less credible (for Augustine's detractors) that eternal bodies (of the damned) should endure eternal punishment, than that eternal bodies (of the saints) should go on in eternal felicity.
2. Argument that a material body *can* be exempt from destruction by fire.
3. Answer to the complaint that a physical body can't endure pain and simultaneously be incapable of death.
4. Evidence from nature that bodies *can* live under conditions of torture.
5. Many things (miracles/marvels) should be believed although no rational proof is available.
6. Though some marvels aren't natural (of God): many are the products of man's ingenuity or of demons' wiles.
7. God's omnipotence is the basis for belief in marvels. / If God had (has) power to create all things, and to fill His creation with all manner of marvels, why not raise the bodies of the dead and punish the damned into eternity?
8. If some or other property of a substance changes, that is not contrary to nature. (answer to the objection that human bodies are not constituted now, to allow for the eternal punishment sans physical demise argued for by Augustine)
9. The nature of the eternal punishment: warnings from Scripture (e.g. Isaiah 66:24) not to be taken lightly – acc. to Augustine, the fire will be material and is not meant to be a mere picture.
10. If Hell's fire is taken to be material, can it affect immaterial demons? Conclusion from Scripture: yes.
11. The proportion of [*duration of offense / sin*] : [*duration of punishment*]. The objection that eternal punishment for temporal sins is unjust doesn't stand; even in this life, the duration of the punishment does not perfectly accord with the time taken to commit the offence.
12. It is the gravity/magnitude of the Original Sin that makes *all* who are outside the Saviour's grace liable to eternal punishment.
13. The Platonists' idea that even punishment after death is simply to the end purification, is false.
14. Some of the temporal pains (of this life) that are part and parcel of the human condition.
15. God's redeeming work (in its entirety) has reference to the world to come.
16. The different 'laws of grace' that govern every stage of the regenerate's life.

**Some other opinions:**

17. The opinion that the punishment of the damned will not last forever.

18. The opinion that all men will be saved from damnation by the intercession of the saints on their behalf.
19. The opinion that even heretics will escape punishment, through participation in the Body of Christ (at the Lord's table).
20. The belief that all members of the Catholic church (having had the sacraments administered to them etc.) will be saved, regardless of how irreligious/evil/sinful their lives.
21. *See Chapter 20* above.
22. The opinion that those who also engaged in acts of mercy will not be condemned for their offenses.

**Augustine refutes the opinions in Chapters 17-22:**

23. Refutation of those who hold that devils (demons) may also be saved.
24. Refutation of the view that the guilty will be spared through the saints' intercession.
25. Refutation of the notion that heretics of evil life / lapsed Catholics / Catholics of evil life will be saved from eternal punishment through the sacraments.
26. The meaning of having Christ as the 'foundation'; and of 'saved by fire'.
27. Refutation of the argument that works of mercy will atone for persistent wickedness.

**Book 22: The resurrection and eternal bliss of God's people (citizens of the City of God)**

*Creation and resurrection. Miracles still occur in the Christian Church. The Vision of God. (Bettenson: lxiii)*

1. This book to treat of the eternal bliss of the City of God. The creation of angels and men. God's justice and grace.
2. The eternal and unchangeable *will of God*. (God's justice cont.)
3. In fulfilment of OT covenant and prophecy: eternal bliss for the saints.
4. Answer to the worldly-wise (scholars and philosophers) who claim that earthly bodies *cannot* be transferred to Heaven.
5. Christ's physical resurrection and ascension, which some refuse to believe, despite its general acceptance.
6. On the 'founding fathers': unlike the Romans, who made Romulus a god because they loved him (ref. to Cicero), the Church loved/loves Christ, because they believe Him to be God.
7. The world's belief in Christ as due to the power of God and *not* to human persuasion, for the gospel was accepted during time of great scepticism.
8. Miracles, which occurred in the past to make the world believe, have not ceased now that the world does believe. Examples of 'contemporary' miracles known to Augustine. Also mention of the fact that those who ask for miracles now are their own biggest obstacle to belief; they are simply trying to disprove belief in the miracles of the past.
9. Miracles performed by the martyrs in Christ's name bear witness to their faith in Christ.
10. The superiority of the martyrs over the demons, and the difference between their miracles.
11. An answer to the Platonists contention that an earthly body cannot exist in Heaven. "*The conclusion is that the Platonist's arguments for the classification of the elements by weight cannot set limits on the power of the Almighty God so that he cannot make our bodies capable even of a dwelling in the heavens.*"
12. Reply to the calumnies (incl. examinations of people's physical condition at death and relation to resurrection) with which unbelievers pour scorn on the Christian belief in resurrection.
13. The problem of abortive births.
14. The question whether infants at the resurrection will have the body they would have had at maturity.
15. Will all resurrected bodies attain the stature of the Lord's body?
  16. Meaning of "shaped into the likeness of God's Son"
17. Will women retain their sex in the resurrected body? Augustine argues "yes"!

18. Christ, the perfect man; and the Church, his Body and his fulfilment. Note ref. to Eph. 4:10ff.
19. The perfection of the resurrected body.
20. The restoration of the whole body at the resurrection, regardless of how its parts may have been dispersed.
21. The new and spiritual body of the saints.
  
22. The miseries to which Original sin has exposed mankind, relief from which only comes through the grace of Christ Jesus: *“From this life of misery, a kind of hell on earth, there is no liberation save through the grace of Christ our Saviour, our God and our Lord. His name is Jesus; and Jesus, we know, means Saviour. And, above all, it is his grace which will save us from a worse life, or rather death, after this life; and that death will be everlasting. [...]”*
  
23. Additional afflictions peculiar to the saints “in their warfare against evil propensities, and in the temptations and perils in which those battles involve them” and their triumph over them in Christ!
24. The many good things in this life, even though it is subject to condemnation.
  
25. The obstinacy of those who deny the resurrection of the body.
26. Porphyry’s contention, that the soul can have no contact with a body in order to enjoy true bliss, is refuted by Plato.
27. *“Plato and Porphyry each made certain statements which might have brought them to become Christians if they had exchanged them with one another.”* The contradictions between Plato and Porphyry. If they had yielded to one another in these they would not be far from the truth.
28. How Plato, Labeo, or even Varro might have brought themselves to a true faith in the resurrection, if their opinions had been combined into a unified statement.
  
29. The kind of vision with which the saints will see God, in the world to come, for now it is beyond our intellectual capabilities to know/understand the peace of God that the saints will experience when the City of God is established.
30. The eternal and perfect felicity of the saints in the City of God, in its perpetual Sabbath rest/peace.

• **Postscript:**

*“And now, as I think, I have discharged my debt, with the completion, by God’s help, of this huge work. It may be too much for some, too little for others. Of both these groups I ask forgiveness. But of those for whom it is enough I make this request: that they do not thank me, but join with me in rendering thanks to God. Amen. Amen.”*

## Appendix B: James Sire's seven basic questions of world view<sup>82</sup>

In the introduction to his insightful catalogue of modern worldviews, Sire gives seven questions designed to get to the heart of every worldview. This follows on from his claim that one's worldview may be expressed in a set of presuppositions (Sire 2009: 20). The following extract (Sire 2009: 22-23) is given as an expansion of the worldview analysis frame mentioned in 4.2.1 (page 43n55). Though it is not referred to in the main text, it has informed some of the stances taken in this paper to some degree.

1. ***What is prime reality? [...]*** To this we might answer: God, or gods, or the material cosmos. Our answer here is the most fundamental. It sets the boundaries for the answers that can consistently be given to the other six questions. [...]
2. ***What is the nature of external reality [...]***? Here our answers point to whether we see the world as created or autonomous, as chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit; or whether we emphasise our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us.
3. ***What is a human being?*** Here we might answer: a highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a naked ape.
4. ***What happens to a person at death?*** Here we might reply: personal extinction, or transformation to a higher state, or reincarnation, or departure to a shadowy existence on "the other side."
5. ***Why is it possible to know anything at all?*** Sample answers include the idea that we are made in the image of an omniscient God or that consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival in a long process of evolution.
6. ***How do we know what is right and wrong? (Grounds for ethics)*** Again, perhaps we are made in the image of a God whose character is good, or right and wrong are determined by human choice alone, [...] or the notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival.
7. ***What is the meaning of human history?*** To this we might answer: to realise the purposes of God or the gods, to make a paradise on earth, to prepare people for a life in community with [...] God.

---

<sup>82</sup> Sire (2009: 23) adds an eighth question in the fifth edition of his book, which deals with the life-orienting core commitments that are consistent with worldview (i.e. worldview as a "matter of the heart"). This question, though it does flesh out the personal implications of the more abstract questions listed here, does not bear much relevance for this paper.

### **Appendix C: The “peace tabulation” of *civ. Dei* 19.13-14**

TeSelle (1993: 92-94) sets out and explains what has been called Augustine’s “peace tabulation” from *civ. Dei* 19.13-14. He does this, drawing on the work of certain German scholars (Harald Fuchs, 1926; Joachim Laufs, 1973). This peace tabulation is helpful inasmuch as it summarises Augustine’s perspective on peace both in the City of Man and the City of God. It is given here, without the explanatory comments made by TeSelle:

*The peace of the body is the ordered harmony of its parts, unmolested by pain;*

*The peace of the irrational soul is the ordered repose of its appetites, undisturbed by desire;*

*The peace of the body and soul together is the ordered life and health of the living being, without dissolution by death.*

*The peace of the rational soul is an ordered agreement between knowledge and action;*

*The peace of the mortal person with God is an ordered obedience, in faith, to the eternal law.*

*The peace of human beings is an ordered concord, loving one’s neighbour as oneself, doing no harm, helping wherever possible;*

*The peace of the household is the ordered concord of command and obedience among those who live together;*

*The peace of the city is an ordered concord of command and obedience among citizens.*

*The peace of the celestial city is the supremely ordered and supremely harmonious association of enjoying God and each other in God.*

*The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order, and order is the dispensing of all things, equal and unequal, giving to each thing its place.*