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Redemption and Politics in Augustine of Hippo: The Political Appropriation of Theology

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This dissertation is a study of the connection of Augustine of Hippo's theology with his political practice. Instead of limiting Augustine's theology to his exposition of human depravity, this study focuses particularly on the symbols of redemption within Augustine's soteriology. Augustine's two-cities model implicitly provides for the differentiation of the experience of redemption into symbols that are temporally present and common to all human beings. It is argued that Augustine's *City of God* demonstrates that the possibility of redemption and its attendant symbols within the experience are subtly appropriated into the political sphere as the motivation and logic for political practices in so far as the practices convey the order of reality that these symbols seek to represent. This dissertation develops a theory of theological appropriation from Augustine's implicit patterns that provides an avenue for a nuanced treatment of the limitations of politics and a chastened account of earthly progress that remains relevant for contemporary political theory. In other words, since the experience of redemption is not limited to Christian theology, this allows the further development of political practices that can be enacted and shared in the presently intermingled world. The development of appropriation, however, is not without its own difficulties. The existence of redemption also creates the possibility of misappropriating the symbol of redemption in support of political practices that cannot properly function as representations of redemption in the order of reality. In contrast to Augustine's anti-pagan and anti-Pelagian works, which maintain the tensions of appropriated redemption,

Augustine's involvement in the controversy over Donatism provides an example of support for political practices that misappropriate redemption by seeking to politically coerce individuals into redemption. Practices based on misappropriation fail to function in the way they were intended and harm the political community by lessening its attunement to reality. The present account of appropriation allows for the development of Augustine's implicit usage and also corrects his errors and excesses using his own tools. This study demonstrates that Augustine remains a relevant partner in the continuing discussion of the foundations and maintenance of liberal democratic order.

This dissertation by David Benjamin Beer fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in political theory approved by David J. Walsh, Ph.D., as Director, and by Claes G. Ryn, Ph.D., and Joshua Mitchell, Ph.D., as Readers.

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David J. Walsh, Ph.D., Director

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Claes G. Ryn, Ph.D., Reader

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Joshua Mitchell, Ph.D., Reader

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife, Elizabeth, who has been my steadfast support.

"'But he shouldn't say these things about Rome,' people have been saying about me. 'Oh, if only he would shut up about Rome!' As though I were hurling taunts, and not rather interceding with the Lord, and in whatever way I can encouraging you…So what am I saying, when I don't shut up about Rome, other than what they say about our Christ is false."[1]

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[1] *S* 105.12. Augustine, "Sermon 105," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part III-Sermons, Vol. 4*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), 94-95.

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Abbreviations, Translations, and Editions

The following list provides the abbreviations used for citing Augustine's primary works as well as indicates the system that has been used for locating the passage within the Latin text. I have also itemized the translations and editions that have been used for the respective texts listed. As much as possible, I have endeavored to utilize the new editions and translations of Augustine's works being produced by the Augustinian Heritage Institute and New City Press for the as yet incomplete series *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, though more traditional translations and editions have also been consulted and referenced.

DCD   *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*). Citations for the Latin text will appear: *DCD* book.chapter. I will also provide and cite an English translation. Unless otherwise noted, the preferred translation will be *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Dyson's translation will be abbreviated as *CG* followed by pagination. I have also consulted and occasionally cite the following editions and translations: *City of God,* trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 1984); *City of God*, ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*: *First Series, Vol. 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004); *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*) ed. G.E. McCracken et al Bilingual edition. 7 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969-1988).

DDC   *De Doctrina Christiana (On Christian Doctrine).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *DDC* book.chapter.paragraph. *Christian Doctrine* ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*: *First Series, Vol. 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004). *The*

Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part I-Books, Vol. 11: Teaching Christianity, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996).

DGL   *De Genesi ad Litteram (Literal Meaning of Genesis).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *DGL* book.chapter.paragraph. *Literal Meaning of Genesis* in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part I-Books, Vol. 13: On Genesis,* trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002).

DT   *De Trinitate (On the Trinity).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *DT* book.chapter.paragraph. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part I-Books, Vol. 5: The Trinity* trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991). (The reader should be warned that Hill's translation features his own chapter divisions within the books. The traditional citations will be preserved here.) *On the Holy Trinity* ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Vol. 3* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

DVR   *De Vera Religione (On True Religion)* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *DVR* chapter.paragraph. *On True Religion* in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part I-Books, Vol. 8: On Christian Belief* ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005).

Conf. *Confessiones* (*Confessions*). Citations for the Latin text will appear: *Conf.* book.chapter. *Confessiones* (*Confessions*) ed. William Watts, Bilingual edition. 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-61). *Confessions* trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961). *Confessions* ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post- Nicene Fathers: First Series, Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

CFM *Contra Faustum Manichaeum (Reply to Faustus the Manichaean).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *CFM* book.chapter. "Reply to Faustus the Manichaean" in *The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the Donatists* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Vol. 4* ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

EnP *Enarrationes in Psalmos (Expositions of the Pslams).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *EnP* psalm.paragraph. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part III-Homilies, Vol. 15-20*: *Expositions of the Psalms* ed. John Rotelle et al (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000-2004).

Ep. *Epistulae (Letters).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *Ep.* letter.paragraph. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part II-Letters, Vol. 1-4,* ed. John Rotelle et al (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001-2005).

IoEp *Tractatus in epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos (Tractates on the First Epistle of John).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *IoEp* homily.paragraph. *Gospel of John, First Epistle of John, and Soliloquies* ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: Vol. 7* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

Mor. *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* (*Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*). Citations for the Latin text will appear: *Mor.* book.chapter.paragraph. *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* in *Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the Donatists* ed. Philip Schaff in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Vol. 4* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

Retr. *Retractationes (The Retractions).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *Retr.* book.chapter.paragraph. *The Retractions* trans. Sister M. Inez Bogan, R.S.M in *The*

Fathers of the Church, Vol. 60 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

S *Sermones (Sermons).* Citations for the Latin text will appear: *S* sermon.paragraph. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part III-Sermons, Vol. 1-11* ed. John Rotelle et al (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990-1997).

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The completion of a project of this nature offers the happy opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many people without whom it would not have been possible. My family has always been the center of my support. Words cannot begin to express the debt of gratitude owed to my wife for her sacrifice and encouragement as I finished college, proceeded through graduate school, and embarked on the writing of this dissertation. My own great and arduous work would not have been possible without her much greater effort in sustaining me through the highs and lows of writing, all while watching over our two daughters. My parents similarly deserve credit for nurturing my earliest predilections into an honest vocation and for providing kind assistance through my university years.

My first steps toward an academic vocation took place in classrooms at Georgetown University under the direction of James V. Schall, S.J., Patrick Deneen, George Carey, and Joshua Mitchell. The time outside the classroom, however, provided the surest foundations for all my subsequent ambitions. The *Geistkreis* of students and future-scholars who gathered at the home of Rouven Steeves during those years contributed to the creation of the most fertile ground for growth in thought and character. Beyond simply providing hospitality and lively conversation, Rouven Steeves and his whole family lovingly took my wife and I into their lives and have been the greatest friends and mentors ever since. I would have lost my way on the path through graduate school numerous times had it not been for Rouven's guidance and wisdom.

The Department of Politics at the Catholic University of America provided a most welcoming home for my graduate studies. Courses with David Walsh, Claes Ryn, Dennis Coyle, and Philip Henderson helped me develop the initial ideas I had developed about

Introduction

In the midst of Cold War anxieties over the conflict between the competing worldviews of the Western nations and the Soviet Bloc, Senator John P. East expressed the need for a revitalization of the political study of St. Augustine. East was concerned that without the Augustinian tradition political science would have no response to behavioral science or ideology that "confines itself to a sterile world of utopian abstractions and attempts to coerce reality into conforming to that world."[1] East's concern to reinvigorate the Augustinian tradition was understandable in light of the threat posed by the ideology of the Soviet empire. Whether or not they were aware of East's call, many scholars of the last century responded to the pressures he indicated and turned to Augustine in order to develop the defenses of the Western tradition. As Joshua Mitchell has noted on pre-1989 Augustinian scholarship, "When an enemy is palpable, so too are the defenses that are rallied against it."[2] During this period Augustinian scholarship received renewed attention.

Augustine's two-cities model clearly poses a formidable weapon against all utopian ideologies, and he has served well in this capacity for prior generations. However, in light of the cessation of the Cold War through the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the receding memory of the great ideological crisis centered on World War II, we may honestly wonder what relevance is left for the great Church Father beyond a historical footnote. What should we make of Augustine in a world that is not so explicitly dominated by the desire to coerce reality, but rather increasingly focuses on narrow questions of individuals within a democratic society? The changed context of our political world seems to call for a new

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[1] John P. East, "The Political Relevance of St. Augustine," *Modern Age*. 16:2, (1972), 167.
[2] Joshua Mitchell, "Review: The Uses of Augustine, after 1989," *Political Theory*. 27:5, (1999), 695

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reading of Augustine if he is to retain any relevance. The need to re-evaluate Augustine after the Cold War gives us the chance to reformulate the focus of standard Augustinian scholarship and remember why Augustine must be at the foundation of any philosophical or political reflection.

At the intersection of antiquity and the Middle Ages, philosophy and revelation, Rome and Christendom, stands Augustine of Hippo. The overlapping position that Augustine represents, however, is not easily handled within the contemporary divisions of the scholarly field. Philosophers, theologians, and political theorists each generally handle Augustine's work differently than their academic counterparts in other disciplines, and there is very little commonality or intermixing between them. This is incredibly problematic for the interpretation of Augustine, as he knew no firm division between his philosophical and theological reflections.

Academic myopia is a particularly acute problem for the political interpretation of Augustine. The horrors of the twentieth century's experiments with ideologies – both totalitarian and utopian – emphasized reflection on Augustine's writings on human depravity, which provided a potent reminder of the deficiencies of human nature and the prideful basis of all ideologies. However, the overwhelming attention that depravity and the human condition received also served to mask the wider context of Augustine's writings and has created difficulty in determining what further Augustine might offer for a properly chastened understanding of human achievement and progress after the collapse of ideological regimes in the twentieth century.

The required reevaluation can be accomplished with a nuanced treatment of the full-range of Augustine's theological reflections. In order to understand Augustine and grasp the

breadth of the explicit and latent resources he provides to the study of politics we need to work within his theological reflections; particularly, we need to recover the importance of redemption and understand how it fits into the present world through the life of individuals. For contemporary political theory this means reconciling the political implications of Augustine's exposition of human depravity with his theological concern for human redemption.

The general consensus regarding Augustine is that he locates the fundamental problem of politics in human sin, and therefore, calls for the restraint of blatant sin through political institutions as well as the limiting of political power in light of pervasive depravity. This narrowly represents Augustine, however, as only politically relevant in his development of humanity's selfish motivations. Against such overly pessimistic, and often subsequently otherworldly expositions, there have been more recent attempts to provide a neutral or even positive reading of Augustine's political outlook, but this in turn has ignored, isolated, or redefined certain Augustinian tenets in order to provide a palatable product for modern sensibilities.

This dissertation seeks to navigate the tensions relating to the Augustinian conception of limited government and to develop a nuanced treatment by examining the broader theological context of Augustine's work. A fuller account provides proper concern for human depravity as well as a chastened account of political order and progress, all while avoiding the pitfalls of perfective politics. What is commonly missed or misconstrued in the political study of Augustine is how his discussion of human depravity is situated in a broader theological context of redemption through mediation as the divine response to humanity's diremption. Few have considered that the truly bedeviling problem of politics is not

depravity, but rather humanity's redemption, the restraint of sin within individual persons and their restitution. Augustine's reflections provide us an avenue to consider the political importance of redemption that is so commonly missed.

The main argument of this dissertation is that while the Christian category of redemption is strictly theological in operation, its existence in reality provides possibilities and a pattern for its appropriation (as well as misappropriation) into politics that are subtly present in Augustine's political reflections as well as available as latent resources for his continuing relevance to political theory. Appropriation is the theoretical operation of claiming or utilizing theologically representative symbols as the basis for representation in political projects. Consequently, misappropriation is the impermissible transfer of symbols that requires them to provide more representation than is possible or requires symbols to function in a way that violates the internal logic of their experiential basis. By demonstrating and developing Augustine's practical method of appropriation, it is possible to chart a course for drawing ever-present resources from theological reflection for political order and further innovation that will neither forestall continuing discussion, nor diminish the distinctions between theology and politics that can either prevent or correct misappropriation.

The development of the concept of appropriation borrows heavily from Eric Voegelin's work and helpfully serves to clarify the ambiguous connection that exists within the scholarly literature between Voegelin and Augustine. Voegelin will be a constant, though at times silent, companion throughout this work. While Augustinian appropriation develops certain Voegelinian insights, it is also hoped that Augustinian appropriation also offers a further advance by providing more resources for the continuation of Voegelin's work in relation to both Christianity and political liberalism.

Outline of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of six chapters and concluding remarks. The first chapter provides a literature review that lays out the general narratives on Augustine's political importance, particularly focusing on the various interpretations in light of the common questions of Christ and culture. The literature review demonstrates that the general themes in Augustinian scholarship revolve around developing human depravity without continuing on to consider human redemption. This limitation offers the opening for the theoretical development that is attempted throughout the rest of the work.

Chapter two offers an initial theoretical justification for the development of appropriation by considering the latent resources of Augustine's theology of redemption that are available by adapting Eric Voegelin's work on the representative nature of symbols. Here it is necessary to point out the theoretical lacuna that exists when searching for a consistent Augustinian view on the existence of justice and peace. While Augustine remains committed to the strict division between the two cities that is demonstrated in true justice and peace belonging solely to the heavenly city, he offers tantalizing hints and suggestions for the possibility of relative, earthly representations of these absolute symbols through appropriation.

Chapter three consists of a sustained exploration of the fundamentals of Augustine's theology of redemption contained in the *City of God* and provides the experiences and symbols that are necessary for any subsequent political appropriation. Within Augustine's theology of redemption, we must particularly focus on the main features constitutive of citizenship in the heavenly city. Humanity's heavenly citizenship consists of redemption

from depravity through conversion accomplished by grace. It is also argued that these fundamentals carry more weight in interpreting the *City of God* when the common interpretive focus on ecclesiology is abandoned in favor of emphasizing the soteriological reflections of Augustine' anti-Pelagian writings.

Chapter four demonstrates Augustine's implicit appropriation of theology in his practical political statements and recommendations. The focus here is on making sense of Augustine's vague statements on the political benefits Christianity provides to existing political orders. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that redemption is the crucial factor that conditions his statements about the affects of Christianity in the operation of domestic and imperial duties as well as in the imperial pursuit of expansion through war.

Chapter five follows the previous discussion of Augustine's appropriation with a necessary treatment of the ever-present possibility of misappropriating theological resources. By examining Augustine's involvement in the Donatist controversy it is possible to declare that he himself misappropriated redemption in suggesting a course of action that violated the experiential basis of the theological resources to which his practice laid claim. Considering an actual instance of misappropriation also serves to develop the criteria of evaluation for judging between appropriation and misappropriation in general political practice and theory.

Chapter six serves as a capstone reflection on the importance of the development of appropriation for integrating Augustine into contemporary political theory, particularly with regard to liberal democracy. Here the dissertation seeks to follow, comment, and dovetail David Walsh's examination of liberalism. On my reading, appropriation serves liberal theorists in their pursuit of liberalism's theoretical justification as well as provides an avenue to resources for its maintenance in continued political practice. Appropriation fits nicely

with the development of liberal civic virtues recommended by scholars such as Jean Bethke Elshtain and Eric Gregory.

The dissertation concludes with a few remarks on the need for further discussion of Augustinian appropriation in light of the existential turn in philosophy after the advent of German idealism. The idea of transcendence has been transformed by Hegel's work, and it is necessary to consider Augustine's historical role in the formation of basic tenets of orthodox Christianity in order to be sure that both Augustine and Christianity remain relevant to philosophical and political discussion.

Current State of Augustinian Scholarship

Since the midpoint of the last century, there has been a discernable growth in the

popularity and weight of Augustinian studies. No doubt this is in part a consequence of the

explosion of college attendance and subsequent increase in the professorial ranks. The

statistical aspects alone, however, cannot account for the increasing importance of Augustine

within humane studies. It seems unlikely that seminal thinkers as diverse as Hannah

Arendt,[1] Albert Camus,[2] and Joseph Ratzinger[3] would coincidently devote extended study to

Augustine. Rather, it seems more plausible that the existential anxiety generated by the

confrontation of the totalitarian crisis of the last century would engender a movement to

reconsider the roots of the Western tradition that was being threatened. John von Heyking

has surveyed the influence of Augustine on some of the great thinkers of the last century and

concluded they engaged Augustine "to articulate a nonreductive anthropology open to the

heights and depths of human longings that are otherwise perverted by scientific

Enlightenment accounts of human beings."[4] Here again, the movement to Augustine

cannot be incidental; his place within the tradition is a crucial intersection of ancient and

medieval themes in both philosophy and theology that have not been superceded in

modernity.

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[1] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius
     Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[2] Albert Camus, *Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism*, trans. Ronald D. Srigley (Columbia:
     University of Missouri Press, 2007).
[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (St. Ottilien: Eos
     Verlag, 1992).
[4] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of
     Missouri Press, 2001), 12.

Despite the monumental and transitional position that Augustine inhabits in the history of ideas, the presentation of his thought and its importance are often rather uninspiring. Some are content to minimize his importance by describing him as a Christian translating and utilizing the more profound thought of Plato. Others try to do him justice by stressing the historic transition represented by the rise of Christianity. The theoretical importance of Christianity, however, has not been a stylish narrative for sometime, and this approach permits other scholars to simply label Augustine as a Christian thinker and assume that he has nothing to say to their non-theological study.

The history of political philosophy is particularly ambivalent and ambiguous toward Augustine. The traditional presentation of Augustine's place within the canon of political theory is a schizophrenic combination of competing views of what aspects take prominence in Augustine's thought and how to translate certain aspects of his conceptions into our own political terms. Indeed, the problem of translating Augustine's context into present circumstances stalled much Augustinian scholarship in the early part of the last century, as scholars and students alike attempted to interpret Augustine as dealing with the relations of church and state in ways anachronistic to Augustine's historical context.[5] The schizophrenic nature of Augustinian interpretation arises from the clash and competition of dueling interpretations that are each plausibly supported from Augustine's own work without any clear conception of how they might be reconciled. This schizophrenic nature of Augustinian interpretation has much to do with the relation (or lack thereof) of theology and politics within the scholarly community. Political theorists tend to neglect or mishandle Augustine's

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[5] Cf. John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God'* (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2007).

theological context and concepts and theologians tend to be naïve or shortsighted about political possibilities and realities.

H. Richard Niebuhr

The problem set that vexes theologians and political theorists alike is often known by the terms set in H. Richard Niebuhr's famous explication of the question of Christ and culture, which still remains a valuable starting point for a general discussion of Augustine. In his classic work, *Christ and Culture*, originally published in 1951, Niebuhr outlines prevalent approaches and relationships that Christians have demonstrated toward the culture or society in which they have dwelt. He makes no claim to be exhausting the subject or recommending a singular understanding of Christian ethics. In fact, he is quite pointed in his statement that there cannot be *a* Christian ethical approach.[6] Rather, his goal is to offer typological examples in the hope that they will assist and enable others in their analysis of past and present Christian approaches as well as the development of any future Christian approaches.

For his study Niebuhr proposes Weberian typological models for the different positions he thinks have been historically intimated by Christian thinkers and church history. It does not matter whether these positions in their purest expression have ever existed or ever could exist in any actual cultural conditions, they are expounded in their pure form as an analytic construction for hypothetical application and critique. Niebuhr proposes five

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[6] "It must be evident that neither extension nor refinement of study could bring us to the conclusive result that would enable us to say, 'This is the Christian answer.'…the giving of such an answer by any finite mind, to which any measure of limited and little faith has been granted, would be an act of usurpation of the Lordship of Christ which at the same time would involve doing violence to the liberty of Christian men and to the unconcluded history of the church in culture." H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 231-32.

typological categories that are profitably considered as a linear spectrum. At the opposing ends are "Christ of culture" and "Christ against culture," respectively exemplifying the total overlap of Christianity and its surrounding culture or the complete opposition of Christianity to its cultural surrounding. Between these two extremes is a range of three attitudes – "the synthesis of Christ and culture," "Christ and culture in paradox," and "Christ transforming culture" – that can be all be broadly categorized as "Christ above culture." This is to say that each of these subset categories hold to the supremacy of Christ over their cultural settings, but also each understand the implications of that supremacy for culture in different ways.

Confusion over Niebuhr's use of types has been a continual source of difficulty in the scholarly conversation because he references historic Christian thinkers and concrete situations to develop and exemplify his pure types. This blending of hypothetical attitudes and concrete examples often prompts unnecessary argument over how closely the examples of historic figures can be related to the pure exposition of the hypothetical position they are utilized to exemplify. Niebuhr's correlation of types with concrete thinkers has also created the strange fate of permanently affixing these typological labels to certain thinkers or so dominating the scholarly conversation on certain thinkers that it is difficult, if not impossible, for analysis to break out of the sphere of these pure molds.

Niebuhr's use of pure types has certainly affected discussion of Augustine. Though, paradoxically so, because Niebuhr mentions Augustine in conjunction with two of his five typological categories, namely the "Christ against culture" and "Christ transforming culture." Though, he specifically uses Augustine to develop the transformational model and only briefly mentions that he also has aspects of "Christ against culture," it is important to note both of these themes because these categories map neatly onto the tension and conflict

between reading Augustine as rejecting politics or subsuming politics within the mission of the Church.

Since Niebuhr does not strongly correlate Augustine with the rejection of culture, we can briefly deal with the category. The "Christ against culture" type is fundamentally about the "principle of the Lordship of Jesus Christ"[7] against any claims to loyalty from the culture. "The counterpart of loyalty to Christ…is the rejection of cultural society; a clear line of separation is drawn between the brotherhood of the children of God and the world."[8] The rejection of culture is a mandate for the Christian believer because, "It is in culture that sin chiefly resides."[9] We can follow Niebuhr this far if we understand him to mean that fallen humanity organizes itself in culture and therein encapsulates sinful disposition and decisions. While Tertullian, the other great African Father, is a more fitting example of the rejection of culture, Augustine shares in elements of this view throughout his work against Roman paganism.

Niebuhr characterizes the "Christ transforming culture" type as the "great central tradition of the church."[10] In fact, for this concluding typological section Niebuhr drops his normal procedure of offering a theological criticism of the type, which has traditionally been understood to indicate his unstated preference for this model. Niebuhr understands this position to be the moderate heritage of Christianity because it "[does] not take the road of exclusive Christianity into isolation from civilization, or reject its institutions;" rather, this approach is a "more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture."[11] After pointing out

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[7] Ibid., 45.
[8] Ibid., 47-48.
[9] Ibid., 52.
[10] Ibid., 190.
[11] Ibid., 190-91.

elements of this type in the Gospel of John, Niebuhr turns to Augustine as a clearer

exponent of the model. Niebuhr writes, "Christ is the transformer of culture for Augustine

in the sense that he redirects, reinvigorates and regenerates [the] life of man."[12] He thinks

that Augustine's view of grace offers the transformation of antique culture into a Christian

civilizational order. "Everything, and not least the political life, is subject to the great

conversion that ensues when God makes a new beginning for man by causing man to begin

with God."[13]

However, Niebuhr is quick to point out that Augustine himself did not finally hold

such a position. Niebuhr states, "[Augustine] did not actually look forward with hope to the

realization of the great eschatological possibility, demonstrated and promised in the

incarnate Christ – the redemption of the created and corrupted human world and the

transformation of mankind in all its cultural activity."[14] In this, Niebuhr is a bit mystified

why Augustine did not fully develop all of the logical possibilities of his own ideas. Niebuhr

writes, "Why the theologian whose fundamental convictions laid the groundwork for a

thoroughly conversionist [(transformative)] view of humanity's nature and culture did not

draw the consequences of these convictions is a difficult question."[15] Niebuhr seems

genuinely disappointed in Augustine's example and is forced to turn to the English socialist

theologian F. D. Maurice to complete the development of the model.

Niebuhr's models of Christ and culture are usefully considered here not only because

they exemplify dominant motifs for interpreting Augustine, but also because their formation

explains the only road toward their resolution. Niebuhr creates his categories as pure types

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[12] Ibid., 209.
[13] Ibid., 215.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 216.

without any tension or simultaneity. This resistance to enter into theoretical analysis of anything short of pure categories is the key to Niebuhr's puzzlement and disappointment with Augustine's example. Pure types in theology can only be created through neglect of the totality of revelation. The scriptures contain a matrix of non-negotiable aspects that must be held in faithful tension by the believer. It is exactly Augustine's refusal to choose a single aspect of scripture and apply it solely and to the exclusion of other aspects of the canon that prevents him from being a perfect example of conversionist theology. Only F. D. Maurice, who was willing to compromise the witness of scripture by attacking its reliability, is finally able to offer Niebuhr a satisfactory typological example.

Augustine's Political Influence After H. Richard Niebuhr

As a theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr's perspective places greater emphasis on theological questions and his analysis of resulting Christian ethics is limited because he is naïve about political realities. Political theorists examining political order and Christianity have an inversely weighted perspective that is limited in its appreciation for theological difficulties. While Niebuhr misjudged culture, political theorists tend to misjudge theology by over-simplifying the problem set by further limiting Augustine's theology.

Despite their differences, Niebuhr's rejectionist and conversionist types are related through the aspect of human depravity that is critically expressed in both views. This easily grasped piece of Augustine's theology has been latched onto by political theorists and serves as the unifying feature of the standard political literature on Augustine. This focus on depravity has become so common that sin is generally considered the only politically relevant theological concept. With focus on human sinfulness as the hermeneutical tool to engage Augustine's corpus and determine his political relevance, there are four particularly political

interpretive approaches to his political contribution that expand the more basic conceptions

provided by Niebuhr.[16] First, there is a hard realist position that focuses on the coercive

nature of politics as a result of human depravity. Second, there is a soft realist position that

recognizes the manipulative aspects of politics, but also maintains its limits and tends toward

a measure of tolerance and pluralism. Both of these interpretive approaches are state-

centered in their focus. Third, there is political Augustinianism that takes human sinfulness

as justification for a spiritually sanctioned approach to politics that is to varying degrees

ecclesiastic, theocratic, or authoritarian. Fourth, is a politics of confession that is essentially

otherworldly and disengaged from politics because the individual person is exclusively

engaged in repentance for their own sin. These last two approaches both focus on "the

roots of political institutions in personal morality."[17] Despite the individual differences of

these approaches all can be understood as addressing aspects of Augustine's judgment on

human depravity.[18]

As Joanna Scott has noted, "Ironically, it is precisely because the focus of

Augustine's writing and sermons was *not* politics, but rather the odyssey of the pilgrim soul

in the saeculum, that his references to public life and institutions are so intriguing and

conducive to a variety of interpretations."[19] There has been some limited and more recent

attention to the soteriological aspects of Augustine's political theology, but these

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[16] Cf. Joanna V. Scott, "Political Thought, Contemporary Influence of Augustine's" in *Augustine Through the Ages,* ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 658-61.

[17] Ibid., 658.

[18] There are a limited number of outlying commentators who read Augustine as suggesting politics as a positive or natural good. See von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics*; Peter Burnell. "The Status of Politics in St. Augustine's *City of God.*" *History of Political Thought.* 13:1, (Spring 1992), 13-29; and D.J. MacQueen. "The Origin and Dynamics of Society and the State according to St. Augustine." *Augustinian Studies.* 4 (1973), 73-101.

[19] Scott, "Contemporary Influence," 658.

contributions have yet to garner widespread attention or fundamentally shift the scholarly

discourse. Any general approach to interpreting Augustine invariable seems to limit

attention to other aspects of his thought that do not fit well with the pursued line of inquire

and interpretation. Jean Bethke Elshtain comments, "Given this towering enterprise [of

Augustine's entire corpus], it is perhaps unsurprising that attempts have been made to

reduce Augustine to manageable size."[20] The finished product of such "Augustine Lite" (her

term for output of such endeavors) may display the taste of Augustine, but lacks the lasting

and substantial filling. This is demonstrated in briefly surveying the common interpretive

approaches.

Hard Realism: Niebuhr and Deane

As a shorthand expression we might say that those who develop a hard realist

position out of Augustine's writings would agree with Peter Brown's statement: "For

Augustine, this *saeculum* is a profoundly sinister thing."[21] The sinister nature of present

reality, and the politics that typifies human actions within it, derives from the general

unregenerate state of humanity. Dino Bigongiari goes so far as to claim that Augustine's

political theology is simply an outworking of depravity. He writes, "The political

implications of [Augustine's] theology are not hard to trace. All depends, of course, on the

profound pessimism of his theory of predestination…And as a result of it you have St.

Augustine's entire political structure."[22] This is sometimes known as the *propter peccatum*

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[20] Jean Bethke Elshtain. "Why Augustine? Why Now?" in *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 244.

[21] Peter Brown, "Political Society" in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 321.

[22] Dino Bigongiari, "The Political Ideas of St. Augustine" in *The Political Writings of St. Augustine*, ed. Henry Paolucci (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1962), 343-44.

view. Basing political reflections solely on the depraved state of humanity leads to what are generally summarized as pessimistic and/or otherworldly views. Herbert Deane provides an indicative statement in noting, "The fact that this earth is a land of 'dying men,' all mortal and all subject to sin, suffering, and misfortune, is at the root of Augustine's political and social quietism…there is little or no impulse toward social or political reconstruction or amelioration. This life is only the anteroom to eternal life, a place of suffering and punishment for sin and a testing-ground for the virtues of the faithful."[23] While these shorthand caricatures of pessimism and otherworldliness provide some utility, we must be careful of over-reliance on them and wary that they do not condition our response. We must not allow the labels of pessimism and otherworldliness to indicate that the countervailing reaction should be optimistic and worldly. We must find conceptions that do no violence to Augustine's own symbolism and thinking.

The sinfulness of humanity requires human institutions that will account for corruption and respond to it. Reinhold Niebuhr writes, "In political and moral theory 'realism' denotes the disposition to take all factors in a social and political situation, which offer resistance to established norms, into account."[24] However, the institutions themselves cannot be held to the same standard of judgment as the individuals. The hard realist position is based on the firm division Niebuhr enunciated between "moral man and immoral society." Niebuhr notes, "A realistic analysis of the problems of human society reveals a constant and seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the needs of society and the

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[23] Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 151.

[24] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism" in *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (Fairfield: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1977), 119.

imperatives of a sensitive conscience."[25] Whereas society must focus on the necessities of

social life and "strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion,

resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment,"[26] the sensitive moral spirit of the individual

"must strive to realize his life by losing and finding himself in something greater than

himself."[27] The "moral obtuseness of human collectives"[28] makes the disinterestedness of

the individual impossible on the large-scale and requires substantially lower sights for

evaluation.

Herbert Deane's 1963 work, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, further

developed Niebuhr's realism using Augustine as its authoritative spokesman. While setting

out to provide a basic topical compendium of Augustine's major political ideas, Deane first

lays out the theology and psychology of fallen man as the groundwork for everything that

will follow. Deane declares, "Augustine's central political insight [is] the idea of a politics of

imperfection."[29] He explains, "If we wish to understand how social, economic, and political

life operate, and how, indeed, they *must* operate, we have to start with the assumption that

we are dealing, for the most part, with fallen, sinful men. It is they who set the tone and fix

the imperatives of earthly life and its institutions."[30] Deane's realism can be summarized as

the development of the state and its operation.

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[25] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville:
        Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 257.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 272.
[29] Deane, *Political and Social,* 233.
[30] Ibid., 39. Cf. also: "In any earthly state a small number of the citizens may be men who
have been converted by God's grace…However, as long as this world lasts, there will never
be a society or a state made up solely or even predominantly of the saved." Ibid., 116.

Following Niebuhr, Deane sees human political institutions as a secondary level of order lying over the initial level of human depravity. He writes, "Augustine follows this traditional Christian doctrine that society and social life are natural to mankind, and hence are to be sharply distinguished from the state and the political and legal order…[which] are not natural, but are remedial institutions ordained by God after the Fall in order to deal with the changed condition of sinful man."[31] This "remedial" character of earthly politics is a common assertion that runs through the varying proponents and diverse strands that are typified as hard realism.[32] Such a view automatically curtails the dignity of the political realm because anything meant only to correct for a deficiency cannot have its own intrinsically worthy character. George Lavere demonstrates this in his own assessment of Augustine's political implications: "At best, the state is a necessary evil, a corrective device for the restraint of self-centered human beings whose fall from grace has rendered the human condition precarious and, not infrequently, intolerable."[33] According to this remedial view, politics only serves basic and limited ends. Deane similarly notes, "The state, for Augustine, is an external order; the peace that it maintains is external peace – the absence, or at least the diminution, of overt violence."[34]

For strict forms of Augustinian realism, the state holds together the fractured remains of humanity through its manipulative power over individuals. Deane claims that violent coercion and its threat are the only tools that the state has for such an effort. "The

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[31] Ibid., 78.

[32] Cf. "While insisting that the state is neither religious nor moral in its nature or function, Augustine does assign it an indispensable role in the affairs of mankind. Its proper work is remedial and protective – a means of curbing the unruly tendencies of human beings tainted by sin and the effects of sin." George Lavere, "The Political Realism of Saint Augustine," *Augustinian Studies*, 11 (1980), 141.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Deane, *Political and Social,* 117.

state is…a coercive order, maintained by the use of force and relying on the fear of pain as its major sanction for compliance to its command."[35] Deane thought Augustinian realism and pessimism developed the doctrine of original sin into an approach that understands that the "ceaseless application of coercive power is necessary in order to hold in check human pride and the fruits of pride – aggression, avarice, and lust – and to preserve the fabric of civilization which is constantly imperiled by these forces."[36] There is no vision of moral progress present in Deane's Augustinian realism. He declares, "[The state] has no weapons by which it can mold the thoughts, desires, and wills of its citizens; nor is it really concerned to exert such influence. It does not seek to make men truly good or virtuous. Rather, it is interested in their outward actions, and it attempts, with some success, to restrain its citizens from performing certain kinds of harmful and criminal acts."[37] Deane determines that Augustine develops the remedial order of the state to avoid the inevitable anarchy and destruction that would reign among sinful men without its existence.[38]

Various practical and theoretical problems are immediately evident from Deane's account of Augustine's realism. As an example of a practical problem that leads to underlying theoretical problems we may note that as a consequence of his doctrine of the nature and purpose of the state, Deane declares that Augustine provides no political or moral right for rebellion against tyrannical or unjust rulers. "If wicked, sinful men occupy positions of power and authority as judges or kings, they are to be obeyed and there cruelty is to be accepted as divinely ordained discipline and punishment…If anyone attempts to

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 242.
[37] Ibid., 117.
[38] Ibid.

rebel against the established ruler, he is not to be aided but rather opposed."[39] The only

exception that Deane recognizes from Augustine is the obvious injunction against obeying

orders from temporal rulers that clearly violate God's commands.[40] Even here, however,

Deane only countenances "passive disobedience" with "acceptance of the consequence,"

rather than rebellion against the constituted authority.[41]

Deane's argument depends on the extension of Augustine's view of God's

providential control of human history for the purposes of chastisement and correction,

hence his supporting citations from the *City of God* Book 5.19 and 5.21. This view of

providence, however, is entirely negative and neglects Augustine's own positive references to

providence. Augustine declares, "When those who are gifted with true godliness and live

good lives also know the art of governing peoples, nothing could be more fortunate for

human affairs than that, by the mercy of God, they should also have the power to do so."[42]

Augustine here seems to be less pessimistic and otherworldly than Deane's realism would

generally entail.

This leads to the underlying theoretical problem with a vision of hard realism as

developed by either Deane or Niebuhr. This realism highlights the depravity of humanity

and the remedial position of political institutions without accounting for the fact that in

Augustine's theology redemption is the attendant remediation for human depravity. Deane

can come close to thinking about man's political existence in light of God's graciousness to

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[39] Ibid., 145.

[40] Ibid., 149. Cf. "What difference does it make under what rule a man lives…provided only
that those who rule him do not compel him to do what is impious and wicked?" *DCD* 5.17.
English translation: Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (Henceforth *CG*) 217.

[41] Deane, *Political and Social,* 149.

[42] *DCD* 5.19. *CG*. 225.

mankind, as when he notes, "Even to disobedient, prideful man God has been most merciful; He has established new institutions, adapted to the new conditions of sinful existence, in order to keep a check on human greed and violence and to prevent society form collapsing into complete anarchy and chaos."[43] However, Deane's general approach is to consider grace only in its specifically salvific, theological aspect. He correctly notes, "God's grace which brings regeneration and ransom from the captivity to sin cannot serve as the basis for social organizations since, as we have seen, it liberates only a small minority of the mass of sinners;"[44] though this view is limited in terms of the importance that appropriation of redemption plays in the whole of human existence post-Fall.

Niebuhr's realism has the same shortcoming in relation to the existence of redemption, which can be grasped in his view of love. Redemption is an expression of divine love and evokes subsequent, individual expressions of love from humans that should not be typified as expressions of depravity. However, Niebuhr limits such expressions from the corporate realm with his contrast of moral man and immoral society. As Eric Gregory notes, "Niebuhr's account of love offers a taunting impossibility that lies 'beyond history' and has only a shadowy social existence in politics. Sin, finitude, paradox, and political prudence dominate."[45] Niebuhr's rigid contrast leads Charles Norris Cochrane to declare, "To admit as final any dualism between 'moral man' and 'immoral society' is to perpetuate the most vicious of heresies; it is to deny the Christian promise and to subvert the foundations of Christian hope."[46]

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[43] Deane, *Political and Social,* 95-96.

[44] Ibid., 95.

[45] Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 16-17.

[46] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action*

Both Niebuhr and Deane developed their hard realism in opposition to weighty challengers. Niebuhr opposed the enthusiasm for the promises of liberal democracy in his day; and Deane's underlying concern is opposition to the presence of politically perfective authoritarianism in the fascism and communism of the twentieth century. This realism develops by applying Augustine's critique of classical political theory to the political ideologies of the last century. Augustine had critiqued classical political theory in its devoted focus on the best regime. John Rist writes, "Augustine is concerned not with the best regime, let alone with the educational value of the 'best' state, in the classical manner, but with the basic flaws that must be discerned in each and every form of political society…Augustine's more radical concern is to show that all forms of government in the 'earthly city'…are driven by an underlying but perverted love of self and an arrogant contempt or disregard for man's proper subordination to God."[47] Transferring Augustine's observations about "creative politics"[48] into their own time allowed both these realists to respond to challenges in their own day. However appropriate this attention to the corruption of humanity may have been in response to the political ideologies of their own day, it remains incomplete without a concurrent explication of redemption that is not limited only to its eschatological character.

Soft Realism

Soft realists have some basic continuity with the hard realist concerns outlined about; however, they represent a new generation of scholars. Reaching their full maturity in the seventies and eighties, this generation of soft realists remains concerned for the challenges of

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From Augustus to Augustine (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2003), 563.

[47] John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 217.

[48] Cochrane, *Christianity*, 562.

authoritarian ideologies, but did not place as much emphasis on the political possibilities of combating human depravity. While depravity is still an important constitutive element of politics, these soft realists emphasized pluralism and tolerance as responses to humanity's imperfect nature.

Many such soft realists turned to Augustine for resources for their new emphasis. Augustine would be a surprising resource for such an endeavor if viewed solely as the suppressor of the Donatists who had nothing to say other than hammering away at depravity. Soft realists came of age in an era of low cost publishing that engendered a renewed emphasis on reading primary sources and so provided their generation with the necessary demonstrations that Augustine is a far more complex thinker than would be assumed by the previous generation's glosses upon his texts. Jean Bethke Elshtain states, "Augustine creates a complex moral map that offers space for loyalty and love and care, as well as for a chastened form of civic virtue. If Augustine is a thorn in the side of those who would cure the universe once and for all, he similarly torments cynics who disdain any project of human community, or justice, or possibility."[49] This new generation recognized that Augustine was far more complicated than previously suggested.

Rather than justifying an authoritative political expression, soft realists read Augustine as an argument against rigid conformity to principle. Graham Walker provides an indicative expression in writing:

> Taken as a whole, Augustine's political theology would serve as a kind of substantive and principled justification for a policy of muddling through. It amounts to a principled argument against a politics of principle – not, of course, against a politics that consults principle, but against one that takes the attainment of principle to be its

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[49] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 91.

prime task. As we have seen, this is because politics is in essence a provisional palliative for the fallen condition.[50]

The depravity and diremption of humanity are not avoided here, but there is a lessened emphasis on political attainment and consequently, a rejection of some coercive political projects in favor of some acknowledgment of tolerance or political limitations in the pursuit of peace and security.

R. A. Markus

There are many scholars whose interpretations of Augustine fit into the soft realist tradition and could merit serious attention.[51] Oliver O'Donovan has, however, generously declared R. A. Markus as, "The author whose work in this field represents the measure by which other attempts in our generation must be judged."[52] Markus's work represents the standard of the last generation because he so represents the spirit of the last generation through the interpretive construction he places on Augustine. In exuberant enthusiasm for the "secularization thesis" that reigned in his day,[53] Markus attempts to develop what of Augustine's corpus connects with Markus' present. Markus elaborates the common notion of Augustine as a forerunner to the Western tradition, but more particularly goes so far as to

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[50] Graham Walker, "Virtue and the Constitution: Augustinian Theology and the Frame of American Common Sense" in *Vital Remnants: America's Founding and the Western Tradition*, ed. Gray L. Gregg II. (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1999), 137.

[51] Cf. Elshtain, *Augustine*; Oliver O'Donovan, "Augustine's City of God XIX and Western Political Thought," *Dionysius* 11 (1987), 89-110; Linda C. Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government," *Humanitas*, 16:2, (2003), 94-106; James V. Schall, "The 'Realism' of St. Augustine's 'Political Realism': Augustine and Machiavelli," *Perspectives on Political Science*, 25:3, (Summer 1996), 118-23; Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the City of God," *Milltown Studies*, 19/20, 1987, 55-72.

[52] O'Donovan, *City of God* XIX, 90.

[53] For Markus' own account of his influence by contemporary ideas of "secularity," and for his attempt to reevaluate his work in light of the decline of the secularization thesis see Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), 2-3, and *passim*.

claim Augustine's status and relevance are as a proto-liberal, proto-secular, soft-realist. Given the dominant position that Markus represents within the study of Augustine, it is appropriate to proceed swiftly to clarifying and criticizing Markus' work rather than developing his well-known ideas.

Without explicitly addressing the interpretive labels of H. Richard Niebuhr, Markus' work seems to be a reaction against both of Niebuhr's interpretive labels of Augustine's philosophy and politics. This is evident in Markus' rebellion against one-sided interpretations of Augustine. Markus writes, "[Augustine] could accept neither the hostility and opposition to Rome inculcated by the apocalyptic view, nor the near-identification of Christianity and the Roman Empire involved in the Eusebian view. This is the source of the ambivalence which has often misled Augustine's readers and caused scholars to give one-sided evaluations of his position."[54] In all probability, Markus is well aware of H. Richard Niebuhr's work, and we commit no scholarly error in evaluating Markus' work in relation to Niebuhr's question of Christ and culture.

Markus' overall project could be summarized as the attempt to deny H. Richard Niebuhr's themes of either rejection or transformation of the present world. Markus remains within the broad spectrum of realism in asserting that, "'Control of the wicked within the bonds of a certain earthly peace' remained Augustine's fundamental thought about the purpose of government."[55] He continues elsewhere, "If social life is natural, it is nevertheless, in the actual conditions of a politically organized community of sinful men, a

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[54] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 56.
[55] Ibid., 96.

burden, like a disease."[56] Markus, however, does not rest here, but further asserts that

Augustine supports a neutral, open, and pluralistic political society in the present world, thus

making him a "soft-realist." There is clearly no way that Augustine would use such

historically anachronistic vocabulary; however, Markus strives to draw a path from

Augustinian "signposts" that allow us to attribute these modern concepts to him.[57] Markus

reads a political environment that looks strikingly like our modern liberal society from

Augustine's wide-range of tangential statements. His overall assessment and perspective is

clearly in view in the concluding section of his work.

> Society became intrinsically 'secular' in the sense that it is not as such committed to
> any particular ultimate loyalty. It is the sphere in which different individuals with
> different beliefs and loyalties pursue their common objectives in so far as they
> coincide. His 'secularization' of the realm of politics implies a pluralistic, religiously
> neutral civil community. Historically, of course, such a society lay entirely beyond
> the horizons of Augustine's world. After centuries of development it has begun to
> grow from the soil of what has been Western Christendom; but it is far from
> securely established in the modern world. It is assailed from many sides. Even
> Christians have not generally learned to welcome the disintegration of a 'Christian
> society' as a profound liberation for the Gospel. Augustinian theology should at
> least undermine Christian opposition to an open, pluralist, secular society.[58]

Such strikingly problematic references to secularization and pluralism should not lull the

reader into an attitude of over-confident superiority and easy dismissal. In fact, such

sentiments come at the end of a lengthy treatise where Markus has displayed sufficient

breadth and acumen to merit a close reading and critical re-reading.

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[56] Ibid., 99.

[57] Markus shows his methodology in noting, "The argument of this book is that if we wish to understand the political bearings of the fundamental theological structures of Augustine's thought, we do better to pursue the implications of the hypothesis in which we have reconstructed the shape of that thought than to remain content with what he actually said about the duties of Christian rulers and subjects." Ibid., 153.

[58] Ibid., 173.

Critically re-reading Markus' *Saeculum* is, in fact, an important step because on first approach one can be quickly swept up in Markus' tiered argument and sufficiently awed as to accept the appealingly packaged conclusions at the end of his work. Markus asserts, "The most significant aspects of Augustine's reflection often turn out to be his changes of mind rather than the vast body of *idées recues* which he simply took over as part of a contemporary stock of ideas."[59] This assertion and his detailed effort to demonstrate that Augustine changed his conception of the relations of the Church and Empire allow Markus to subtly over-extend from what Augustine said to what Markus suggests he should have said, or what he would think today.

Markus begins by sympathetically drawing the reader towards him by first exhaustively developing the seemingly irrefutable argument that Augustine had once been tempted to think that the Roman Empire's conversion to Christianity had been ordained as part of the expression and fulfillment of the Gospel message before finally becoming a critic of the "Constantinian settlement." Markus work in this area retains its canonical status and no substantial reservations are appropriate at present. The difficulty with Markus is where he proceeds after his refutation of Eusebian enthusiasm. According to Markus' reading, since Augustine ended as a reformed critic of the "Constantinian settlement," readers are justified in following "signposts provided by Augustine's reflection on history, on society and on the Church,"[60] which ultimately leads to the open and pluralist society of Markus' late twentieth century.

Markus's intentions and even something of his procedure recommend themselves to our attention and present endeavor in that he is not concerned with mere dogmatism.

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[59] Ibid., viii.
[60] Ibid., 155.

Markus writes, "In theology, true continuity is not so much a matter of drawing out implications from, still less of repeating the substance of assertions made by, the Fathers; it is rather to be found in loyalty to their ultimate doctrinal aims."[61] Justifying his project, he continues, "Having observed Augustine's doctrinal aims taking shape with growing clarity of focus in his writings, I now trace the direction, without following the signposts very far, in which the insights Augustine can furnish to twentieth-century point."[62] Tragically, Markus fails at his own project through his shortsighted assessment of Augustine's doctrinal aims. Markus focuses on Augustine's ecclesiological elements rather than his soteriological statements and misses important nuances in his analysis.

Markus' predominant concern is to separate the mature Augustine from every trace of Eusebian enthusiasm for the Christianization of the empire. Markus wishes to avoid the notion that "the establishment of the Christian Empire and the repression of paganism have entered the sacred history," that "they have become part of God's saving work."[63] Therefore, his analysis of sacred and secular history is set up to demonstrate that everything between the Resurrection of Christ and the eschatological fulfillment is indistinguishably secular. Unfortunately, the tools are ill chosen for his objective. The problem with trying to work with the categories that Markus has chosen is that he is unsophisticatedly dealing with theological complexities of revelation and redemption.

In his dichotomy of sacred and secular history,[64] Markus is dealing with divine revelation of human redemption. He understands this in so far as he speaks of "God's saving work" in his description of the sacred. However, any understanding of God's saving

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[61] Ibid., 156.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 31.
[64] Ibid., 9-11.

work of redemption must distinguish between the objective events of redemptive history,

such as the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, but also the subjective event of

individual redemption, such as justification, conversion, and sanctification. Geerhardus Vos

explains, "Revelation accompanies the process of objective-central redemption only, and this

explains why redemption extends further than revelation. To insist upon its accompanying

subjective-individual redemption would imply that it dealt with questions of private, personal

concern, instead of with the common concerns of the world of redemption collectively."[65]

From this we can understand that Eusebian enthusiasm for the Christianization of the

Roman Empire depended on elevating the subjective redemption of Roman citizens to

objective-central redemptive status. To the extent that this lines up with Markus' argument,

we are in agreement. However, Vos continues, "Still this does not mean that the believer

cannot, for his subjective experience, receive enlightenment from the source of revelation in

the Bible, for we must remember that continually, alongside the objective process, there was

going on the work of subjective application, and that much of this is reflected in the

Scriptures."[66] Markus' analysis is, therefore, problematic because he moves too quickly from

separating the empire's conversion from redemptive history to notice that God's individual

saving work continued in the individual Roman citizens living within their particular

societies.

　　　　Markus had earlier expressed his purpose to "consider the fundamentals of the way

in which Augustine conceived the social dimension of human, especially Christian,

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[65] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), 6.

[66] Ibid.

existence,"[67] but his conception of the social dimension of Christian existence seems to

extend only to the corporate, Church-life. He therefore minimizes and neglects the

individual aspects of Christian social existence that are rooted in the subjective experience of

redemption. This is in clear view when Markus reassures the reader of mankind's ability to

secure itself within the neutral, pluralistic political order that should result from

"secularization." Markus holds that "secularization" does not inhibit the individual Christian

from judgment and political perspective. Markus states, "In recoiling from monstrous

wickedness or admiring heroism, in deploring the collapse of a great culture or applauding

an advance to a more humane society he is drawing on the *normal resources of the human

mind.*"[68] In emphasizing that the Christian in society is no more restricted than the non-

Christian, he denies that the Christian is even aided beyond the unregenerate mind to

understand the circumstances and situation of a fallen world. Markus' minimization of the

affect of Christians and Christianity appears in his assessment of Augustine throughout the

text. For instance, when commenting on Augustine's six-ages scheme of history, Markus is

quick to point out that there is "[nothing] inherently optimistic about the idea of rebirth and

rejuvenation associated with the sixth age"[69] when redemption is offered through Christ.

Markus is so careful to avoid any notion of perfective politics in preference for tolerance

that he disregards the Christian message for fallen humanity. This allows Markus to

conclude that, "The main lines of [Augustine's] thinking about history, society and human

institutions in general (the *saeculum*) point towards a political order to which we may not

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[67] Markus, *Saeculum*, vii.
[68] Ibid., 158-59, emphasis added.
[69] Ibid., 25.

unreasonably apply the anachronistic epithet 'pluralist,' in that it is neutral in respect of ultimate beliefs and values."[70]

Much of Markus' thought on the secular direction of Augustine's thinking is appealing in its conclusions. We can appreciate his effort to separate theology and politics, not only from a desire to protect politics, but also from a genuine desire to safeguard theology as well.[71] Though we may wish to follow Markus for the sake of these appeals, we are blocked from unanimous consent by Markus' neglect of redemption highlighted by his frequent reference to neutrality as an explication of the secular. Markus bases the notion of secularity on the neutral interaction of all peoples within the shared space of society. The problem with his idea is that Markus ignores the individual repercussions of redemption. At present, society is certainly ambiguous because it is an inseparable intermingling of members of each eschatological city, but each individual citizen has an "ultimate loyalty"[72] to one of these cities that characterizes every action, whether public or private. There is no neutrality of action in either sphere as human actions are impelled by our loves.

Markus himself admits some of the difficulty with the correspondence between secularization and neutrality and attempts to respond to his modern critics in his subsequent reconsideration of his work in *Christianity and the Secular*. He notes, "It is easy to misunderstand the neutrality implied in secularity. A great deal of misunderstanding arises from failure to distinguish the private from the public realm. The neutrality which is an essential aspect of the secular – no discrimination between religions, worldviews, ideologies

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[70] Ibid., 151.
[71] Cf. Ibid., 173.
[72] Ibid.

– is a requirement in the public sphere."[73] Markus' efforts at clarity provide little comfort

because the issue involves the relation of morality and religion in individual souls.

The "discrimination between religions, worldviews, [and] ideologies" of which

Markus speaks, occurs in the private realm and will undoubtedly carry over into the public

realm in some form or another. This is a fact that Markus freely acknowledges in response

to his critics. "When we ask whether there is a 'neutral public sphere in which people can

act politically without reference to ultimate ends?', the answer…must be no, because people

cannot act intentionally in any sphere without reference to ultimate ends. But it is important

to note that the implication of this is not that there is no 'neutral public sphere' but that

there is no morally indifferent action with it."[74] Where Markus draws the line in his

concession is at the institutional level. He writes, [Theological] norms (self-love vs. love of

God, etc.) cannot apply to practices, cultures, institutions, or social structures. Society,

institutions, and practices are incapable of salvation or damnation; they are of an impersonal

nature."[75] Here we can clearly perceive the problems of insufficient attention to the issue of

redemption. From the standpoint of subjective redemption, Markus is wholly in the right,

but his limited attention to individual redemption misses its appropriation into the political

realm at the level of practice and institutions.

While Markus' work is generally heralded in the mainstream, a new vocal minority

has appeared to criticize him from the perspective of a renewed enthusiasm for and

identification with "Christendom." Markus himself points to criticism from the movement

labeled "radical orthodoxy," but we could also include those inspired by traditional themes

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[73] Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 6.
[74] Ibid., 44.
[75] Ibid., 47.

from Anabaptist theology. Markus summarizes the consensus among his critics inclined

toward Christendom as based on "a view [that] no sound political theory can be constructed

except within the framework of a Christian 'ontology' or worldview."[76] In response, Markus

sets his notion of secularity against the "triumphalism" of Christendom which he identifies

as "approving, supporting, or, in their absence, hankering after the conditions which allow

institutional religious influence or domination to bear on the legal, cultural, or political

structures within the surrounding society."[77] Markus reads Augustine's separation of virtue

from society as still allowing for cultural and societal structures to remain while being used

with different faith by members of the two cities. He concludes, "The *polis* could no longer

serve as its members' educator in justice and instrument of perfecting human life…But the

Church, expressing its social character in its sacramental life, continued to exist within the

boundaries of the (ancient) civic community, *within the conditions provided by it for its ecclesial

life*."[78] Markus here continues his exclusive and deficient focus on ecclesiological issues only

pertaining to the institutional church without reference to individual Christians. The

importance of individual Christians and individual morality in the political order is stressed

by the last two interpretive approaches.

Theocratic, Authoritarian, or Anti-liberal

Within the Christendom stream of thinking we can differentiate two separate

approaches to Augustine and more broadly the place of Christianity in society. The first

group generally falls under the traditional label of political Augustinianism and the second

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[76] Ibid., 43.
[77] Ibid., 9.
[78] Ibid., 45, emphasis added.

suggest a confessional witness to politics. The former approach has historically been more prominent and important and so we will handle it first.

Traditionally, Augustine's emphasis on human depravity has suggested to some scholars that the interpretive key is the conception that the Church provides a sanctifying cover and direction to the political actions of Christian rulers. Here the institutional operations of the Church or a holy empire completely control political society as the only proper arbiters of moral competence. This conception can still hold to the radically fallen nature of man, but suggests that for politics to be beneficial in this world religious or religiously sanctioned authority must control it because political authority is subsumed into ecclesiastical authority. This attempt to conflate the political and ecclesiastical authority was most famously outlined as *l'Augustinisme politique* in H. X. Arquillière's classic work of the same name.[79] It is important to note that Arquillière does not ascribe political Augustinianism to Augustine himself, but rather suggests Augustine's authority was used by Gregory the Great and Isidore of Seville to develop such a notion in the Middle Ages.[80] Johannes van Oort notes in his review of the literature, "In the Middle Ages a political ideal was discerned in the *City of God*, that of the Christian state closely allied to the Church. This might be termed the theocratic interpretation. From Charlemagne until well into the sixteenth century this remained the universally accepted interpretation."[81] While it has since been minimized and we question whether Augustine would actually have supported such an

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[79] H.X. Arquillière, *L'augustinisme politique: Essai sure la formation des theories politique du moyen age* (Paris: Vrin, 1934).

[80] See also Charles H. McIlwain, *Growth of Political Thought in the West* (New York: Macmillen, 1932), 154-60.

[81] Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1991), 123.

interpretation of his work, it remains a commonly adopted trope at least for criticism in a

post-modern context because of its history of abuses.

Below we will consider the idea that Augustinian Christianity can serve as a

confessing witness to society without controlling or interfering with it. In this first case,

though, we need to address the possibility of political Augustinianism as a theocratic

authoritarian vision. Certainly in the Middle Ages the Church commanded varying degrees

of control and influence over political society that in hindsight can be labeled abuse. No one

of significance in the field now suggests Christianity should operate with such an attitude or

affect, but it is important to highlight the traditional outcome of political Augustinianism as

authoritarian because there remain resonances and leanings toward this position.

John Milbank

Chief among those offering a renewed vision of political Augustinianism, and a

leader within the radical orthodoxy movement is John Milbank.[82] Milbank provides a

provocative treatment Augustine, Christianity, and secularism that all flow into his larger

vision for the relation of Christianity and political society. Milbank works up to his

treatment of Augustine, which is the culmination of his seminal *Theology and Social Theory*, by

first surveying Western political theory since Machiavelli and determining that, in its entirety,

it represents a theological counter-narrative to Christianity that masks and supports an

ontology of violence. Milbank defines the true message of Christianity as an ontology of

peace that stems from God's creation *ex nihilo* and is manifest in Jesus' acceptance of an

unjust death. In contrast, paganism and secular theory represent an ontology of violence, "a

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[82] Oliver O'Donovan is also a leading proponent among Augustinian commentators of a
renewed Christendom who displays certain fundamental similarities with John Milbank.   He
is, however, less provocative in his political declarations than Milbank, which for the present
purposes are better highlighted.

reading of the world which assumes the priority of force and tells how this force is best

managed and confined by counter-force."[83]   Milbank describes this ontology of violence as

stretching from pagan mytho-poetic speculation on the role of the gods in holding back

chaos from the bounds of the cosmos to the economic and political structures of society

that secular theory supports.[84]

Milbank draws on Augustine's account of the two cities as support for his vision of

contrasted ontologies, which bear different ethical visions. Milbank summarizes Augustine's

theoretical objective in the *City of God*:

> Augustine's contrast between ontological antagonism and ontological peace is
> grounded in the contrasting historical narratives of the two cities. The *Civitas terrena*
> is marked by sin, which means, for Augustine, the denial of God and others in
> favour of self-love and self-assertion; an enjoyment of arbitrary, and therefore
> violent power over others – the *libido dominandi*. To show that pagan political
> communities were fundamentally sinful Augustine consequently had to argue that
> their structures of *dominium* – of self-command, economic property ownership, and
> political rule – were not truly subordinated to the ends of justice and virtue, but
> rather pursued *dominium* as an end in itself.[85]

Milbank very provocatively asserts that sinful men necessarily create sinful structures in

culture and society because these structures participate in and support self-love. "The realm

of the merely practical," he writes, "cut off from the ecclesial, is quite simply a realm of

sin."[86]   Milbank refuses to allow secular society to be neutral in the way that Markus desires.

Instead, Milbank envisions a wide-scale overthrow of secular structures by Christian political

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[83] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers,
1993), 4.

[84] As support for his view we might reference James Madison's vision of ambition
counteracting ambition, and his contention that, "This policy of supplying, by opposite and
rival interests, the defect of better motives, might be traced through the whole system of
human affairs." "Federalist #51" in Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The
Federalist: The Gideon Edition*, ed. George Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis: Liberty
Fund, 2001), 269.

[85] Milbank, *Theology*, 390.

[86] Ibid., 406.

practice. Milbank declares, "Salvation from sin must mean 'liberation' from political, economic and psychic *dominium*, and therefore from all structures belonging to the *saeculum*, or temporal interval between the fall and the final return of Christ. This salvation takes the form of a different inauguration of a different kind of community."[87] For Milbank, the Church is the *altera civitas* – the other city – that provides the only true salvation because it offers the only true human sociality. Milbank boldly proclaims that everything about our present politics should be abandoned because it is infected with sin and that the society of the church must be the only order at large.[88]

In analyzing Milbank's contribution to understanding Augustine there are several connected theological points to make that bear upon the reception of Milbank and can only be briefly outlined here and not expanded upon. The general point from which all are connected is that we need to be aware of the difficulty of utilizing any analysis or insight in Milbank's work because of his pervasive effort to subtly redefine nearly everything that is commonly understood as Christian theology. Without paying close attention and being historically and theologically sensitive, the reader will fail to see that Milbank's essential definition of Christianity as non-violence carries with it a revaluation of all of Christianity. Subtly connected to his views on non-violence are denials of the traditional views of the atonement and incarnation of Christ and therefore what is the work of Christ and what

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[87] Ibid., 391-92.

[88] It should be noted that Milbank does not have a great deal of confidence that this will happen as the first chance has already been missed in the Middle Ages: "The Church to be the Church, must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony – 'within' the state where this is possible; but of a state committed by its very nature only to the formal goals of *dominium*, little is to be hoped. A measure of resignation to the necessity of this dominium can also not be avoided." Ibid., 422.

redemption is accomplished by that work.[89] Christianity ceases to be anything like what has been traditionally understood, and Milbank's work cannot be properly understood without completely grasping the entirety of his redefinition. Redefinition is a constant in Milbank's work that ranges from the quirkily inventive – "It is in fact the ontological priority of peace over conflict (which is arguably the key theme of his entire thought) that is the principle undergirding Augustine's critique"[90] – to the perplexing – "The Hebrews define themselves as the *rejected*, the community of an Exodus"[91] – and the down-right subversive – "Jesus's practice is only atoning in the form of a new social mechanism in which we can be situated."[92] Because Milbank presents an impressively systematic treatment of the subject, there is little analytical fruit that can simply be harvested without also taking the roots from which it has been nurtured.

The above warning must be carefully considered because Milbank has made it so tempting to ignore. The theologically inclined reader is tempted from the very start to be sympathetic to Milbank's critique of "secular reason" and feel compelled to follow his lead in making social theory submissive to theology. As Milbank rightly notes, "If theology no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other [theoretical] discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology."[93] Milbank has returned us the fundamental question of Christ and culture and rightly understands that it always boils down to a question of who is influencing whom. Milbank moves from the correct supposition that culture should not influence Christianity, but rather vice versa, and he examines the social

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[89] Milbank leans heavily here on the work of René Girard on sacrifice and the scapegoat. Cf. Ibid., 392-98.
[90] Ibid., 390.
[91] Ibid., 393, emphasis added.
[92] Ibid., 397.
[93] Ibid., 1.

implications of Christianity. Unfortunately, in the process of correctly answering the Christ and culture question he has misconstrued the more fundamental question of the work of Christ and so confuses and misappropriates the correct affect of Christ's redemptive work.

It may seem somewhat counterintuitive to consider Milbank as an expression of theocratic authoritarianism given his emphasis on peace and nonviolence, in fact he himself would probably protest that he is suggesting the exact opposite. However, he is included under this label as a modern representative of the desire of Christians to transform politics along the lines suggested by H. Richard Niebuhr. His vision shares resonances with political Augustinianism through the condemnation of human depravity and the confidence that Christianity can entirely replace the politics of the present world. A more charitable description might be simply to refer to Milbank as anti-liberal rather than theocratic and authoritarian, but the more provocative designation highlights the necessity of correctly appropriating redemption in political theory and practice as well as avoiding the domineering attitude of misappropriation that Milbank's vision can tend toward. In his most confident pronouncements Milbank demands the "Christianization of the State and the subsumption within the ecclesia."[94] As Eric Gregory has commented, when Milbank makes such claims, "Theocratic alarm bells go off."[95] Another commentator has sounded a similar warning of Milbankian domination in pointing out that, "his conception of 'counter' has no room for 'encounter.'"[96]

William Connolly

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[94] John Milbank, "The Invocation of Clio: A Response," *Journal of Religious Ethics,* 33, 1 (Spring 2005), 38.

[95] Gregory, *Politics*, 141.

[96] Bernd Wannenwetsch, "The Political Worship of the Church: A Critical and Empowering Practice," *Modern Theology* 12, 3 (July 1996), 273.

In order to see how Milbank's hints and resonances can develop into full-blown authoritarianism we can follow William Connolly's polemical reading of Augustine.[97] Connolly seeks to demonstrate that those within the Augustinian tradition who develop an intrinsic moral order necessarily pursue domination over any display of difference. Connolly claims that in establishing "'the majority' type" Augustine moves to construe "'the exception' as monstrous,"[98] and seeks to impose his identified norm upon the difference of others through confession, which "serves as a vehicle of purification and moralization,"[99] and through hereticization of the other. Connolly explains:

> An Augustinian heresy is a temptation within his own faith in that its declarations receive their impetus from uncertainties and ambiguities floating within the authoritative doctrine itself; it is a political threat in that its articulation disturbs the highest hope the authoritative doctrine is designed to sustain; it is politically indispensable in that its constitution as heresy stills the threat within the doctrine and the self through exclusion of those giving voice to it. [100]

According to Connolly, the desire to articulate an intrinsic moral order inaugurates the "gentle wars of identity\difference," and also keeps them in perpetual existence. Confession is threatened by silence and so cannot stop at simple exclusion, but must also coercively drive difference into proper confession.[101]

Connolly provides us a picture of the authoritarianism latent within traditional political Augustinianism that Milbank's opposition to the secular is silent upon. In combining the two readings of Augustine we see the difficulties attendant upon the

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[97] In fairness, Connolly's work is not focused on Augustine himself, but on what Connolly terms the "Augustinian imperative" that he draws from the spirit of Augustinianism. William Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993), xvii. For our purposes, however, Connolly can be taken to elucidate a harsh vision of Augustine as morally and politically domineering.

[98] Ibid., 41.

[99] Ibid., 43.

[100] Ibid., 78.

[101] Ibid., 87.

suggestion that Augustinians should claim the transformational model subtly advocated by

H. Richard Niebuhr. Any condemnation of secular domineering is immediately suspect of

manifesting in its own desires toward domination.

Confessional Witnessing

The easiest way to avoid the dilemma of Christianity falling into the trap of

authoritarian imposition is to remove Christianity from the projects of political participation,

which is the next interpretive approach to Augustine's political contribution. The

confessional approach to Augustinian interpretation, however, is the least common and so

the most briefly outlined. This approach still deserves attention because it fills some

theoretical holes and problems and completes the political discussion by bringing it full circle

back to explicit consideration of H. Richard Niebuhr's fundamental typologies.

The confessional, Anabaptist vision of the relation between Christianity and politics

chiefly exists as a response to the threat of the coordination between politics and the church

and domination of either over the other. John Howard Yoder labels such coordination

between the political order and the church as "Constantinianism" in order to reference all

such instances back to what he sees as the fundamental error of the early church.[102] A

confessional vision refuses to formally interact with worldly political processes because it is

focused on the more fundamental issue of personal morality and righteousness. Instead of

engaging in the polity, it seeks to stand outside of political institutions and witness for the

Christian faith by posing a counter-example through the formation and maintenance of an

intentional community. Milbank is generally appreciative of the Anabaptist tradition, but

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[102] John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 135.

distinguishes himself from its proponents by insisting that they do not go far enough since they refuse to directly engage in political activity as instruments of change.

Given the historical tradition of political Augustinianism, the association of a confessional vision with Augustine might seem anachronistic. Proponents of this confessional vision, however, often turn to Augustine to make the argument that Christianity was mistaken in following the path it did in the Middle Ages.[103] Both Augustine and confessional supporters share fundamental themes of peace and love with Augustine and can claim textual support. In response, it suffices here to notice Augustine's own claim about the efficacy of Christianity's non-violent resistance to political persecution.

> Our martyrs, when the Christian religion, by which they knew they were made safe and most glorious for all eternity, was charged to them as a crime, did not choose to evade temporal punishments by denying it. Rather, by confessing, embracing and proclaiming it, and for its sake enduring all things with faith and fortitude, and by dying with godly assurance, they shamed the laws by which it was forbidden, and caused them to be changed.[104]

Augustine here offers the only mention in the *City of God* of laws changed by the influence of Christianity. It is, therefore, not out of line to draw the inference that Augustine can provide other resources for a larger confessional tradition focused on intentional communities.

The change that Augustine elaborates above was not effected by Christians rising through the ranks of power, agitating the masses, or threatening force, but by peacefully offering up their bodies to persecution and death as a witness of their Christian practice. This fits nicely with the confessional vision for the "practice [of] nonviolence and love of the

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[103] "Far from providing warrant for a Christian worldliness prepared to exercise temporal power, the logic of Augustine's two cities…could instead have undergirded renewal of an earlier Christian tradition of pacifism." Gerald Schlabach, "Augustine's Hermeneutic of Humility: An Alternative to Moral Imperialism and Moral Relativism," *Journal of Religious Ethics,* 22, 2 (Fall 1994), 323.

[104] *DCD* 8.19. *CG*. 340.

other as an alternative to the political imperatives of communal survival that we usually

encounter."[105] The confessional witness should not be confused as a possible substitute for

the temporal political order that is vitiated by human depravity because the confessional

witness does claim perfection. Since they understand themselves as intentional communities

striving toward individual holiness only, they are not meant to handle large-scale popular

issues or nominal citizenship the way that political society must. The community's focus is

to inwardly guard their own hearts. They witness that there is a more fundamentally

important objective in human life than survival, but they make no claim on those who are

not joined in their small community. Membership is optional in a way that political society

can never be.

Since confessional Anabaptist communities do not offer themselves as realistic

replacements for the entire political structure, the important question is how they can affect

any difference in political discourse. Augustine claimed that Christian martyrs effectively

changed Roman laws through their confession and witness, but how does this actually work?

Thomas Heilke helpfully writes, "At the very least, communities that seek to live out

alternatives to coercion and violence as the basis of political life can serve as substantive,

witnessing counterpoints to the practices they reject, since these practices continue to pay at

least partial lip service to the principles such communities affirm."[106] Whether or not they

are able to meet their own standards, all political communities still affirm the merits of civic

virtues such as justice, peace, or love. This follows Augustine's thinking when he writes,

"For so great is the force of probity and chastity that the whole, or nearly the whole, of

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[105] Thomas Heilke, "On Being Ethical Without Moral Sadism: Two Readings of Augustine
and the Beginnings of the Anabaptist Revolution," *Political Theory*, 24, 3 (August
1996), 493.

[106] Ibid., 495.

humankind is moved to praise them; nor is there anyone so ruined by vice as to relinquish all

sense of honour."[107] By offering a counter-example of the Christian vision of justice, peace,

and love through confessional witness it is possible to effectively influence the political order

without actively participating in particular political processes.

The confessional interpretation of Augustine skirts the line between H. Richard

Niebuhr's dichotomy between "Christ against culture" and "Christ transforming culture."

The intentional communities of the confessional approach do reject the political

organization of the world at large because of its fallen state, but also offer themselves as

examples of transformation. They remain outside of the transformational model, however,

because the confessional approach has also traditionally emphasized the incomplete state of

their own personal righteousness as a result of their focus on Christianity as a practice of

living. The emphasis on practice tends to minimize the conception of transformation as

definitive accomplishment after conversion and redemption. Since redemption is realized in

long, steady practice, the immediate focus remains – as with all the previous approaches – on

the present depravity in the human condition.

An Original Approach to Augustine's Work

So far we have seen the prevalent approaches to interpreting Augustine's political

importance move from Niebuhr's ambivalence between rejecting politics and subsuming it,

to Markus' rejection of this approach in favor of a neutral secular sphere of politics, to

Milbank's over-correcting emphasis on Christianity which returns to the subsuming of all

aspects of culture and politics, as well as the confessional attempt to return to the

abandonment of politics. All of the approaches outlined above can be traced back to roots

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[107] *DCD* 2.26. *CG*. 88.

in the doctrine of original sin and human depravity. In their own ways each of these thinkers or traditions misses aspects of Augustine's political contribution by overly limiting their thinking to accounting for his theological account of depravity. The political importance of Augustine is rightly centered on his theological dichotomy between the two cities, but we cannot properly understand the two-cities model in terms of human depravity alone. The idea of original sin certainly makes a persuasive argument against perfective and utopian ideas of politics that have been the chief concern of the last century, but the argument abruptly and unnaturally stops here. To speak of depravity without a subsequent discussion of redemption, however shows a fundamental misconception of the issue. We cannot speak of manifestations of humanity's diremption without further considering the existence, manifestation, and representation of redemption in political society. We must understand how the symbol of redemption that underlies the creation of the two-cities model corrects the pervasive interpretations of Augustine.[108]

The general outlines of this approach can be briefly adumbrated here since more detail will follow in later chapters. Having noted that all of humanity is marked by the affects and manifestations of human depravity, and that the individual instances of sin manifest in the political life through human behavior, we are drawn to consider the ways in which divine redemption can consequently affect political life. Redemption is usually considered only in its eschatological fulfillment as heavenly existence. Since redemption, however, is necessarily accomplished and applied in earthly existence,[109] it is necessary to

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[108] Two notable exceptions to the general neglect of redemptive theology are Charles Norris Cochrane and Robert Dodaro whose works will make recurring appearances throughout the subsequent chapters and, therefore, do not require comment here.

[109] See John Murray, *Redemption – Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).

begin to consider its present representations prior to complete fulfillment. The general question here pursued is how does redemption work itself out in politics?

From the perspective of human agency, redemption enters the political realm through the activity of individual Christians who have been converted and transformed by regeneration. All humans are tainted by the affects of diremption generally and by the evil consequences of their own self-interests. When individuals are redeemed and become citizens of the City of God, they are not entirely transformed with all vestiges of evil removed, but they are affected by redemption in a measure and live different lives in earthly society because their wills have been changed. Christians no longer live and act entirely for themselves, but rather, they love God above all things and accordingly have different wills.

This is not to say that there is such a thing as Christian politics or that Augustine advocated such an idea. As Ernest Fortin notes, "There is, strictly speaking, for Augustine no such thing as a Christian polity. Christianity was never intended as a substitute for political life."[110] Rather, what we must focus on is the way in which the existence or presence of individual Christians and Christianity change the political sphere; how these changes may be regarded as resources and patterns for all persons in political existence. What Eric Voegelin wrote of Plato can apply to Augustine equally, "Human existence mean[s] political existence; and restoration of order in the soul implie[s] the creation of a political order in which the restored soul [can] exist as an active citizen."[111] Either through their direct action or through their indirect affect, Christians can change the political realm without subsuming it. Directly, Christians can work to promote or oppose given actions

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[110] Ernest Fortin, *Political Idealism and Christianity in the Thought of St. Augustine* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1972), 32.

[111] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1957), 90.

because of their attunement to the order of existence. Indirectly, Christians raise the general level of virtue and morality in society by making certain thoughts and actions thinkable or providing an example for imitation. I will develop these themes in more details by handling them under the rubric of the appropriation of redemption.

Appropriation, as well as the attendant notion of misappropriation, conveys the understanding that man is limited in his ability to fully encapsulate reality, but that life still requires actions and decisions. As Voegelin notes, "[Man] live[s] in the tension between the unseen measure and the necessity of incarnating it…in society."[112] The appropriation of redemption acknowledges that a finite human can never immovably fix the total truth of reality in which he exists. In fact, "This invisible harmony is difficult to find, and it will not be found at all unless the soul be animated by an anticipating urge in the right direction."[113] With the existence of redemption in clear view, however, man can acknowledge his finiteness and still find existential resources to appropriate – that is to claim them as a ground or basis for himself and others in society. The appropriation of Christian insights about the created and redeemed order refreshes the fading letters of the moral law written in all human hearts. It is not the same thing as accomplished redemption in that it will not do to save souls, and its effects in the political order at any given time may be only temporary. Still, Augustine's work brims with evidence that men are not left in a hopeless tangle of uncertainty. His work is filled with latent resources for how humanity can be attuned to the order of existence without seeking to control it.

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[112] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 68.
[113] Ibid.

<center>**The Political Resources of Augustine's Theology**</center>

"One cannot restore political science today through Platonism, Augustinianism, or Hegelianism. Much can be learned, to be sure, from the earlier philosophers concerning the range of problems, as well as concerning their theoretical treatment; but the very historicity of human existence, that is, the unfolding of the typical in meaningful concreteness, precludes a valid reformulation of principles through return to a former concreteness."[1]

Introduction: Theology as a Political Resource

Augustine is revered as a towering intellectual figure at the center of one of the most important transitional periods of human history. As a foundational figure in theology and philosophy he remains widely read and cited, but contemporary thinkers are largely uncomfortable with Augustine. Augustine does not fit well into modernity's notion of the distinction between philosophy and theology or reason and revelation. As such, scholars from both these broad disciplines have engaged in a kind of sorting procedure in which they have tried to separate out what material pertained to their field and have given the rest a wide berth. In response to modernity's exacting exclusion of faith from their intellectual pursuits, post-modern thinkers have made a sport of turning the tables on modernity and showing that their own privileging of certain modes of reasoning involves as much initial faith as any religiously derived position. Post-modernity has provided a helpful critique that allows faith to reappear from its exclusion, but it has also again muddied the waters of philosophy and theology and left us without any clear conception of how theology can aid or assist the pursuit of non-religious speculation.

What is needed is an approach that can recognize and handle theology as a resource. The division of reason and revelation implicates the two-cities model that Augustine first

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[1] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

elaborated and so we must necessarily recur to his work to relocate ourselves within this contemporary problem set. Augustine's work provides a path forward, but it must be discovered within a discourse that is different from our own and not immediately transparent. In fact, on first glance, it would seem that Augustine closes any forward path because he denies crucial philosophical and political symbols – such as justice – a true earthly manifestation. This is only the appearance of an obstacle, though, because Augustine's corpus actually contains a theoretical lacuna in relation to the earthly manifestations of justice and other vital symbols. In order for theology to serve as a resource, we must identify and fill the theoretical lacuna. This can be accomplished by developing an Augustinian theory of appropriation out of the outlines of Eric Voegelin's "new science of politics," which provides the groundwork for a sensitive treatment of the existence of theological symbols that are necessary for Augustine's political thinking. Once the theoretical lacuna in Augustine's work is filled, he can speak more clearly to the problems that beset politics in this and every age.

Filling the Theoretical Lacuna

The first hindrance to clearly developing Augustine is the prejudiced attitudes that see him as otherworldly and pessimistic. In order to do away with overly otherworldly and pessimistic interpretations of Augustine we must do two related things: first, demonstrate and develop a theory of worldly progress within Augustine's corpus; and second, handle his own statements that appear abundantly clear in their otherworldliness and pessimism. The concurrent completion of these tasks does not seem immediately obvious. As an indicative challenge, consider the common quotation, "As far as this mortal life is concerned, which is spent and finished in a few days, what difference does it make under what rule a man lives

who is soon to die."[2] Such a statement would seem to both deny any idea of improvement or progress in worldly affairs and necessitate an otherworldly attitude that is pessimistic regarding human life.

In order to unravel our problem, the first thing to notice and explain is that there is a tension that Augustine creates whenever he speaks of peace. Ultimately for Augustine, peace is the final perfection of all things that will reign in heaven. Augustine writes of the difference between "eternal peace" and "earthly peace," "This is our final happiness, our last perfection, a consummation which will have no end. Here, in this world, we are said to be happy when we have such little peace as a good life can afford."[3] Even more clearly, he states, "The word 'peace,' however, is frequently used in [connection] with merely mortal affairs, where there is certainly no eternal life."[4] Despite the fact that peace truly exists in the heavenly realm of the eschatological end, Augustine also immediately sets up a tension by allowing it to have some existence in this earthly life as well. This tension depends on the connection of peace and order.

Peace is proper order at any given level of experience. Augustine states, "The peace of all things lies in the tranquility of order; and order is the disposition of equal and unequal things in such a way as to give to each its proper place."[5] The reference to the notion of "proper" introduces the problem that creates the tension between the two experiences of peace. In the first place, peace exists in the heavenly realm because all things will be perfected and participate with the divine. However, Augustine has been nothing if not clear

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[2] *DCD* 5.17. English translation: Augustine. *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W.
    Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (Henceforth *CG*) 217.
[3] *DCD* 19.10. *CG.* 932.
[4] *DCD* 19.11. *CG.* 933.
[5] *DCD* 19.13. *CG.* 938.

that the present world, and particularly humankind, is not in its proper relation to the divine. Without the proper relationship to God, there can be no true peace, but there will still be an earthly peace that exists in the proportion that things approximate their proper order. Augustine continues to elaborate further, "Even that which is perverse, however, must of necessity be in, or derived from, or associated with, and to that extent at peace with, some part of the order of things among which it has its being or of which it consists. Otherwise, it would not exist at all."[6] As God has created all things and superintends the order of things, there cannot be complete disorder.

Augustine's understanding that there are varying levels or types of peace should be compared to his more strict conception of justice and the problem this entails for political society. Augustine insists that according to Cicero's definition of a people there never was a Roman commonwealth because, "Common agreement as to what is right…cannot be maintained without justice. Where…there is no true justice there can be no right."[7] The hinge of Augustine argument turns on the traditional definition of justice as rendering to each their due. While this definition continually poses retributive and distributive problems for basic human interactions, these problems are nothing compared to the impossibility that exists for humans in trying to render to God his due. The already insurmountable distance between God's infinite nature and the finite appeasements available to creation are nothing compared to the further separation wrought by the subsequent rebellion of humanity. Augustine notes, "What justice can we suppose there to be in a man who does not serve God? For if the soul does not serve God it cannot by any means govern the body justly, nor can human reason govern the vices. And if there is no justice in such a man, then it is

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[6] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 936.
[7] *DCD* 19.21. *CG.* 950.

beyond doubt that there is no justice in a collection of men consisting of persons of this

kind."[8] All this leads Augustine to his overwhelming conclusion that true justice can only

exist within the confines of the realized City of God.

Leaving the discussion at this point would seem to vindicate the otherworldly,

pessimistic interpretation that we have attempted to throw aside. The discussion, however,

cannot be left off here because it would fail to account for the tension that we have been

working to exhibit by comparing peace and justice. Otherworldly and pessimistic

interpretations do not account for Augustine's usage of designations such as "just peace"

and "unjust peace,"[9] or Augustine's insistence that justice must exist even between the

members of a band of robbers in order for them to be able to commit their crimes. As

William Stevenson has noted, "If true justice is out of the question in the saeculum, then a

proximately just peace is not. The final, complete, and permanent peace awaiting the city of

God is of course out of the question in the saeculum, but there is a kind of 'temporal peace'

which is both desirable and, on occasion, attainable; indeed, in some form or other it is

unavoidable."[10] It would seem that there is a definite theoretical lacuna between peace and

justice that needs to be filled by a worked out conception.

Oliver O'Donovan has hinted at the way in which Augustine could have developed

an understanding of justice along the lines that he used to differentiate peace that would fill

the identified lacuna. O'Donovan writes:

> "We may…be surprised that Augustine did not embark upon an analogical treatment
> of justice, which would have allowed for it to be instantiated on different levels of
> society. This would have been to treat it in the same way as he treated peace: there is

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[8] *DCD* 19.21. *CG.* 952.

[9] See *DCD* 19.12.

[10] Stevenson, William R., Jr., *Christian Love and Just War: Moral Paradox and Political Life in St.
       Augustine and his Modern Interpreters* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 35.

absolute peace and there is relative peace, so why not also absolute justice and relative justice? There is, in fact, a relative justice in Augustine's thought, but it does not extend downwards to embrace the ordinary legal activities of the earthly commonwealth."[11]

As O'Donovan indicates, Augustine could have easily made an argument for a similar treatment of justice; however, since he did not, we must explore his motives. His refusal to do so brings out the importance of his larger theological context and the issues of justice that relate to it.

Augustine's refusal to develop relative justice stems from the verbal relation of justice to the theological concept of righteousness. Of righteousness, Augustine writes, "Our righteousness [in this mortal life] also, though true righteousness insofar as it is directed towards a good end, is in this life such that it consists only in the remission of sin rather than in the perfection of virtue."[12] The righteousness (or justice as O'Donovan chooses to translate the passage) that Augustine acknowledges only pertains to Christians and only in a limited form. Augustine's hesitance is explained by the theological tension between justice and righteousness.[13] O'Donovan explains:

> The Latin *iustitia*…is notoriously translated in theological English by no fewer than three words: righteousness, justice and justification. Augustine cannot use the word without being aware of the problematic represented by the third of these, the *iustitia Dei, non qua iustus est sed qua iusti sunt homines quos iustificat,* 'not in the sense of his being righteous, but in the sense of his justifying mankind.' He cannot, or will not, disengage a separate social or political sense of the word from this theological discussion.[14]

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[11] Oliver O'Donovan, "Augustine's *City of God* XIX and Western Political Thought," *Dionysius.* 11, (1987), 99.

[12] *DCD* 19.27. *CG.* 962.

[13] Cf. Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

[14] O'Donovan, "*City of God* XIX," 100.

While he allows peace to differ depending on whether it is between God and man or between man and man, Augustine will only speak explicitly in this passage of justice or righteousness between God and man. Augustine continues, "In this life…justice is present in each man when he obeys God, when the mind rules the body, and when the reason governs the vices which oppose it, by subduing or resisting them. Also, it is present when man begs God for the grace to do meritorious deeds, and for pardon for his offenses, and when he duly gives thanks to Him for all the blessings he receives."[15] In Augustine's conception, justice is absent if there is not a righteous relation between God and man. This was his fundamental point in changing Cicero's definition of a commonwealth by removing a reference to justice or right.[16]

Augustine's unwillingness to speak explicitly of relative justice explains much of the difficulty in surveying his works for a clear approach to politics. Justice, however, does factor to some extent into his thinking about society and politics. Augustine famously declares, "Justice removed, then, what are kingdoms but great bands of robber? What are bands of robbers themselves but little kingdoms?"[17] The striking feature of his comment on political authority is in some sense conditioned by the removal of justice, though the greatest weight of criticism rests on his further correlation of any group of criminals with general political authority. Combined with his reformulation of Cicero's definition of a commonwealth, this leads to the conclusion that justice is not a necessary feature of political authority, though it may remain as a crowning feature of a given polity.

The implicit presence of relative justice, though he is explicitly silence on the subject,

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[15] *DCD* 19.27. *CG.* 963.
[16] Cf. *DCD* 19.24. *CG.* 960.
[17] *DCD* 4.4. *CG.* 147.

leads to the need to move from how theology conditions and explains this tangled

discussion to how it can provide a further path forward. Augustine clearly refused to allow a

detailed discussion of justice that is separate from the sense of justification as a theological

understanding of God making humans righteous. The justification of humans can only be

discussed in the context of redemption. To allow for the correlation of righteousness and

political or social justice would be to suggest that politics has redemptive or perfective

possibilities. Augustine would not allow this because his strict view of justice also provides

him with an absolute criterion with which to criticize the failings of earthly politics. The

conscientious scholar, however, cannot be content with superficially accepting Augustine's

implicit movement from the denial of perfect justice to the tacit existence of relative justice

because the operation involves significant issues and questions with the distinct possibility of

confusion and misapplication. Following these adumbrations a full theory needs to be

developed to fill the outlined lacuna. Developing Eric Voegelin's theoretical tools on

representation into an Augustinian theory of appropriation provides the required material to

fill out this lacuna.

Developing the Groundwork for Appropriation

The remainder of this chapter must be dedicated to the argument that this theoretical

lacuna can be filled by allowing redemption to serve as a pattern for political affairs. At this

point, however, all that is clear is that Augustine's ambiguity is related to the limits of how he

will allow theology and earthly affairs to mix. As an indicative expression and starting point

for discussion, let us consider that Augustine writes:

> When man sinned, He did not permit him to go unpunished, but neither did He
> abandon him without mercy…Neither heaven nor earth, neither angel nor man, not
> even the inward parts of the smallest and most inconsiderable animal…nor a tiny
> flower of a plant…has God left unprovided with a harmony and, as it were, a peace

among its parts. It can in no wise be believed, then, that He has chosen to exclude the kingdoms of men and their lordships and servants from the laws of His providence.[18]

Here we have a clear tension between the state of the world after diremption and the transcendent origin of mercy that sustains the entire order of creation. Mercy (*misericordia*) is an ambiguous phrase in this passage because it clearly conveys a kind of tenderhearted compassion or pity, but does not necessitate any notion of forgiveness or redemption that can also be included in the notion of mercy. In this case, Augustine conveys the sense that God has retained his providential role for all of creation after the Fall, but the foresight of providence is far short of the restitution of redemption without being totally opposed to also including this sense.

As Oliver O'Donovan has hinted in his analysis of Book XIX's puzzling treatment of justice, there is a subtle nuance in Augustine's works that relates theology to politics and uses theological experiences as a resource for political reasoning. I have chosen to refer to Augustine's movement as appropriation in the sense that Augustine uses his theology as a resource in his political thinking. More precisely, while categories such as redemption are strictly theological in nature, their existence in reality provides possibilities and a pattern for appropriation (as well as misappropriation) into politics that are subtly present in Augustine's political reflections. The theoretical development of appropriation is directly related to what Eric Voegelin would refer to as existential representation, and Voegelin's thinking on the subject helps us understand how Augustine can contain an implicit theory for development.[19]

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[18] *DCD* 5.11. *CG.* 206.

[19] The connection between these two thinkers is not contrived, as Robert McMahon suggestively asserts, "We might even say that Augustine was a late-antique Christian

Symbolic Representation

For Voegelin, political science fundamentally concerns "an exploration of the symbols by which political societies interpret themselves as representatives of a transcendent truth."[20] This is because humans throughout history have consistently developed communal symbols to express the experience of the existence of a transcendent order and their participation within that order. Voegelin writes, "Human society is not merely a fact, or an event, in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon…it is as a whole a little world, a cosmion, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization."[21] This "little world" is internally illuminated by the symbols that society creates to express its grasp and participation with the reality of their existence. "Symbolism illuminates [the cosmion] with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a cosmion, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as its existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence."[22] The transparency of these symbols can be more compact or more differentiated,[23] but they are equivalent in that they seek to symbolize the same experience of reality.[24] Not only do humans create "a little world" of symbols in their society, but they also consistently seek to convey the exact order that they experience in reality in their society. As Alexis de Tocqueville insightfully notes, "The spirit

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Voegelinian, and Eric Voegelin, a late-modern philosophical Augustinian." "Augustine's *Confessions* and Voegelin's Philosophy," *Modern Age*, 48, 1, 2006, 46.

[20] Voegelin, *New Science,* 1.

[21] Ibid., 27.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid. See also Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 1: Israel and Revelation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 163, and below.

[24] Cf. Eric Voegelin. "Equivalence of Experience and Symbolization in History," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12, Published Essay: 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

of man, left to follow its bent, will regulate political society and the City of God in uniform fashion; it will, if I dare put it so, seek to *harmonize* earth with heaven."[25] Thus the human political cosmion is not only "a little world," but it is also a representation of the entire existing cosmos.[26]

While he does not express the same level of theoretical development, Augustine appears to grasp and support the notion that political society properly represents the entire cosmos in miniature.[27] Augustine approvingly quotes Cicero on the need to maintain the existence of cities. On Augustine's rendering, Cicero maintained that, "A city must be so constituted so that it will endure forever; and so death is never nature to a commonwealth as it is to a man…When a city is destroyed, obliterated, extinguished, it is as if – to compare great things with small – the whole world (*mundus*) had perished and collapsed."[28] Augustine's continuing commentary on Cicero's statement seems to indicate that he thought Cicero's error lay in the assumption that the world would never end – not in his correlation between the existence of cities and the universe. This would seem to be a tacit assumption that in the process of constituting a city to endure forever it will create a cosmion.

Above, Tocqueville pointed out that humanity instinctively seeks to correlate its experience of the transcendent with its earthly existence. In Voegelin's more precise terms,

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[25] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 287.

[26] "The term 'cosmion,' thus gains a new component of meaning as the representative of the cosmos." Voegelin, *New Science*, 54.

[27] This idea would parallel the emphasis elsewhere on the similarity between all of creation and a political body. "Nothing happens…which does not issue either as a command or as a permission for the inmost invisible and intelligible court of the supreme emperor, according to his unfathomable justice of rewards and punishments, favors and retributions, in what we may call this *vast and all-embracing republic of the whole creation*." DT 3.4.9. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 1991), 132, emphasis added.

[28] *DCD* 22.6. *CG.* 1118.

political society offers three different types of representation: elemental, existential, and transcendent. Elemental representation is the manifestation of society in its external forms and institutions. Voegelin explains, "The cosmion has its inner realm of meaning; but this realm exists tangibly in the external world in human beings who have bodies and through their bodies participate in the organic and inorganic externality of the world."[29] Voegelin raises the notion of elemental representation as a crucial distinction that must be acknowledged so that analysis can proceed deeper. Elemental representation is insufficient for political society because the existence of forms and institutions is not sufficient in itself for a healthy, functioning society. The mere existence of certain institutions does not necessitate that political society is fulfilling its task creating and functioning as a cosmion. While seemingly simple the importance of not getting distracted and satisfied with examining elemental representation remains vexing in political science and practice in our own time. Voegelin's comment regarding the "naïve endeavor of curing the evils of the world by spreading representative institutions in the elemental sense to areas where the existential conditions for their function were not given,"[30] can be just as prophetically applied to America's contemporary involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, as to his own Cold War context.

More important than the mere elemental representation of society is the existential representation that must lay behind all external forms in order to validate their existence and operation. Existential representation exists to "serve the existential necessities of a society."[31] For Voegelin, existential representation is tied to the articulation of society, which

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[29] Voegelin, *New Science*, 31.
[30] Ibid., 51.
[31] Ibid., 37.

is the "process in which human beings form themselves into a society for action."[32]

Voegelin continues to write, "Behind the symbol 'articulation' there hides nothing less than

the historical rise and fall, as well as the evolutions and revolutions between the two terminal

points."[33] This symbol is crucial to the existential representation of political society because

it pertains to society's animating principle. The evolution and revolution of political cultures

move according to how they articulate themselves, which then yields the existential

representation of society that it means to maintain in all its actions, whether maturing or

restarting.

Voegelin introduces transcendent representation because the "problem of

representation [is not] exhausted by representation in the existential sense," and it

"become[s] necessary to distinguish between the representation of society by its articulated

representatives and a second relation in which society itself becomes the representative of

something beyond itself, of a transcendent reality."[34] Early empires clearly demonstrated this

understanding of society as a representation of the transcendent order of the cosmos. "One

uniformly finds the order of the empire interpreted as a representation of cosmic order in

the medium of human society. The empire is a cosmic analogue, a little world reflecting the

order of the great, comprehensive world."[35] For instance, in earlier time the thinking goes

that, as there is one sun that reigns over the heavens, there must be one emperor to reign

over the earth.

Voegelin continues further to demonstrate that the culmination of philosophy emerges

as a challenge to the prevailing political institutionalization of the levels of representation.

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 41.

[34] Ibid., 54.

[35] Ibid.

Symbols become ossified and are taken for reality itself rather than for a representative expression of reality. This problem is most acutely felt when certain symbols become more important than the humans for whom they were meant to serve. For instance, there reaches a certain point when the common representation of truth in the cosmological form creates conflict by minimizing or marginalizing individuals within political society in such a way as to conflict with a vaguely held and ambiguously symbolized facet of experience. This conflict calls for a greater degree of differentiation of experience because the cosmos is not the only important facet of truth that must be accounted for. This is the fundamental issue of Plato's dictum that the city is man writ large. As Voegelin notes, "A political society in existence will have to be an ordered cosmion, but not at the price of man; it should be not only a microcosmos but also a macroanthropos. This principle of Plato will briefly be referred to as the anthropological principle."[36] In more detail, the anthropological principle differentiates the experience of the reality to account for the unique place of humans within it. Political society will decay if its structure is such as to destroy the individual humans that compose it. Hence, political society as a macroanthropos means that it is a society fit for individual humans. However, it also raises the question of what type of individual humans is this political society fit for? Voegelin continues, "As a general principle it means that in its order every society reflects the type of men of whom it is composed."[37] The uniqueness of individual humans can manifest an array of experiences ranging from the virtuous to the vicious, all of which are completely possible in both individuals and groups. So there is a dual nature to the anthropological principle, on the one hand it calls for symbolizations within society that account for humanity as it is in reality, but on the other hand, the

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[36] Ibid., 61.

[37] Ibid., 61-62.

humanity as it exists is not necessarily good and so society too can manifest the virtues or vices or its citizens.

Symbols are necessary for theory, but must be kept in their proper place without losing the important tension they ultimately convey. Voegelin notes, "Theory is not just any opining about human existence in society; it rather is an attempt at formulating the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definite class of experiences. Its argument is not arbitrary but derives its validity from the aggregate of experiences to which it must permanently refer for empirical control."[38] The representation of symbols and theoretical treatment involving these symbols are not aspects of an enterprise unto itself; a game to be skillfully played by those clever enough to create systems in their minds. The science of politics must continually recur to the experiences of reality that animate all representations in order to avoid the loss of tension. The loss of tension can be particularly appalling when dealing with the public, political expression of the psyche that has been formed by openness to the divine. Following Voegelin, political theory requires an approach to theological symbols that maintains the tension of divine experiences given incarnate expression in public existence.

Defense of the Term "Appropriation"

The foregoing analysis has not yet definitely supported the adoption and usage of the term "appropriation." Readers may justifiably suspect the appearance of a neologism in any author's work; the appearance of a neologism when a sufficient term already exists is doubling damning. In this light it is particularly necessary in the present case to explain the usage of appropriation as a technical term instead of relying on Voegelin's development of

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[38] Ibid., 64.

symbols as representation of experiences of reality. In the first place, it is possible to defend appropriation against the accusation of being a strict neologism, rather it is an adaptation of an existing term and usage. The term appears in Kierkegaard's work in a comparable fashion when he defines truth as, "An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth."[39] Hegel also uses the term in a related way when he declares, "A person has as his substantive end the right of putting his will into any and every thing and thereby making it his, because it has no such end in itself and derives its destiny and soul from his will. This is the absolute right of appropriation which man has over all 'things.'"[40] Outside existential philosophy and German idealism, James Wetzel also utilizes appropriation as the means of conveying something of the Platonic inheritance and tradition in which Augustine writes.[41] The present intention in using the term is only an adaptation of such previous usages for the purpose of faithfully rendering Augustine's theoretical movement.

The present use of appropriation differs from some previous usage because it conveys a respect for the limited ability of humanity within an order that is not their own creation. Kierkegaard doubts the possibility of objective declaration from a subjective being, which is a properly humble attitude, but politics requires that humanity do what it can within the world. Hegel's usage considers appropriation more as mastery than participation. Hegel elaborates in an addition to the above passage, "Man is free will and consequently is absolute, while what stands over against him lacks this quality... 'to appropriate' means at

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[39] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments: Vol. I,* ed. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 203.

[40] G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 41.

[41] James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6.

bottom only to manifest the pre-eminence of my will over the thing and to prove that it is not absolute, is not an end in itself. This is made manifest when I endow the thing with some purpose not directly its own."[42] On Hegel's development of the term there would be no chance to consider the simultaneous development of misappropriation that shall appear below.

It is quite certain that nothing in Augustine's corpus comes verbally close to the present usage, which should give the careful reader pause. Eric Voegelin has rightly cautioned that the "first rule of hermeneutics" is "that the meaning of the text must be established through interpretation of the linguistic corpus. As such, it is impermissible to 'put an interpretation on' a literary work through anachronistic use of modern vocabulary without equivalents in the text itself."[43] As Eric Voegelin himself elaborated, the only suitable defense for the appearance of any outside term must be that it covers an experience or range of experiences that is implicit within prior linguistic symbols. This is referred to as the principle of compactness and differentiation.[44] Compactness is the concise symbolization of an experience without minute detail, distinction, or difference. Elaborating on what was implicitly contained within the prior compactness can further differentiate a symbol, which allows for greater theoretical analysis and interpretation. In the present case, it is not shocking that Augustine's linguistic corpus does not include the concept of appropriation; however, this work argues that his corpus demonstrates the experience of appropriation and necessitates such vocabulary for critical analysis. Without a further elaboration of technical vocabulary, Augustine's distance from the modern reader may

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[42] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 236.

[43] Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 162-63.

[44] Ibid., 163.

appear insurmountable. As Voegelin notes, "Unless a theoretical exposition activates the corresponding experiences at least to a degree, it will create the impression of empty talk or will perhaps be rejected as an irrelevant expression of subjective opinions."[45] When read with a few more theoretical tools, however, the hope is that Augustine still delivers his insights to a present age that may find them relevant.

It still remains to be seen whether or not there is justification for using the term appropriation when existing technical vocabulary, such as existential or transcendent representation, may be sufficient. There is enough existing usage of appropriation in philosophical discourse to allow the interpreter the option of using it. However, this is not in itself a sufficient defense. Appropriation has an advantage over symbolic representation in that it conveys a movement that is related to existential and transcendent representation, but distinct. Representation is the successful outcome of symbolizing an aspect of reality in human life and society. Appropriation as a concept refers to the operation of moving a symbol or experience from one contextual experience of reality to another. Redemption exists as a symbol because of the experience of humanity receiving salvation from moral evil by the operation of a transcendent divinity. While redemption explicitly refers to the realm of theology, the presence of such a symbol encourages speculation on whether humanity can be saved from other evil situations in a decidedly temporal fashion. Therefore, appropriation seeks to use a truth or symbolization of truth in a realm other than that in which it was initially experienced and in so doing acknowledge the relation of the two realms.

Appropriation must also be defended against the claims of a further, more venerable

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[45] Voegelin, *New Science*, 64-65.

Christian tradition, that of natural law. After the achievements of St. Thomas Aquinas in

medieval philosophy there is a temptation to interpret Augustine's division of the heavenly

and earthly cities as implying a proto-Thomistic distinction between a natural and

supernatural realm. For example, Etienne Gilson has written, "Everywhere in mediaeval

philosophy the natural order leans on a supernatural order, depends on it as for its origin and

end."[46] From this view it is inferred that there is a natural law that holds sway over the

natural realm of the city of man. This conception of natural law could account for

Augustine's basic understanding of order that is symbolized in this entire world. However,

we have a basic problem with this understanding that, due to his chronological position,

Augustine did not have the benefit of the fully developed mediaeval conception of nature,

which is not entirely distinct from God's activity, though distinguishable. So while

Augustine may on occasion make statements that seem suggestive of natural law, it is only an

apparent connection. Consider for example this statement from Augustine's early work,

"The maker of temporal laws, if he is a good and wise man, will consult that eternal law

itself, which no soul has been given the right to judge, so that in accordance with its

immutable regulations he may discern what at this juncture in time is to be commanded and

forbidden."[47] Augustine's statement here is conditional, not imperative. As Deane has

stated, "[Nowhere] does Augustine ever state that positive law must conform to God's

eternal law or to the law of nature if it is to be valid…He does not say that if the ruler is

unwise or evil and fails to take the eternal law into account […then] these laws have no

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[46] Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 364.

[47] *DVR* 31.58. Augustine, "True Religion" in *On Christian Belief*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2005), 68-69.

validity and the subjects have no obligation to obey them."[48] Modern readers of

Augustine must be on guard against Thomistic attitudes and interpretations of Augustine

that have been attached to Augustine through the commentary tradition.[49] Rather than a

more scholastic attitude, Augustine's entire thinking is bound to an active conception of

God, working both among the chosen people as well as at large in the world which God

personally created and actively sustains. His thinking is at a much more basic level than later

mediaeval thought. Therefore, It is incorrect to consider Augustine's view of nature as

reaching the full development of mediaeval thought and conveying a natural law distinction.

Appropriation avoids confusion with the scholastic tradition while paying its due to the

Platonic tradition and yet conveying contemporary relevance beyond religious modes of

thinking.

Problems of Differentiation

Appropriation as an interpretive tool for analyzing Augustine also helps address the

political problems that are distinctly manifest compared to the issues of transcendent

theology. The fields of politics and theology pose unique challenges whose solutions are not

necessarily compatible. Several general aspects of Christian theology must be addressed

here, but only in broad view of the basic political problems that Christian theology entails. It

remains necessary below to further address in detail Augustine's own symbolization of

theology.

The importance of developing conceptual terminology that will handle Christianity is

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[48] Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia
    University Press, 1963), 90.
[49] Cf. Gustave Combès, *La doctrine politique de saint Augustin* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1927).
Cited in Deane, *Political and Social*, 91, "elle n'est plus qu'une formule inerte et vide, incapable
de dicter un devoir et de commander l'obèissance," as well as the statement that Augustine,
"enseigne qu'une loi injuste n'est pas une loi et que le citoyen doit lui refuser l'obèissance."

vital because of the philosophical problems posed by the differentiation of Christianity and the possibility of derailment. Cosmological truth and anthropological truth alone sustained the project of classical philosophy through the early Roman Empire, but becomes problematic and eventually untenable in the course of human history. Alasdair MacIntyre has referred to this as an "epistemological crisis" within a tradition.[50] The traditional paths of thinking reveal dead-ends and such thought "begins to have the effect of increasingly disclosing new inadequacies, hitherto unrecognized incoherencies, and new problems for the solution of which there seem to be insufficient or no resources within the established fabric of belief."[51] We see this in the breakdown of classical political philosophy and its partial apprehension of reality that yields a Promethean spirit of "defiance and revolt…followed by confusion, defeat, and despair."[52] This breakdown of classicism historically prompted large numbers of conversions by late-antique philosophers to the growing movement of early Christianity. In light of the great number of conversions of Neo-Platonic philosophers to Christianity in the first centuries after Christ, "It will be necessary," as Voegelin states, "to recover the question to which, in Hellenistic-Roman culture, the philosopher could understand the gospel as the answer."[53] Bearing in mind as Sheldon Wolin advises, "The significance of Christian thought for the Western political tradition lies not so much in what it had to say about the political order, but primarily in what it had to say about the religious

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[50] Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), 361.

[51] Ibid., 362.

[52] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2003), 456.

[53] Eric Voegelin, "Gospel and Culture," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 12, Published Essay: 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 175.

order."[54]

The problem of classical philosophy from Plato on was the inability of Plato to successfully resolve or transmit a solution to the question of mediation.[55] The cosmology and anthropology of classical science was based on a division of form and matter that yielded only an ethical and logical system based upon forms or ideas, but not one that could be fully applied to the nature of matter and human existence. On Plato's understanding, the One can only be transcendent and cannot display immanence because of the imperfection of human reality that is only ever an image. Therefore, the task of Platonic philosophy was to build a bridge from the Many to the One in order that man could recover a principle that could unify and verify all of experience.[56] As James Wetzel has noted with his usage of appropriation, "Neither Plato nor his followers ever solved the problem of mediation. The problem emerged from the disparity between the sublime perfection of the good and the human mind's powers of representation…to appropriate the good into our power of agency, we would have to be able in some way to include ourselves in the good's representation."[57] This problem left humanity without any assurances of meaningful existence. Sheldon Wolin agrees, "Christianity succeeded where the Hellenistic and late classical philosophies had failed, because it put forward a new and powerful ideal of community which recalled men to a life of meaningful participation."[58] In Voegelin's summation that, "the impossibility of *philia* between God and man may be considered typical for the whole range of

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[54] Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Expanded Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 87.

[55] Cf. Cochrane's *Christianity and Classical Culture* throughout for more detail in this regard.

[56] Cf. Cochrane, *Christianity*, 473.

[57] Wetzel, *Augustine*, 6.

[58] Wolin, *Politics and Vision,* 87.

anthropological truth,"[59] we capture the problem as well as glimpse the solution that is provided by the differentiation of Christianity. Voegelin continues to write of the Platonic problem of mediation, "The soul orients itself toward a God who rests in his immovable transcendence; it reaches out toward divine reality, but it does not meet an answering movement from beyond. The Christian bending of God in grace toward the soul does not come within the range of these experiences…The experience of mutuality in the relation with God, of the *amicitia* in the Thomistic sense, of the grace which imposes a supernatural form on the nature of man, is the specific difference of Christian truth."[60] Following Voegelin we may term the differentiation of Christianity as the rise of "soteriological truth."[61]

The challenge that philosophy had raised to historical existence in a political order that attempted to symbolize its experience of transcendent order – but could only be found lacking because of its failure to form a perfect analogy – had revealed "man as the measure, properly understood." The philosopher strove to independently orient himself to the unseen measure, but it was only with the confirmation of his attempt in the "revelation of the measure itself," that the project of philosophy could be vindicated against the polis that would silence the philosopher. It is in this sense that Voegelin credits the advent of Christianity, and he summarizes the contribution in noting that, "The fact of revelation is its

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[59] Voegelin, *New Science*, 77.
[60] Ibid., 77-78.
[61] "Terminologically, it will be necessary to distinguish between three types of truth. The first of these types is the truth represented by the early empires; it shall be designated as 'cosmological truth.' The second type of truth appears in the political culture of Athens and specifically in tragedy; it shall be called 'anthropological truth'…The third type of truth that appears with Christianity shall be called 'soteriological truth.'" Ibid., 76-77.

content."[62] By this he means that the mere existence of revelation provides the most salient features of the experience. Namely, that transcendent divinity can irrupt in humanity's perception of reality and interact with humans on an individual or mass basis.

With Christian revelation there also disappears the problem of what Voegelin referred to as "the mortgage of the polis."[63] That is the concrete historical experience of the revelation that remains inseparable from the revelation itself and so limits it to those who originally received it. With Greek philosophy, the "leap in being"[64] resulted in "personal existence of individual human beings under God," but still retained an inevitable "mortgage on the polis" because "the discoveries, though made by individuals, were made by citizens of a polis; and the new order of the soul, when communicated by its discoverers and creators, inevitably was in opposition to the public order, with the implied or explicit appeal to the fellow citizens to reform their personal conduct, the mores of society, and ultimately the institutions in conformity with the new order."[65] Christianity is not mortgaged to the polis because, while it has a concrete advent, it is a universal symbolization that does not depend on present political structures for its continuation or validation.

In contrast to classical philosophy, Christianity provides symbolization of creative movement that is not separate from the highest order of being. Without veering into triumphalism, it is still possible to maintain that the political possibilities opened up by this differentiation are enormous. The creative spirit is not something other or separate from transcendent divinity. This allows for the further symbolization of the transcendent divinity

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[62] Ibid., 78.

[63] Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 164.

[64] Cf. Ibid., 10-11.

[65] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 2: The World of the Polis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 169.

as involved in the everyday affairs of humanity. God directs and superintends creation.

As Cochrane states, "It becomes possible to envisage the divine principle as both

transcendent and immanent, 'prior' to nature, the world of time and space in which we live,

and yet operative with it."[66] In opposition to classical political philosophy, Christianity could

provide an account of human freedom that explained his struggle within himself and against

outside forces without supposing that he wrestled with fortune or reaching the conclusion

that only heroes or supermen could participate with divinity.[67]

It should be noted that such an august scholar as Markus denies that there was an

epistemological crisis as described by Cochrane, MacIntyre, and to a lesser extent, Voegelin

and Wolin. Markus writes:

> "The new interpretive scheme in this kind of case is not one that has been
> conceptually enriched, and it does not displace one which has revealed itself as lacking
> the resources to meet the demands made upon it…[The new] ways of thinking were,
> indeed, profoundly continuous with an already ancient tradition of thought. It did not
> solve problems previously insoluble, or answer questions previously answerable;
> rather, losing certain kinds of interest, it by-passed or suppressed them."[68]

Markus' statement supposes that the philosophy of classical culture was in no way lacking

after the advent of Christianity, and that the great process of mass conversion to Christianity

was simply a matter of political choice or calculation, and the transformation the simple

outcome of emphasizing scriptural discourse in an "almost exclusively scriptural culture and

the adoption of a framework for thought formulated within scriptural horizons."[69] Markus

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[66] Cochrane, *Christianity*, 406-07.

[67] "We are thus to think of ourselves no longer either as mechanisms or organisms, but as persons, endued with latent spiritual powers to be activated through the indwelling Word, by virtue of which we may share the divine nature." Ibid., 411.

[68] Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 225.

[69] Ibid.

does not take seriously the notion – which he himself utilized in a prior work[70] – that the

political project of classicism was breaking down before Constantine because of its

incredible overreaching.

Markus should acknowledge the overreaching of classicism since he himself makes

reference to its definitive analysis as "creative politics," or perhaps more clearly stated in the

language of "perfective" politics, offered by Charles Norris Cochrane.[71] For the Greeks, the

polis is the sphere of truly human action and the realm of human perfection where man

reached his *telos*; therefore, nothing else could stand equal in importance to political activity.

Giovanni Sartori notes:

> For the Greeks, 'man' and 'citizen' meant exactly the same [thing], just as participating
> in the life of the polis…meant 'to live.'…The meaning and value that this notion had
> is exactly revealed by the meaning of the Latin *privatus* and its Greek equivalent, *idion*.
> The *privatus*, i.e., private, means 'deprived' (from the verb *privare*, to deprive), and the
> term was used to connote an existence that was incomplete and defective in relation to
> the community…Correspondingly, idiotes (derived from idion) was a pejorative term,
> meaning he who was…a non-citizen and therefore a vulgar, unworthy, ignorant man
> who was concerned only with himself.[72]

This privileged, perfective politics, could never live up to the expectations of its project. The

very notion of the eternality of Roman rule, which exemplified creative politics, was

disintegrating before Augustus reinvigorated it, but his efforts were truly only life-support

until the creative politics of classicism died and was reborn after Constantine as the limited

politics of Christianity. Markus accepts the distinction between these two traditions, and

would even accept that Augustine finds the classical "polis-centred tradition of Greek

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[70] Cf. R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press, 1970), 73.

[71] Ibid., 83, where he credits Cochrane's work.

[72] Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited, Part Two: The Classical Issues* (Chatham,
    New Jersey, Chatham House Publishers, 1987), 284-85.

thought"[73] flawed and problematic. Markus, however, stops far short of following this line of reasoning to the conclusion that the classical tradition is not a viable path.

Undermining Civil Theology

If we are permitted to disagree with Markus and accept that Christianity changes the nature of human thought, then we must also consider its changes to the realm of action and whether this is entirely unproblematic. Eric Voegelin is particularly sensitive both to the advancement and problem poised by Christianity's differentiation. The differentiation of the Judeo-Christian truth enfolds from the experience of divine irruption and reaction against the stale cosmological truth. Voegelin notes, "When the spirit bloweth, society in cosmological form becomes Sheol, the realm of death."[74] The Jews are the first "people that moved on the historical scene while living toward a goal beyond history,"[75] and Christianity is the further differentiation of this prior compactness. There are two distinct political difficulties with the differentiation of soteriological truth from cosmological truth. In the first place, the soteriological truth expresses the experience of divine irruption into human existence and opens man to the transcendent reality that is greater than mundane existence. The transcendent reality can eclipse the present reality of human existence and foster enthusiasms and expectations that are not realizable in the present. As Voegelin writes, "This mode of existence [is] ambiguous and fraught with dangers of derailment, for all too easily the goal beyond history could merge with goals to be attained within history."[76] On

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[73] Markus, *Saeculum*, 73.
[74] Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 113.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

this point, Augustine is safe from any Voegelinian critique and actually merits his praise.[77]

Augustine's two-cities model is the archetype of all arguments for limiting enthusiasms in

this world.

It is in the second political problem with the differentiation of soteriological truth that

Augustine cannot so easily escape Voegelin's censure. In order to demonstrate this problem,

Voegelin's general criticism of the Christian Fathers can be taken as indicative for Augustine

as well, "They did not understand that Christianity could supersede polytheism but not

abolish the need of a civil theology. When the truth of the soul had prevailed, the vacuum

was left that Plato had tried to fill with his construction of the polis as cosmic analogue. The

filling of this vacuum became a major problem wherever Christianity dissolved the pre-

Christian truth of the closed society as a living force."[78] While the cosmological truth had

appropriately captured an element of humanity's experience of truth, the Christian

differentiation completely dissolves its compact predecessor. "When the differentiated truth

of reality is intensely experienced and adequately symbolized, the more compact symbols of

the older truth become false. And that would be the end of the matter, if a discovery

concerning man's humanity in relation to God were no more than a personal affair, if it did

not have also a social and historical dimension."[79] The Christian differentiation prompts

Augustine to completely reject the prior cosmological formulations that have prevailed over

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[77] "Christian statesmen, from St. Paul to St. Augustine, had to struggle for an understanding of the exigencies of world-immanent social and political order." Ibid., 183.

[78] Voegelin, *New Science*, 158.

[79] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 4: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 36-37.

society, despite the fact that these may have contained clear elements of truth.[80] The

political problem with the dissolution of cosmological symbolizations, is that soteriological

symbolizations do not clearly occur in the context of earthly society as understood by the

Greeks, and therefore they provide no alternatives to the symbolizations that they have

supplanted. Speaking particularly of this problem in Augustine, Voegelin notes, "St.

Augustine could not understand…the compactness of the Roman experience, the

inseparable community of gods and men in the historically concrete *civitas*, the

simultaneousness of human and divine institution of a social order."[81]

      Voegelin's criticism is correct in so far as there is a great deal of ambiguity in

Augustine on the matter of civil theology.[82] Civil theology had been part of the disorder for

which Christianity was an alternative, in that the rote transmission from generation to

generation had deprived the old religion of its animating spirit.[83] Augustine, however, does

not have to provide a formulation of political practice derived from Christianity because he

assumes the continuation of prior institutions, despite the fact that those institutions were

based upon pagan religion and worship. Augustine blithely comments that Christian

pilgrims,"[Do] not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary

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[80] "[Augustine's] attitude toward Varro's civil theology resembled that of an enlightened intellectual toward Christianity – he simply could not understand that an intelligent person would seriously maintain such nonsense." Voegelin, *New Science*, 87.

[81] Ibid., 88.

[82] Ernest Fortin considers Augustine's critique to be purposefully indirect in order to not exacerbate an already confused polity. "We have no assurance that the quaint deities which Augustine dredges up with Varro's help…were even remembered, let alone revered, by the pagans themselves." Ernest Fortin, "Augustine and the Roman Civil Religion: Some Reflections," in *Classical Christianity and the Political Order: Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem*, ed. Brian Benestad (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 94-97.

[83] Cf. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 382-83

for the support of this mortal life are administered…[however] it has not been possible for the Heavenly City to have laws of religion in common with the earthly city."[84] On the one hand, he insists that Christians can share in the earthly peace by obeying civil laws, but on the other, he rejects shared religious laws as if the laws of piety were in some way separated from the laws of property. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges' neglected classic explicates the connection between ancient religion and law that complicates Augustine's easy confidence. His words are worth quoting at length:

> To understand how much the principles and the essential rules of politics were then changed [with the coming of Christianity], we need only recollect that ancient society had been established by an old religion whose principle dogma was that every god protected exclusively a single family or a single city, and existed only for that. This was the time of the domestic gods and the city-protecting divinities. This religion had produced laws; the relations among men – property, inheritance, legal proceedings – all were regulated, not by the principles of natural equity, but by the dogmas of this religion, and with a view to the requirements of its worship. It was this religion that had established government among men; that of the father in the family; that of the king or magistrate in the city. All had come from religion, – that is to say, from the opinion that man had entertained of the divinity. Religion, law, and government were confounded, and had been but a single thing under three different aspects.[85]

These comments appear to support Voegelin's broad criticism of Augustine's attitude toward civil theology. The underlying religious roots of ancient laws make it unclear how Christians can both follow the political order at large and not see the detriment that it will bring either to their own faith or to the polity.

While the preceding analysis has taken some inspiration from the work of Eric Voegelin and has leaned heavily upon him at times, it is necessary to move beyond Voegelin for the full development of Augustine's theoretical resources. In dealing with the rise of soteriological truth, Voegelin has provided the immense service of bringing it to our

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[84] *DCD* 19.17. *CG.* 946.

[85] Fustel, *Ancient City*, 381.

attention and pointing out some of the inherent tensions and problems created by Christianity's further differentiation and symbolization. Voegelin, however, never provided a fully satisfactory treatment of Christianity as part of his project in *Order and History*. There are many allusions and hints in the chronologically pre-Christian volumes of *Order and History* regarding Voegelin's assessment of the Christian differentiation, but he shifted the project before he produced the volumes that would have brought this analysis to fruition. What remains needful in a Voegelinian analysis is a more thorough treatment of soteriological truth, and particularly a treatment that is consistently rooted within the continuing Christian tradition. Augustine offers the best chance for both historical insight and continuing relevance. The Christian differentiation of truth can be understood as a foundation of the present development of appropriation. A fuller theoretical treatment should address a number of Voegelinian concerns and criticism of Augustine and Christianity more particularly. In order to understand the implicit theory of Augustine's appropriation the first step is to briefly examine the Christian redemption and conversion from the life and world that he had previously known and lived.

The Problem of Conversion

Hints at the experience of conversion pre-date the appearance of Christianity. The Greek experience with conversion, however, is of a much more compact type. Consider the famous Parable of the Cave in the *Republic*.[86] In order to become a philosopher and see the true light and order provided by the sun, the potential philosopher must be freed and leave the darkness of the cave. As Eric Voegelin has so astutely intimated, to all appearances the potential philosopher is passive in this entire operation and is even forcibly compelled into

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[86] *Republic*, 514a

the discomfort of the light.[87] Throughout the parable Plato speaks in ambiguously passive

language. Socrates relates that this man "is released" from his bonds and "suddenly

compelled to stand up." Further he notes, "Someone dragged him away from there by force

… and didn't let him go before he had dragged him out into the light of the sun."[88]

Interpreting the parable, Eric Voegelin comments, "From the depth comes the force that

drags the philosopher's soul up to the light, so that it is difficult to say whether the upper

There is the source of his truth, or the nether There that forces him up… The source of the

help is hidden; we can only say it is There."[89]

It is important to see the Parable of the Cave as addressing the problem of education

or *paideia*. While in the cave the prisoners attempt to guess and explain the shadows that

play across the walls in front of them, all the while they are unaware that the Promethean fire

that creates the unreal shadows is not true light compared to the sun above that illuminates

true reality.[90] The prisoners' habituation in a world of shadows and noctilucent glimmering

can never break the restraints of unreality that are imposed upon them. As Voegelin writes,

"A man's education to the full understanding of reality is incomplete as long as he has not

undergone the turning around of the soul, the *periagoge* in the Parable [of the Cave]."[91] Once

a prisoner has been turned around and ascended out of the cave into the true light of the sun

he will behold a fuller degree of reality. The passive language of Plato implies a transcendent

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[87] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
        University Press, 1957), 61-62.

[88] Plato, *The Republic of Plato,* ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 194-95 (515c-
        516a).

[89] Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 62.

[90] "As Socrates refigures this myth in his Image of the Cave (Republic 514), it turns out that
the fire Prometheus brought was a counterfeit light (b2); those few who know how to use it
only abuse it by allowing it to project deceptions." Eva Brann, *The Music of the Republic*
(Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2004), 156.

[91] Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 115.

operation and the turning (*periagoge*) from unreality to reality compactly contains elements that are recognized in the experience of conversion.

The Greek experience, however, is not fully equivalent with the Christian experience. Voegelin continues, "The Platonic periagoge has the overtones of conversion [in the Christian sense]; but no more than overtones. The experience remains essentially within the boundaries of the Dionysiac soul."[92] The compactness of the Greek experience of conversion is explained by Christianity's differentiation through the connection between conversion and redemption. According to Voegelin's reading of Plato, "Philosophy is not a doctrine of right order, but the light of wisdom that falls on the struggle; and help is not a piece of information about truth, but the arduous effort to locate the forces of evil and identify their nature. For half the battle is won when the soul can recognize the shape of the enemy and, consequently, know that the way it must follow leads in the opposite direction."[93] In the Christian experience, conversion is the initial realization of redemption. A.D. Nock's canonical study of conversion explains the radical nature of Christianity's conversion, "By conversion we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right."[94] Nock continues, "Christianity demanded renunciation and a new start. [It] demanded not merely acceptance of a rite, but the adhesion of the will to a theology, in a word faith, a new life in a new people."[95] Christianity's symbolization of conversion goes

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 62-63.

[94] A.D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 7.

[95] Ibid., 14.

further than prior symbolizations because the experience creates a new life through an internal change and transformed will that acts in faith.

The Christian differentiation of conversion creates a problem in relation to the outworking of its specifically internal transformation. Whereas in Plato's Parable of the Cave, the "turned" philosopher has been commanded, "You must go down [*katabateon*],"[96] the individual Christian receives no such explicit injunction from the revelation of scripture.[97] While there is an expectation of some elements of external, visible transformations, the external change is entirely secondary to the internal change within the individual. Therefore, Christianity did not build up a distinct practice for all social existence.

Conversion as an internal change, which does not necessarily supply external practice, but denotes a separation from past life, is incredibly problematic when looked at through the lens of classical culture or any other category of definite manifestation. As R.A. Markus explains the problem, "We are reminded that in the non-Christian world religion touched everything, that the distinction between sacred and secular is essentially a Christian one which we impose on a culture to which it is foreign; the conclusion follows inevitably, that if everything is religion, then everything must be changed in conversion."[98] Following this logic to its most extreme end, Ramsay MacMullen claims, "So disturbing and difficult must be conversion, or so incomplete."[99] According to MacMullen, without evidence of conflict

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[96] Plato, *Republic*, 520c

[97] While lacking a clear dictate from revelation, Augustine does declare, "No one ought to live a life of leisure in such a way that he takes no thought in that leisure for the welfare of his neighbor…it is the love of truth which seeks a holy leisure, while it is the impetus of love that we should undertake righteous business…if it is imposed on us." DCD 19.19. *CG*. 949.

[98] Markus, *Ancient Christianity*, 7.

[99] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 74.

and trauma in antiquity, the historian is not allowed to accept the testimony of conversion to Christianity. Such an extreme view would call into doubt even Augustine's conversion, and, therefore, demands that we explore in more detail why Christianity did not develop a fully unique political practice when it arrived in the classical world, while also explaining some of the changes it did affect.

No Unique Christian Politics

Appropriation provides us with a way to hold the tension between the continuing existence and need for political life and the dissolution of prior symbolization on which political life rested. Our focus is naturally drawn to the interaction of Christianity and the Roman Empire because it was the prevailing political structure of its day and the first substantive political society with which this young religion crossed paths. After dissolving and supplanting the prior societal symbolizations and institutions of the Roman Empire when Constantine and Theodosius made legal provisions and then preferences for Christianity, Christian thinkers and statesmen did not provide a systematic alternative to the prior political practice. As such, Christianity can be accused of two entirely different errors in realm of politics. On the one hand it can be argued that Christianity simply overlaid the existing empire structure and combined the church and empire in an unlimited and unholy alliance. On the other hand, the opposite conclusion can be reached whereby Christianity undermines and abandons the political realm and provides no appropriate alternative.

The first argument represents a characterization of the historical reality that Christianity faced after the decline of the Roman Empire. The second conclusion represents the reaction against the easy correlation of the church and political power, whether it is historical or modern. In so far as the historical situation after the empire's decline confused

the true nature of political authority and power, it was an unfortunate occurrence. Transcendent commands were removed from their revelatory setting and identified with the commands of the empire. Divine authority was usurped or abused by temporal authorities to great detriment. As such, the historical argument is less profound and easier to deal with by the simple acknowledgement of error. Things should not have happened the way they did.

The second argument poses the more serious challenge both to the historical church and to its present existence. In so far as it legitimately challenges the past abuses of divine authority by temporal rulers and refuses to equate the two, the anti-political tone of this interpretation of Christianity is correct. However, the argument cannot be left here. A better understanding of the absence of political teaching will reveal the deficiencies of an anti-political interpretation of Christianity, while still avoiding excesses.

As an introduction to the political teaching of Christianity we may take the following statement from Augustine as indicative: "[The Christian] 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: first, to do no harm to anyone, and, secondly, to help everyone whenever possible."[100] Clearly, this is not a distinct political program. At most, Augustine has offered a general encouragement to civil peace that would be unobjectionable to a whole range of worldviews, ideologies, or political religions.

In the first place, we should note that Christianity does not have a unique political practice because revelation lacks any strictures on political structure. There are very limited commands in revelation that are directly applicable to the structure of political society.

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[100] *DCD* 18.35. *CG.* 873.

There are some limited political imperatives in the Christian faith for believers in this

world and their political interactions. We must point out, however, that these imperatives

only appear for a limited range of interactions and textually they are largely confined to the

Old Testament. Christians, for example, are directly forbidden to murder, steal, and bear

false witness.[101] On such concise revelation there is no definite political organization

required. Even the Old Testament tribes of Israel did not derive their entire political

structure from revelation, but rather demanded a king like all the other peoples.[102]

    To explain further we may venture to make the general statement that, for

Augustine, there is no such thing as Christian politics, only Christians in politics. Such a

statement seems simple, but is deceptively complicated. Augustine clearly provides no

systematic formulation of a political doctrine. This leads a noted scholar such as Peter

Brown to conclude that, "The weakness of Augustine's position is…that it implies a very

static view of political society. It is quite content merely to have some of the more painful

tensions removed. It takes an ordered political life for granted."[103] Without nuance this

statement is inaccurate. Augustine insists that Christian rulers must keep and promote peace

just as pagan rulers previously had, so he should not be accused of assuming that there will

never be the possibility of disorder in the struggle to maintain peace. Rather, he assumes

that this will be the function of any ruler, be he Christian or pagan. So, returning to the

earlier formulation, there are only Christians in politics, not Christian politics. Augustine

stated more clearly than anyone in the early history of the church that Christianity is

fundamentally the statement about what God has done for humanity. Politics, in contrast, is

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[101] Exodus 20: 13-16

[102] 1 Samuel 8:4

[103] Peter Brown, "Political Society," in R.A. Markus, *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*
    (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 325.

always concerned with the actions of humans. The dissonance is immediately evident. Unlike politics, Christianity is concerned with what has been done for the individual, and to maintain that focus it is imperative to avoid discussing the resulting life lived as an obligation that can be so systematized as to negate the focus on what has already been accomplished. Christian practice must avoid the assertion or implication that the life that follows after conversion is somehow a prerequisite of the conversion that prompted the change. Excluding the changed life protects the exclusivity of the divine work, but also prevents the definite declaration of a detailed code of conduct in everything from morals to political practice.

The non-political nature of Christianity is a nuanced tension that must not veer to the opposite extreme. Just because individual action has no place in gaining or assuring the Christian life does not mean that the redeemed individual does not have a changed life or that these changes do not pertain to politics. Voegelin has assured us with his "anthropological principle" that, "Every society reflects the type of men of whom it is composed."[104] As Christians provide insight into the nature of man and his proper ordering, the order of society will in time shift toward a fuller conception of these anthropological principles. Therefore, the presence of Christians within a given polity will affect the order expressed and represented in that polity. Augustine provides an example of a difference individual Christians make in society when he preaches to his congregation against the recent lynching of a public official. He writes, "I am not saying, brothers and sisters, that any of you can go out and just tell the populace to stop; that's something not even I can do. But each one of you in his own house can prevent his son, his slave, his friend, his neighbor, his

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[104] Voegelin, *New Science*, 61-62.

apprentice, his ward from taking part. Work on them so that they don't do these things."[105] Similar actions taken by the mass of individual Christians throughout society will at minimum produce a leavening effect on political culture, and when Christians are the dominant majority, may even lead to the declaration of Christian ideas in the form of laws. This will result in laws and institutions differing from the practice of non-Christians. Institutionalizing certain Christian practices and principles is theologically permissible as long as it is clearly understood as derivative from Christianity and not Christianity itself. Christians are not bound to implement Christian ethics, though they will likely always engage in such an enterprise because they hold them as a true symbolization of the order of existence. The simultaneity is crucially important, though the tension is always difficult to hold.

The tension that must be maintained is similar to the theological categories of the law and grace expounded by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. Law as a performative requirement revealed by God will not save man because of his inability to fulfill its requirements. Without the law, however, mankind would not know the existence of sin and their bondage in sin.[106] Grace accomplishes human redemption from sin, but does not replace the law. The law is still proclaimed, but Christians do not find assurance in their ability to fulfill it. In the same way, political society may seek to represent truths of Christianity, but its practice neither creates Christians nor maintains their existence. As Oliver O'Donovan notes, "Earthly events of liberation…provide us with partial indications

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[105] *S* 302.19. Augustine, "Sermon 302," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Part III-Sermons, Vol. 8*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994), 309.

[106] Romans 7:7-8

of what God is doing in human history."[107] The key to understanding any Augustinian

statements about the political benefits of Christianity is his focus on the individual Christians

engaged in political society. Rather than offering a new and/or divine pattern for political

order, Augustine is referring to the possibility of Christians inhabiting a culture and living

their lives as professed Christians.

Conclusion

Augustine's own very explicit comments on the current state of the world and his

theology of original sin have appeared to many readers throughout history as a grim picture

of human possibilities. Despite this disinclination, Augustine has remained appealing

because his attitude does not stretch to the extremes drawn by some of his readers. It is

important to remember that Augustine does not himself follow the course that others have

taken in renouncing the world. The anchorite tradition might seem a logical outcome of

Augustine's position, but he does not follow this path. As Voegelin notes, "There have

always been men who have held the belief that out of the perishable qualities of human

existence no earthly structure of intrinsic meaning can be built, that every attempt at creating

a cosmion is futile, and that man has to undergo the trial of life only as a preparation for life

of meaning beyond his earthly existence…The monastic or anchoritic attitude considers

fundamentally the attempt at political company to be a mistake."[108] The same cannot be said

for Augustine.

Augustine's understanding that there is no Christian politics makes it seem as if the

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[107] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

[108] Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 19, History of Political Ideas, Vol. I:
Hellenism, Rome, and Early Christianity*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Columbia, MO:
University of Missouri Press, 1997), 226-27.

differentiation of soteriological truth is inherently headed for derailment, but he only stresses the impossibility of Christian politics to further emphasize the role of individual Christians in the social realm of political interactions. This is the fundamental lacuna that our efforts have been directed toward filling. Appropriation of Christianity by individuals within society provides the existential representation that seems to be lacking in Augustine and explains how he neither renounced the world by abandoning involvement with it, nor allowed the human possibilities of progress to cloud his expressions of the true redemption that is divinely offered.

With a full appreciation of the resources of theology in clear view, humans can acknowledge their finiteness and still find existential resources to appropriate – that is to claim them as a ground or basis for themselves and others in society. Augustine notes, "When man sinned, [God] did not permit him to go unpunished, but neither did He abandon him without mercy. To good and evil men alike He gave being…and He gave life capable of reproducing itself…and intellectual life, in common with the angels alone." He continues further, "It can in no wise be believed, then, that He has chosen to exclude the kingdoms of men and their lordships and servants from the laws of His providence."[109] The appropriation of Christian insights of the created order refreshes the fading letters of the moral law written in all men's hearts and provides resources for social life. It will not do to save their souls, and its effects at any given time may only be temporary. Still, Augustine's works brim with evidence that humans are not left in a hopeless tangle of uncertainty; they can be attuned to the order of existence without seeking to control it.

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[109] *DCD* 4.11. *CG.* 206.

Redemption as Experience

"The [*eros*] of Plato is a passion for transcendence; behind it lurks the assumption of an hiatus or discontinuity between the sensible and the intelligible worlds which this concept is intended to bridge…This connection, however, does not…have to be 'established,' it needs only to be recognized, since it also exists, as it has from the beginning and will to the end of the *saeculum.* To recognize its existence is to recognize the existence of divine grace."[1]

Introduction

In focusing on the political appropriation of Augustine's theology the goal is to broaden the discussion beyond the boundaries created by requiring initial investment toward the Christian tradition. Appropriation is meant to focus on the experiences that motivate the individual theological symbols and not require strict dogmatic adherence to the symbols because of their common adoption within the Christian tradition. This approach protects Augustine's works from being merely mined for *dicta probantia.* Such a search for proof-texts requires the presupposition and acceptance of the symbols, rather than displaying a motivation to address the experiences that underlie and motivate these symbols. Dogmatism would further hinder the utilization of theological symbols for political expressions.

Focusing on appropriation also keeps this study from being solely an exercise in political theology. The political appropriation of Augustine's theology necessarily contains some aspects of what is traditionally known as political theology, but it is not limited to an expression of what Christianity may require politically. By developing the experiences that engender the symbols, it opens the discussion to those who are not necessarily committed to the symbols of the Christian tradition, but are willing to participate in a discussion that addresses experiences that happen to occur within a religious context.

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[1] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2003), 554.

Approaching Augustine through appropriation helps to avoid the difficulties that arise when attempting to view Augustine from a systematic perspective. It is a common observation that Augustine's literary output does not provide a picture of a systematic craftsmen proceeding in a logical progression throughout his life. The course of Augustine's thought, rather, seems to run from polemic to polemic. He is fully capable of systematic rigor within a given topic of discussion, but he does not display a great deal of thought for providing a unifying expression that could cover all his polemical struggles or suggest his approach to questions that he did not cover or that did not arise in his day.

The common response to the difficulties of treating Augustine in a systematic fashion has been to pick and choose elements from Augustine for either praise or condemnation in place of Augustine as a whole. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has written:

> We are overrun with so many Augustines – the pessimistic Augustine; the pluralist Augustine; the romantic Augustine; the reactionary Augustine; the sexist Augustine; the anti-sexist Augustine; even the proto-socialist Augustine – that it is difficult to sort matters through. It is altogether too easy to hive off one chunk of Augustine and turn that into the *real* Augustine or the only Augustine worth salvaging for current post-modern (or whatever) consumption.[2]

Appropriation provides something of a solution to this problem because it acknowledges that it seeks to draw political resources from Augustine's theology, not because he happened to speak authoritatively on a given subject, but because the symbols within his works depend on an existential basis for their formation. Too many scholars have been committed to systematizing Augustine simply for the sake of making a discrete whole that they can uphold or criticize. Whereas Augustine, in contrast, seems to implicitly understand that humans

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[2] Jean Bethke Elshtain, Review of *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* by James Wetzel, *Augustinian Studies:* 24 (1993), 187.

cannot construct monolithic systems in good faith.[3] Hence, the reader is not obliged to

seek or impose artificial systematization onto Augustine, but only to draw resources from his

theology. There is necessarily a systematic feature present in such activity, but since it

remains motivated by the underlying experiences, it does not succumb to the inherent risk of

killing the engendering experiences. Systematic exposition is only attempted in the hopes of

the thinker participating in the engendering experiences and does not suggest that orderly

expression can capture the experience for the thinker's own willful purposes.

Augustine's Symbolization of Theology in the *City of God*

Despite the foregoing disclaimer against systematic efforts, the political

appropriation of theology cannot proceed without sufficient understanding of Augustine's

theology as a whole. In this we may be said to be focusing on what is traditionally known as

Augustine's contribution to religious dogma, but what is needed is not a dogmatic approach

that identifies symbols and rigidly constructs their intention. Too many studies of Augustine

fall into this trap by envisioning the studies contribution as a *Quellenforschung* of Augustine's

doctrines. Rather than treating his theology as objective doctrines, the goal of focusing on

appropriation is to respect the experience that underlies the symbols and investigate how

that experience pertains to matters traditionally outside the scope of theological

investigation.

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[3] Cf. Kierkegaard's observation: "A thinker erects a huge building, a system, a system
embracing the whole of existence, world history, etc., and if his personal life is considered, to
our amazement the appalling and ludicrous discovery is made that he himself does not
personally live in this huge, domed palace but in a shed alongside it, or in a doghouse, or at
best in the janitor's quarters. Were he to be reminded of this contradiction by a single word,
he would be insulted. For he does not fear to be in error if he can only complete the system
– with the help of being in error." Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, ed. Howard
and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 43-44.

The interpreter faces the problems presented above in attempting to form a systematic view of Augustine for the purposes of examination and evaluation. Augustine is notoriously difficult on the systematic level; in fact, most commentators make it a point of noting his non-systematic nature. As John Neville Figgis stated, "We can never understand Augustine if we think of him as a system-maker. Systems may have come out of him, but before all else his is a personality."[4] There is a consistent theme throughout the literature that emphasizes the connection of Augustine's personality and his non-systematic nature. Markus indicatively declares, "With a highly differentiated personality like Augustine's, with his complex and subtle mind, it would be a counsel of despair to begin with the assumption that his thoughts and attitudes should have a simple, monolithic consistency."[5] As Karl Jaspers has stated, "Nothing is easier than to find contradictions in Augustine. We take them as a feature of his greatness."[6] These commentators highlight the interconnectedness of Augustine's personality and inconsistency in order to substantiate the existential nature of Augustine's approach and brilliance. Jaspers continues, "Is there a point, a limit, where we are bound to encounter contradiction?...Yes, wherever, moved by the source of being and the unconditional will within us, we seek to communicate ourselves in thought, that is to say, in words. In this realm, freedom from contradiction would be existential death and the end of thinking itself."[7] The importance of Augustine's personality for this existential approach was that his "intensely religious soul could venture into a variety of experiences without

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[4] John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God'* (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2007), 6.

[5] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 134-35.

[6] Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), 111.

[7] Ibid.

losing itself."[8] Augustine's openness to puzzling matters and difficult questions has allowed him to remain appealing and relevant long after his death.

Despite the above emphasis on Augustine's personality rather than his contradictions, the reader must still find a procedure for examining and evaluating Augustine's corpus, particularly the *City of God* with all its prolixity. By focusing on the experiences symbolized in the *City of God* the reader has a way to identify and think critically about Augustine's important points and contributions, but the reader is also necessarily presented with the traditional questions regarding Augustine's intention in constructing the work. The symbols of his work are necessarily related to the context from which the work proceeds and identifying the chief impetus of the work would allow the interpreter to ably navigate the accumulated material of the *City of God*. The reader is thus necessarily concerned with identifying the chief symbol and engendering experience of the *City of God*.

The dominant experience of the *City of God* is redemption and the narrative and symbols that circle around this experience. This is to say that, the sack of Rome is only the proximate cause for Augustine writing the *City of God*, whereas the true cause is the experience of redemption. This contention is borne out by the title and the text of the work. The full title of the work – helpfully reproduced in the recent Cambridge edition – is *The City of God Against the Pagans*. In keeping with his previous works, Augustine could have hypothetically titled the work: *Against the Pagans*. From his subordination of that theme to the symbol of "City of God," the reader may surmise that the invasion and sack of Rome is

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[8] Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 19, History of Political Ideas, Vol. I: Hellenism, Rome, and Early Christianity*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 206.

not the truly significant matter of the *City of God*, and we must rather investigate the symbol of *civitate Dei* and how it expresses the experience of redemption.

The Term "City of God"

The mere mention of a heavenly city immediately brings to mind its contrast, the earthly city. The two cities appear as themes in embryo in Augustine's corpus as early as 389-391 in *On True Religion*, which is significantly earlier than the initial composition of *City of God* around 412-413. Here his early conception of the two cities is outlined when he speaks of two types of people (*duo genera hominum*).[9] The theme appears in Augustine earlier than his *City of God*, and in several other places as well, primarily because it is not originally unique to Augustine; rather, it is drawn from multiple sources.[10] Scholars have speculated at various plausible sources ranging from the renegade Donatist scholar Tyconius to Neo-Platonism, or various incidental passages of scripture, most notably the Psalms.[11] Augustine himself seems to assign the most importance to the witness of scripture when he writes, "The city of God we speak of is the same to which testimony is borne by that Scripture, which excels all the writings of all nations by its divine authority."[12] The question of derivation and origin has animated significant scholarly debate for the past half-century or more, but has produced more heat than light. The significance of Augustine's two-cities model is not enhanced or jeopardized by earlier sources of similar expression because the symbols do not themselves

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[9] *DVR* 17.33. Augustine, "True Religion" in *On Christian Belief*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 50.

[10] See Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1991).

[11] Psalm 46, 48, and 87 among other references.

[12] *DCD* 11.1. Augustine, *City of God*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: Vol. 2*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 205.

matter, but the experiences they represent and the use for which the symbols are employed. In this the originality and importance of Augustine's contribution cannot be questioned.

The use to which Augustine's two-cities model is put is grasped in noting how he has developed the symbol from scriptural antecedents. Allusion to ideas that might be expressed as a city of God occurs in both the Old and New Testament,[13] but has a different understanding for Judaism as opposed to exclusively Christian revelation. In the Old Testament the Psalmist invokes the City of God as a lyrical allusion to the city of Jerusalem and the importance of the tabernacle/temple to Hebrew worship. For King David, Jerusalem is the City of God because it is the capital of the Jewish people, whom God emancipated from Egyptian captivity, and with whom God has established a covenant as a chosen people. Later, with the temple as the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant and the location of the Holy of Holies, it is literally God's dwelling place on earth.

Christianity proclaims the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah in the incarnation of God's only begotten Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity has differentiated itself from Hebrew revelation along the lines of the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John. When a Samaritan woman meets Jesus resting at a well she discerns that he has a prophetic gift and questions him whether it is right to worship on Mount Sinai, as her people did in commemoration of revelation of the Decalogue, or in Jerusalem as the Jews require. Her question seeks the correct physical location where the divine presence resides with humanity. Jesus answers her, "An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth… God is spirit, and

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[13] Cf. John 18:36 "My kingdom is not of this world."

those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."[14] The answer directs her away

from focusing on temporal locations and differentiates Christianity from Judaism, which

retained "a perpetual mortgage of the world-immanent, concrete event on the transcendent

truth that on its occasion was revealed."[15] The intercession of the Christ removes the need

for the mediation temporarily provided by the sacrifices of Mosaic Law and God's presence

no longer dwells in a fixed temporal location.[16] After the advent of Christianity, the City of

God symbol provides differentiation of the earlier conceptions of God dwelling amongst the

chosen people and the social relationships that the righteous have among themselves in their

present and future states.

Origins and Development of the Two Cities

The symbols of both cities are rooted in the experience of redemption even though

only the City of God is the gathering of the theologically redeemed. It should be understood

that the mere temporal existence of the unregenerate city is a divine blessing given that non-

existence was a logical possibility entailed by creation *ex nihilo*. It should be grasped that in

Augustine's conception God did not create anything out of necessity, but rather out of love.

The depth of this insight cannot be done justice here, but it suffices to note that God, as

perfect being, lacks nothing and, therefore, cannot have been compelled to create humans.

By the same logic, God does not require human beings to complete or fulfill the perfection

of the City of God. God's total sovereignty is such that humanity, and all of creation, is a

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[14] John 4:1-26

[15] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol.1: Israel and Revelation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
University Press, 1958), 164.

[16] Hence, the significance of the temple curtain guarding the Holy of Holies ripping from top
to bottom when Jesus was crucified. Cf. Matthew 27:50-51

gratuitous feature of God's order.[17] Augustine writes of God's act of creation from nothing, "He demonstrated in a marvelous fashion, to those who are able to see such things, that He has no need of the creatures which He has made, but rather, created them out of His own unmotivated goodness; for He abode without created things for an eternity which had no beginning, yet His blessedness was no less complete."[18]

Noticing that Augustine chronologically discusses the fall of the angels before the fall of Adam and Eve also highlights the gratuitous nature of creation. Even before humanity's diremption, God had acted to establish the City of God as an expression of his redeeming love by reserving a remnant of the angels from the possibility of diremption.[19] When the act of turning away was repeated by humanity, the divided structure of the two cities was already in place. God was not required to effect human redemption, but the experience of redemption was extended to humanity and temporal provision was provided for the unregenerate.

Augustine begins his exposition of the origin and progress of the two cities in Book 11 of the *City of God*; however, it is not until Book 15 that we arrive at the simplest exposition of the two-cities model as it appears in human life. Augustine declares, "I divide the human race into two orders. The one consists of those who live according to man, and the other of those who live according to God. Speaking allegorically, I also call these two

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[17] Consider Plato's expression in the *Laws* (803c) that humans are divine playthings and see also James V. Schall, *On the Unseriousness of Human Affairs: Teaching, Writing, Playing, Believing, Lecuturing, Philosophizing, Singing, Dancing* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001) for a Christian account of Plato's suggestion.

[18] *DCD* 12.18. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (Henceforth *CG*) 526. N.B. there is a discrepancy between some editions and translations around the chapter divisions in Book 12.

[19] Cf. *DCD* 11.13.

orders two Cities: that is two societies of men."[20]   Augustine draws an image of this

division from the first children of the biblical parents Adam and Eve; namely, the persons of

Cain and Abel each respectively represent a city. Augustine's account of the Genesis story

of these brothers is worth recounting in detail:

> Now Cain was the first son born of those two parents of the human race, and he
> belonged to the City of man; the second son, Abel, belonged to the City of God…So
> it is that each man, because he derives his origin from a condemned stock, is at first
> necessarily evil and fleshly, because he comes from Adam; but if, being reborn, he
> advances in Christ, he will afterwards be good and spiritual. So it is with the whole
> human race. When those two cities began to run through their course of birth and
> death, the first to be born was a citizen of this world, and the second was a pilgrim in
> this world, belonging to the City of God. The latter was predestined by grace and
> chosen by grace; by grace he was a pilgrim below, and by grace he was a citizen
> above.[21]

Cain, as the first-born son and a farmer, allegorically represents a rootedness in the world

that is incompatible with citizenship in the heavenly realm because it does not acknowledge

dependence on God. Cain lives by the sweat of his brow and reaps what he sows.

Augustine notes, "Cain founded a city, whereas Abel, a pilgrim, did not found one."[22] Abel,

as a shepherd, is the better allegorical picture of the sojourning, pilgrim existence that totally

depends on God for all things.[23] Abel can only hope to find temporary water and pasture

while traveling with his sheep. Augustine elsewhere explains, "When a man lives according

to truth, then, he lives not according to self, but according to God."[24] In Augustine's

paraphrasing of the account of Cain and Abel the dominant symbols of redemption appear

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[20] *DCD* 15.1. *CG.* 634.
[21] *DCD* 15.1. *CG.* 635.
[22] *DCD* 15.1. *CG.* 635.
[23] "The first just men were established as shepherds of flocks, rather than as kings of men.
This was done so that in this way also God might indicate what the order of nature
requires." *DCD* 19.15. *CG.* 942.
[24] *DCD* 14.4. *CG.* 586.

as original sin, conversion (or rebirth), and grace. These symbols can guide our further

inquire into Augustine's theology of redemption throughout the *City of God.*

Human Depravity

Humanity fell through Adam's disobedience to God's command in the Garden of

Eden. Humans now find themselves east of Eden and struggle for temporal security and

possessions even as they struggle theologically for their salvation with "fear and trembling."[25]

The verbal symbol of original sin suggests the dual movement of Augustine's development

of Adam's turn from God and the "condemned stock" that, as a result, is his progeny.[26]

Augustine declares, "It is a perverse kind of elevation indeed to forsake the foundation upon

which the mind should rest, and to become and remain, as it were, one's own foundation."[27]

In rebelling from the divine Creator, the creature debased himself and distorted his

perception of reality[28] and even his own self-understanding.[29] This leads to the classifications

of sin's effects within the individual as noetic –those relating to humanity's capacity for

knowing and understanding reality – and volitional – those relating to humanity's capacity

for choosing or willing its actions and desires. The effect of Adam's sin was not limited to

him, or only he and his wife; the sin was passed on to all humanity who were represented in

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[25] Philippians 2:12

[26] As an interesting side note we can notice the distortions that have arisen in understanding the Genesis account of Cain and Abel. For Augustine, Cain and those who follow after him in their perverted love are not radically different creatures, but rather the common men of human existence. Contrast this with the *Beowulf* account of Grendel as representative of the "banished monsters" of "Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed and condemned as outcasts." Seamus Heaney, trans., *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation (Bilingual Edition)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 9.

[27] *DCD* 14.13. *CG.* 608.

[28] "Man came to be distracted by turbulent and conflicting emotions, and so became very different from what he had been." *DCD* 14.12. *CG.* 607.

[29] "[Adam, who,] in his pride, had pleased himself, was now, by God's justice, handed over to himself. This was not done, however, in such a way that man was now placed entirely under his own control. Rather, he was divided against himself." *DCD* 14.15. *CG.* 611-12.

their persons. Augustine explains, "That sin, perpetuated when all mankind existed in

one man, brought ruin upon them all; and so no one can be rescued from the toils of that

sin, which was punished by God's justice, unless the sin is expiated in each man singly by the

grace of God."[30]

The results of the Fall are not limited to the noetic and volitional affects upon

humanity in its corporate or individual temporal manifestations. Sin does not only affect the

life humans live at present, it also determines the end of human life. Absent original sin,

Augustine asserts, man was never intended to die. Augustine declares, "We must, then,

confess that the first human beings were so constituted that, had they not sinned, they would

not have experienced any kind of death; but that, having become the first sinners, they were

then punished by death in such a way that whatsoever sprang from their stock should also be

subject to the same penalty."[31] Here Augustine reconciles the divine warning given in the

Genesis account that eating of the forbidden fruit would be punished by death with the

further account that Adam and Eve did not immediately die.[32] Death is an ordained

punishment for sin, and not the natural outcome for all life as is generally assumed in

naturalistic accounts of human existence. Augustine utilizes this distinction in his polemics

against Pelagian notions of perfection in the present life. Death is only entailed by original

sin, which affects the operations of human life and the duration of human life.

More than present temporal consequences or even the passage from this life, the

existence of depravity is particularly responsible for the eternal condemnation of mankind.

The human soul is constituted to be immortal in the sense that it "never ceases to live and

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[30] *DCD* 14.20. *CG*. 620.
[31] *DCD* 13.3. *CG*. 543.
[32] Genesis 2:17

feel,"[33] and when the individual passes from life, he does not simply cease to exist, but instead faces the eternal consequences of divine repulsion from sin. As distinguished from the death of the body when the soul is separated from the body, this eternal condemnation or "second death" occurs when God finally forsakes the soul and is eternally separated from it.[34]

The general condemnation of humanity does not stretch to the general manifestation of the second death in all humanity. Augustine notes, "The first death, which is common to all men, was brought about by that sin which, in one man, became common to all. The second death, however, is not common to all men; for, by the grace of God, through a Mediator, He has redeemed from the second death those who were 'Called according to His purpose,' as the apostle says."[35] This is a crucial distinction in Augustine's theology and it bears practical effects. All humans are affected by the existence of depravity in the present life, they feel the consequences of depravity in their minds and wills, and all will eventual depart from this world because of sin, but not before the manifestations of sin are spread further across humanity through their own actions and their begetting progeny. Not all of these people, however, finally stand under divine condemnation. There are limits to the consequences of sin in an eschatological determination, and depravity may also be limited in some of its present manifestation.

Conversion and Citizenship in the Cities

Since the effects of the Fall are transmitted to all of Adam's posterity, all humans are initially born into citizenship in the earthly city, which is an interior spiritual condition and

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[33] *DCD* 13.2. *CG.* 541.
[34] *DCD* 13.2. *CG.* 541.
[35] *DCD* 13.23. *CG.* 571.

not a physical manifestation. Augustine notes, "The good man is free even if he is a

slave, whereas the bad man is a slave even if he reigns: a slave, not to one man, but, what is

worse, to as many masters as he has vices. When Divine Scripture speaks of these vices, it

says, 'For of whom any man is overcome, to the same he is also the bond-slave.'"[36] The

citizens of each city have their allegiance to their realm because their love binds them to it

and the respective loves are the driving principles in each. This is Augustine's famous theory

of love as weight that he develops in both his *Confessions* as well as the *City of God*. In the *City

of God* he writes, "The weight of bodies is, as it were, their love, whether they are carried

downwards by gravity or upwards by their lightness. For the body is carried by its weight

wherever it is carried, just as the soul is carried by its love."[37] The advances of science since

Augustine cloud his metaphor a bit in our own time, but in this case it is better to think of

gravity as having a dual directional force capable of pushing upward or pulling downward.

He elucidates this more clearly in the *Confessions*. He there writes, "The body by its own

weight gravitates towards its own place. Weight goes not downward only, but to its own

place. Fire tends upwards, a stone downwards. They are propelled by their own weights,

they seek their own place … Out of order, they are restless; restored to order, they are at

rest. My weight is my love; by it am I borne whithersoever I am borne."[38] Because of sin all

mankind is separated from its proper relationship to God, but cannot return there without

the proper directional force supplied by its love. Hence, as he states in the famous

introduction to the *Confessions*, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace

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[36] *DCD* 4.3. *CG*. 147, referencing 2 Peter 2:19.

[37] *DCD* 11.28. *CG*. 487.

[38] *Conf.* 13.9. Augustine, *Confessions*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: Vol. 1,* ed.
    Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 193.

until they rest in you."[39] Though incidentally, he is well aware that this restlessness may

not be so clearly experientially perceived by all.

In response to the sorrowful state of humanity in original sin, God offers the mercy

of rebirth or conversion to humans. "When we were burdened and overwhelmed with sins,

turned away from the contemplation of His light and blinded by the love of darkness, that is,

iniquity, He did not wholly desert us. Rather, He sent to us His own Word, Who is His only

Son."[40] Following the logic of humanity pursuing whatever its love commits it to, we can

understand the need for a new love. In order to restore a right relationship with God, there

must be a conversion, a change worked within. Augustine writes, "When we no longer yield

our members as instruments of unrighteousness: then there is a change in us. This change is

such that, under God's rule, man no longer conspires with himself to do evil. Rather, he

finds, in his own changed mind, a gentler ruler."[41]

As we have seen from earlier sections, this conversion change is neither primarily

physical nor external; it is an internal change of the individual's disposition. Augustine can

note simply of conversion that, "There is a change in us."[42] As he will point out in his

polemics against both Donatists and Pelagians, this is not to say that those members of

humanity who are converted are perfected or even totally free from the noetic and volitional

effects of sin, such as ignorance, passions, and self-interest, but that they are now inclined

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[39] *Conf.* 1.1. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Classics, 1961), 21.
[40] *DCD* 7.31. *CG.* 306.
[41] *DCD* 15.6. *CG.* 642.
[42] *DCD* 15.6. *CG.* 642.

towards righteousness and turned away from evil by the divine mercy.[43] Donatism incorrectly posited the perfection of the earthly church, while Pelagianism incorrectly supposed that individuals could perfectly uphold the standards of righteousness. In both cases Augustine's concern was that these positions had distorted the experience of conversion that he saw outlined in scripture and tradition.

Conversion is a differentiated symbol of redemption, but in order to avoid the problems of the Donatists and Pelagians we must understand the change in the broader context of redemption as an eschatological determination of freedom from condemnation. Conversion is not an unambiguous victory against unrighteousness in this present life. Converted individuals must constantly struggle against the desires and habits of their former lives and their temporal lives bear this out. Commenting on the miseries of the Romans during and after Alaric's siege, Augustine writes, "Life [is] the school of eternity, in which [humans] … are proved and corrected by evils."[44] After conversion, life on earth is not rendered totally easy or peaceful; there are still trials and tribulations. The divine purpose uses these adversities to direct, test, and prove the change within converted individuals, and also to chastise any individuals when they cling too tightly to the passing things of this world. Conversion offers a picture of some differences between citizens of the two cities, but it can also present images of similarity because the internal change is not always outwardly manifest. The eschatological distinction between the cities, therefore, must always balance existential investigations.

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[43] "For the will which is present in man's nature can fall away from good to do evil; and it does this through its own free choice…It can also turn away from evil to do good; but it cannot do this without divine aid." *DCD* 15.21. *CG.* 678-79.

[44] *DCD* 1.29. *CG.* 43.

Symbol of Grace within Redemption

The *City of God* is replete with symbols of redemption, and particularly with the
symbol of grace. From the very beginning Augustine writes in the preface to the first book
of the *City of God*: "I know…what efforts are needed to persuade the proud how great is that
virtue of humility which, not by dint of any human loftiness, but by *divine grace* bestowed
from on high, raises us above all the earthly pinnacles which sway in this inconstant age."[45]
Noting that he has concluded his "great and arduous work"[46] "with the Lord's help,"
Augustine consequently ends the work in the same spirit. Between these two terminals,
grace continues to appear throughout the text as a symbol, even as Augustine moves from
refuting pagan claims related to Rome's distressing position, to his more general concern
that his readers not misunderstand the nature of Christianity.

The crucial feature of Augustine's symbol of grace is the divinely initiated aid that it
represents. As Augustine clearly details, grace is a divine operation that benefits humanity.
Its divine nature is pictured in that it comes from above or from on high, and is actively
bestowed on its recipients. More than just a happenstance of divine operation or
intervention, grace represents a beneficial aid to humanity's present, sorrowful condition.

Most particularly, grace is Augustine's symbol for the application and
accomplishment of redemption and conversion through the operation of the divine.
"Citizens of the Heavenly City are produced by grace, which redeems nature from sin."[47]
Redemption cannot be accomplished without divine action towards the individual.
Augustine writes, "The Holy Spirit works inwardly to give effect to the remedy…Otherwise,

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[45] *DCD* 1. *praefatio. CG.* 3, italics added.
[46] *DCD* 1. *praefatio. CG.* 3.
[47] *DCD* 15.2. *CG.* 637.

even if God makes use of a creature subject to Him to speak to the human senses in some human form…and does not rule and direct our minds with His inward grace, no preaching of the truth is of profit to a man."[48] Hearing and knowing about redemption does not cause the operation because redemption is not a fact to be grasped, but an experience. Divine grace provides the experience that is represented as conversion and redemption.

Because the primary need of humanity in its rebellious state is a restoration to the proper relationship with the divine, this is the main meaning of Augustine's symbol of grace. In its compact symbolism, grace appears to be strictly theological in meaning and operation. Without grace there is no right relationship with the divine; with grace humanity is regenerated and restored to righteousness. For political purposes, however, it is insufficient to deal only with the strictly theological aspects of Augustine's *City of God*.

In spite of God's definitive determination regarding the eschatological state of every individual soul, the manifestations of this at present are inconclusive. In this temporal world citizens of the two cities are intermingled and indistinguishable because the observer does not definitively know the love that animates each person's heart. As Abel only appears to human eyes to have been different from Cain in that his sacrifice was arbitrarily accepted,[49] so humans cannot personally differentiate between citizens of the different cities in this life. Augustine writes, "At this time…many reprobate are mingled in the Church with the good. Both are as it were collected in the net of the Gospel; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore. Then, however, the wicked will be separated from the good."[50] The finality of the determination provides us

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[48] *DCD* 15.6. *CG*. 642.
[49] See Genesis 4
[50] *DCD* 18.49. *CG*. 896.

little help at present because we must deal with more experiential divisions within humanity: those who nominally claim faith, those who are going to come to faith, those that renounce once professed faith, those who have backslid into habitual sin, and any other relational possibility that can present itself during life. While efficacious grace is determinative of redemption, in the present life the reader must be careful of the nuances contained within references to grace when one cannot be sure of final efficacy. Augustine highlights the problem of redeeming grace in the present world when he declares, "All the promises of the new covenant refer only to our new inheritance in the world to come. For the time being, we receive a pledge of that inheritance."[51] As exemplified here, his theology may be classified as demonstrating an "already, not yet" aspect. The City of God is already completed through redemption offered in Christ, despite that fact that it has yet to come into visible fruition. When Augustine calls attention to the experience that humans have only received as a pledge, he is implicitly including the problem that the pledge may manifest itself in numerous ways in this life. Even the keen observer may mistake other appearances and manifestations for the true pledge of converted Christians causing complete inability to presently separate the two cities according to their living citizenry. This suggests that rather than attempting to apply various symbols and expressions from Augustine's writings to specific earthly institutions as wholes, the reader should observe how each symbol operates within the entire context of human existence.

Among the aspects of observing the broader experience of human life, it should be evident that God's authority does not only pertain to the discrete individuals reserved for the

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[51] *DCD* 21.15. *CG*. 1073.

heavenly city. The reader must not neglect that on Augustine's account the divine role

of creator also entails a divine role as governor of creation.[52] Augustine declares:

> There is a divine and, if I may so express it, productive energy which cannot be made, but makes. When the world came into being, this energy gave the form of roundness to the earth and to the sun. This same divine and productive energy, which cannot be made, but makes, gave the form of roundness to the eye and to the apple. And other natural objects likewise receive the form which we see bestowed upon each of them as it comes into being not from without, but from the inmost power of the Creator.[53]

This divine work of creative power not only brought all this is into existence, but further

divine work sustains creation as a governing power. "If He were to withdraw His creative

power, so to speak, from things, they would no more exist than they did before they were

created."[54] And he also notes, "If God were to remove the efficacy of His power from

things, they would not be able to go on and attain the kind of development assigned to

them, or live out their allotted span; nor, indeed, would they even remain in that condition in

which they were created."[55]

The divine governance of creation extends beyond existence to the operation of all

ordered facets of reality. "All the other things of this life, be they great or small, such as the

world itself, light, air, earth, water, fruits, the soul and body of man himself, sensation, mind,

life: all these things he bestows upon good and evil men alike. And among these things is

imperial sway also, of whatever scope, which He dispenses according to His plan for the

government of the ages."[56] God has ordained the course of the heavens and the propagation

of all forms of life. "He establishes the earth and makes it fruitful. He bestows its fruits

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[52] Cf. *DCD* 7.30. *CG*. 305.
[53] *DCD* 12.26. *CG*. 536.
[54] *DCD* 12.26. *CG*. 538.
[55] *DCD* 22.24. *CG*. 1160.
[56] *DCD* 5.26. *CG*. 235.

upon animals and men. He knows and ordains not only principle causes, but also

secondary ones."[57]

In its compact form, Augustine's symbol of grace entails any divine aid or direction

towards the good of existence. Augustine is often at pains to point out the commonness of

God's blessings on both the good and bad alike. "He has…willed that the good and evil

things of this world should be *common* to both, so that we may neither grasp too eagerly after

those goods which are seen to be possessed by the wicked also, nor dishonourably flee those

evils with which even the good are generally afflicted."[58] The commonness of certain divine

blessings should not mask the more particular blessing of the grace of redemption.

Augustine notes, "Apart from benefits of this kind, which, according to His regulation of

nature, God bestows upon the good and evil alike…we have much proof also of His great

love, which belongs only to the good."[59] The theological understanding of grace must

remain primary, but the reader should be led towards the differentiation of Augustine's usage

of the symbol of grace. This differentiation of the symbol of grace can be adumbrated

through developing the anti-Pelagian setting of Augustine's work during the period he was

writing the *City of God* and throughout the rest of his life.

Anti-Pelagian Context of his Writings

Political scholarship often pays attention to the chronology of Augustine's works

only to expound a perceived shift toward pessimism in his general tenor and outlook. If

anyone bothers to notice that Augustine composed the *City of God* in the midst of his

struggle with the heresy of Pelagianism, it is simply taken as support for his perceived

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[57] *DCD* 7.30. *CG*. 305.
[58] *DCD* 1.8. *CG*. 12, italics added.
[59] *DCD* 7.31. *CG*. 306.

political pessimism. Since this study argues that Augustine should not be interpreted as politically otherworldly and pessimistic, it is important here to account for the theology of the *City of God* and see the connection between this work and the broader anti-Pelagian context that inspired him. It will prove to be impossible to develop a consistently Augustinian account of political progress and development without also making a theological argument about these matters. If Augustine's theology is only pessimistic, we must seriously question how Augustine's political influence can be anything different.[60] What is required rather is to demonstrate Augustine's theology within the *City of God* as a consistent expression of the same theology as his polemics with the Pelagians, and to show how his theology is implicitly differentiating the symbols of redemption. His differentiation of redemption gives a fuller representation of the experience of redemption that allows for political appropriation.

In 410 Alaric's armies stormed Rome and prompted a tidal wave of refugees to flee Italy and flood North Africa. The Christian response to the disaster that had befallen Rome occupied Augustine through the writing of the *City of God* from 412 to 426; however, as we have already mentioned, pagan complaints are not the only matter occupying Augustine's mind at the time. Pelagius, who happened to coincidentally be among the refugees from Rome who passed through Hippo in 410, and his growing influence within Christian circles called forth some of Augustine's most strenuous exertions in subsequent years.

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[60] John von Heyking attempts to support his argument for a natural vision of politics in Augustine by ignoring the anti-Pelagian context of the *City of God* for all practical purposes, but does make the unsubstantiated claim that, even in Augustine's theology, excessive rhetoric can be distinguished from his true position. John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 15.

Pelagius was involved in the contemporary ascetic movement of his day and so is often anachronistically labeled a monk. He had lived in Rome long enough to be appalled by the moral laxity of the Christianity practiced by many of those who professed to subscribe to the faith, and he castigated such nominal Christianity and urged perfection. Pelagius' message had a rigid simplicity that is summarized well by Eugene Portalié, "Since perfection is possible for man, it is obligatory."[61] From this it follows that true Christianity represents living the complete attainment of this perfect life, and everything, and everyone, short of perfection is not really Christian. This was a particularly bracing message for many late antique Christians who were thus convicted of their previous insincerity, and subsequently strove magnificently to lead lives of complete righteousness.

Pelagius with his stringent requirements for accomplished moral improvement abhorred Augustine's sense that individuals are in bondage to sin and even after redemption will never be completely free of the taint of sin this side of heaven. Pelagius was particularly appalled at Augustine' prayer from Book 10 of the *Confessions*: "Give me the grace to do as you command, and command me to do what you will."[62] Augustine's humble denial that any Christian could ever meet the perfect requirements of divine righteousness without being provided with divine assistance until its complete accomplishment patently contradicted Pelagius' ascetic and moral sensibilities.

It is not wholly clear how much credit (or blame) that Pelagius should personally receive for his role in the ensuing controversy. After pursuing Pelagius with mixed success at doctrinal trials in various councils in Africa and Rome, the largest portion of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings are directed toward proponents of certain ideas credited to Pelagius or

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[61] Eugene Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), 188.
[62] *Conf.* 10.29. *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin, 233.

following from Pelagius' ideas. In fact, Peter Brown states, "Pelagian*ism* as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequences, had come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius."[63] There is no need to resolve any conflicts regarding Pelagius' exact role in this history, but the fact that Augustine saw the matter as a composite body of ideas allows us to more confidently develop his own body of ideas through oppositions. Moving through Augustine's anti-Pelagian work in this way builds a picture of Augustine's soteriology. This soteriology is useful for sharpening out understanding of soteriological statements that are less well defined within the *City of God*. The further symbolic clarity also affords us a better vantage point from which to prioritize Augustine's numerous position statements through interpretation.

Departure from Ecclesiological Focus of Anti-Donatism

For a number of reasons contemporary scholarship has tended to focus attention on developing Augustine's ecclesiological material, particularly emphasizing the Donatist polemics. For instance, John Milbank demonstrates this ecclesiological frame in writing, "All 'political' theory in the antique sense, is relocated by Christianity as thought about the Church."[64] Ecclesiology has historically dominated discussion because it provides the needed context for empirically minded studies relating to questions of church and state. More recently, the use of Augustine as a weapon for opponents of utopian visions has prompted ecclesiological references because in Augustine's description only the eschatological City of God is truly perfect. This nearly exclusive focus on ecclesiology often reifies the symbols of Augustine's two cities into rigid objects that are fitted into

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[63] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 346.

[64] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 406.

preconceived notions of political terms like church, state, secular, and theocratic. This reification masks the underlying engendering experiences that Augustine's symbols are attempting to represent. Further developing these reified and deformed symbols inhibits "imaginative re-enactment of the experiences"[65] that is crucial for understanding and appropriating Augustine's theory.

Even charitably granting that an exclusively ecclesia-centric focus might not be undertaken through reification, but rather concerned with the engendering experiences, it still remains perplexing in light of the actual scope of Augustine's writings. Augustine personally expends far more energy in examining questions of soteriology than he does the corporate life of the Church. This would seem to indicate the relative importance of the experience and symbols of soteriology over ecclesiology. Both narratives are certainly present and individually represent Augustine's actual thinking on these issues, but there are points to consider in framing entire discussions as the extrapolation from either narrative.

Initial concern over giving either narrative primary focus exists because it can be argued that Augustine's positions on ecclesiology and soteriology are contradictory. The great Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield argued that not only were Augustine's views on ecclesiology and soteriology in contradiction, but also that the Reformation was essentially initiated by the logic of this conflict because the Reformers sought to elaborate the shift from Augustine's ecclesiology to his soteriology.[66] The political consequences from the

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[65] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 64-65.

[66] "It is Augustine who gave us the Reformation. For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church." B.B. Warfield, "Augustine," in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. 4: Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 130.

Reformation alone hint at the political dimensions that may arise from privileging one part of Augustine's work over another.

It may be argued that the two positions are not in outright conflict, but still that would not ease the difficulties faced by political theorists because the important question is to determine which narrative or polemical track should be employed as an interpretive framework for rendering the Augustinian approach to politics. We cannot avoid the question because Augustine wrote so much, and, at the same time, so little about the topics that we are generally concerned with in political theory. Hence, the preference for ecclesiological or soteriological reflection affects what material is considered in any broad study. As the example of R. A. Markus clearly outlines, determining what material to use is one of the difficulties of conducting a discussion of Augustine's political thought. Markus writes:

> There are certainly elements of reflection on political theory to be found in his writings, but his own explicit remarks in this area constitute no clear body of 'political thought.' They are largely commonplaces or asides, rarely at the centre of his interests. If anything like a 'political theory' is to be extracted from Augustine's work, it will appear more in the form of implications drawn from what he has to say on other, though related matters.[67]

The "related matter" that Markus personally chooses to emphasize is Augustine's ecclesiology, and he accordingly develops the eschatological aspect of the heavenly city to suggest that since all sacred revelation refers to the city of God, all temporal polities are equivalently neutral and secular.[68] Markus explains, "Society became intrinsically 'secular' in the sense that it is not as such committed to any particular ultimate loyalty. It is the sphere

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[67] Markus, *Saeculum*, 73.
[68] While Markus depends on ecclesiology to buttress secularism, it should also be remembered that Milbank uses it to destroy the secular by removing all legitimacy from any society that perpetuates conflict.

in which different individuals with different beliefs and loyalties pursue their common objectives in so far as they coincide."[69]

Emphasizing soteriology over ecclesiology provides a very different approach to politics. The problem with Markus' above statement is that it does not give due weight to the existence and appropriation of redemption into politics by individuals. At present, political society and even the church body are ambiguous because they are an inseparable intermingling of members of each eschatological city,[70] but each individual citizen has an ultimate loyalty due to the presence or absence of redemption. The ultimate loyalty to one of these cities will ultimately color every individual public and private action. There is no neutral action in any sphere where Christian individuals are not free from the experience of their redemption. Actions and the individuals who perform them may be of ambiguous character, but it is better to say that this ambiguity "admits of no easy translation into the language of good and evil,"[71] rather than that it is simply neutral.

That there is "no easy translation into the language of good and evil" does not prohibit the cautious efforts represented by appropriation. Members of both cities will share some overlapping intermediate objectives, but not the final objective to which their actions point. Further, if any citizen grasps the final objective of the opposite city's citizens, they will be fundamentally and actively opposed to its realization because to accept it would be an indication of a different allegiance. Only efforts to preserve a certain ambiguity can secure

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[69] Markus, *Saeculum*, 173.

[70] Cf. "Mixing together in the present age sometimes brings it about that certain persons who belong to the city of Babylon are in charge of affairs that concern Jerusalem, or, again, that some who belong to Jerusalem administer the business of Babylon." *EnP* 61.8. Augustine, "Exposition of Psalm 61" in *Expositions of the Psalms: Vol. 3*, ed. John Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 210.

[71] James Wetzel, "Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Milbank's Augustine," *Journal of Religious Ethics*. 32:2, 2004, 299.

these shared objectives, which is how appropriation fundamentally works.

Appropriation seeks the resources of any symbol of reality in order to generate an

authoritative representation that will engage the citizenry of either eschatological city in the

here and now.

Augustine's Differentiation of Grace

Following Augustine's own hermeneutical principle that "any interpretation of an

obscure passage should…be confirmed by the testimony of manifest facts or by other

passages where the meaning is not in the least open to doubt,"[72] the reader is justified in

using material from Augustine's Pelagian polemics to develop the appropriated theological

symbols of the *City of God*. Particularly, the reader should be sensitive to the way that

Augustine handles the symbol of grace. As seen above, Augustine's use of grace in the *City

of God* seems clearly to convey more than a strictly theological experience.

The word "grace" entails a certain ambiguity in Augustine's discussion. The very

pedestrian nature of the word and the ease with which it fits into conversation masks the

difficulties it presents. That is to say, when grace is mentioned, the term is generally

understood, but its simplicity covers depths that are rarely plumbed. Our basic

understanding of the term is derived from the Latin "*gratia*," which covers an array of

meanings centered on an understanding related to "favor," "kindness," or "blessing." In

Sermon 26, Augustine will also include within the understanding of grace that which is freely

given or "*gratis*."[73] A broad array of experiences must be included within our understanding

of grace since it can encapsulate everything in all of creation that is a freely given blessing.

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[72] *DCD* 11.19. *CG*. 472-73.

[73] *S* 26.4. Augustine, "Sermon 26," in *Sermons: Vol. 2,* ed. John Rotelle, O.S.A (Brooklyn:
    New City Press, 1990), 95.

Hence, we can begin to appreciate the difficulties of using the term in a general

discussion without clear reference to what aspects it may or may not contain. The usage of

grace as referring to the salvation of man through the restoration of a right relationship with

God is a very particular Christian usage of the term that must be distinguished and not

confused with other free blessings of God that he has historically and continually bestowed

upon his creation.

Etienne Gilson has marvelously outlined how the Pelagian controversy necessitated

Augustine's own differentiation of the concept of grace along these lines. Pelagius and his

followers began from the starting point that the greatest blessing bestowed upon humanity is

that God has wonderfully created humanity for perfection. Pelagius was so intoxicated with

the sense that, for the Christian, everything is graciously given for his perfection that, "He

absorbs nature almost wholly into grace."[74] Gilson explains, "Pelagius [was] a thorough-

going anti-Manichean; and original sin, in his eyes, [was] a relic of Manicheanism; created

nature is so wholly good that nothing can be supposed capable of corrupting it to such a

point that it will need further grace in addition to that which brought it into existence."[75]

Pelagius was particularly sensitive to the glory of the divine that could be threatened when

the moral abilities of his creation are disparaged. For Pelagius, the idea that none of God's

creation was now capable of attaining the end for which it was created calls into question the

dignity and power of the initial divine work.

Augustine goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Pelagians have not only

neglected the effects of sin, but that they have contracted the symbol of grace in focusing on

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[74] Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 378.

[75] Ibid., 379.

the representation of graciousness that is share by or common to both pagans and Christians alike. This representation of the symbol excludes the more differentiated experience of grace by which God separates out His chosen people. This symbol of grace is thus being derailed when Pelagians ignore the experience the more complete differentiation represents.

Augustine's differentiation of grace into common and specific elements is clearly seen in *Sermon 26* where he argues against these Pelagian ideas. Augustine here reflects at length on the idea that God has made humanity and not we ourselves. After noting that God has created pagans as well as Christians he reflects on the difference between what is common to all humanity and what is specific to Christians. Augustine writes, "Nature should not be treated as grace – but if it may perhaps be reckoned as grace, it's because it too has been bestowed on us *gratis*. After all, man who did not yet exist cannot have had the right to exist."[76] Augustine is willing to acknowledge that the graciousness of God in creation is common to all humanity, and even that all blessings freely given (*gratis*) are part of God's grace, but he desires to stress the importance of specific grace, and so he is critical of too much focus on common grace. Augustine continues:

> It is [God] who made us his people, it is he who made us the sheep of his pasture. He who sent the innocent sheep to be slaughtered, made us sheep out of wolves. That's what grace is. Apart from that common grace of nature by which we who were not were made human beings, and precisely because we were not, didn't deserve to be made; apart from that grace, this is the greater grace, by which we were made his people and the sheep of his pasture, through Jesus Christ our Lord.[77]

Augustine will also use the term "general grace" in this sermon to refer to the common blessings within creation (which must include the sustenance of creation as well as the

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[76] *S* 26.4. Augustine, "Sermon 26," in *Sermons: Vol. 2*, ed. John Rotelle, O.S.A. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990), 95.

[77] *S* 26.5. Ibid., 96.

limiting and restraint of the effects of sin), but while he will acknowledge some limited validity to such a Pelagian notion, he constantly emphasizes the "greater grace" that makes men and women Christians. He states, "Let's admit that that too is a grace by which we were created, though we nowhere read that it is called so; still, because it was given *gratis*, let's allow it to be so. But now let me show you how much greater is this other grace by which we are Christians."[78]

It is Augustine's constant efforts in this sermon to emphasize the greater importance to Christians of specific grace that holds the explanation for why, though Augustine does have a conception of a differentiated common grace, he explicitly references it so infrequently. Speaking of the "greater grace," Augustine writes, "We don't share being Christians with the godless. So this grace by which we are Christians, that's what we want to preach, that's what we want them to recognize, that's the grace we want."[79] Augustine is clear that, as specific grace is of overwhelming importance, he must be clear on this subject and emphasize it. Augustine understands that there are implications of the Gospel and a biblical worldview for human life, and aspects of these implications can theoretically be shared with those who are not Christians. However, these shared implications clearly are not what make Christians unique, and, therefore, they are not what he preaches for redemption. Appropriation is not the same thing as accomplished redemption and requires proper differentiation of theological symbols.[80] Appropriation is only an account of reality

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[78] *S* 26.12. Ibid., 99-100.

[79] *S* 26.9. Ibid., 97.

[80] In part, the brilliance of Cochrane's study lays in his intimations of an attempt to differentiate grace through English Hegelianism into something similar to what is presented here as appropriation. His intentions, however, are not fully announced and his efforts are handicapped by the difficulties presented in using such categories as "prevenient grace" to suggest further development. Cf. Cochrane, Christianity, 501.

that borrows symbols from theology to represent experiences that are not exclusively theological.

Redemption as Pathos

Having examined Augustine's theology of redemption and offered an adumbrated view of the differentiation of grace that provides resources for redemption, it follows that we must begin to move beyond purely Christian theological reflection to grasp how this theology can interact with a wider scope of reflection. A crucial element of the broader argument that redemption can serve as a model for political practice is the assumption that redemption is available or known outside the strict confines of the Christian community. This assumption cannot stand without comment and requires careful explication. Strictly speaking the theological symbol of redemption, and the whole range of theological experiences that are attendant with redemption (such as calling, repentance, conversion, justification, sanctification, and so on), are the *sine qua non* of Christianity and it could not claim to be the only hope for humanity if it were otherwise. The experience of redemption creates Christians and, therefore, it would be nonsensical to speak of redemption outside of the boundaries of Christianity. What is suggested here is more limited. The claim is not that non-Christians are redeemed, but that they can comprehend the theological symbol of redemption through their own personal experiences that resemble substantive features of the Christian experience. Non-Christians have experiences and symbols of a kind of redemption or salvation that is not the converting operation of justification. This is to say that the experience of redemption is what the Greeks would term *pathos*.

In the *Gorgias*, fearing that conversation is breaking down due to the resistance of Callicles' soul, Socrates seeks to place the foundation of communication on a shared basis.

Socrates notes, "If human beings didn't share common experiences, some sharing one, others sharing another, but one of us had some unique experience not shared by others, it wouldn't be easy for him to communicate what he experienced to the other."[81] Socrates goes on to correlate his twin loves and Callicles' twin loves as a common experiential basis on which their conversation can proceed. Voegelin explicates the Greek conception behind Socrates strategy, "Pathos is what men have in common, however variable it may be in its aspects and intensities. Pathos designates a passive experience, not an action; it is what happens to man, what he suffers, what befalls him fatefully and what touches him in his existential core…In their exposure to pathos all men are equal, though they may differ widely in the manner in which they come to grips with it and build the experience into their lives."[82] There are myriad details of life and many forces outside of human control that affect the very heart of human actions and existence in history as well as thought.[83] The Greeks and Romans symbolized this experience as fate or fortune; terms that even Augustine had a habit of using in his early Christian years and only abandoned because he feared that readers would not understand the Christian redefinition of them.[84] Importantly, fate and fortune resembled God's providence, but are deficient in comparison because they are impersonal and arbitrary. However, the classical world also understood that they could

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[81] Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 51 (481c).

[82] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 29.

[83] To give but one example: "[The periagogic turn] is experienced, not as the result of human action, but as a passion, as a response to a revelation of divine being, to an act of grace, to a selection for emphatic partnership with God." Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 10.

[84] *Retr*. 1.2.2. Augustine, *The Retractions*, trans. Sister M. Inez Bogan, R.S.M. in *The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 60* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 6-7

be saved from these forces that were out of their control, so they glimpsed some aspect

of redemption or salvation.

Wholesale conversion to Christianity is not required to understand the experiential

basis for these symbols. As Voegelin notes, "If one can penetrate to this core and reawaken

in a man the awareness of his *conditio humana*, communication in the existential sense

becomes possible."[85] What are simply required are shared experiences and a way to discuss

it in a public setting. "Articulation," as Voegelin states, "is the condition of

representation."[86] The Romans certainly had previous articulations of the need for

redemption and certain redemptive possibilities. Consider Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*, "The Age

of Iron gives way to the Golden Age/…Commencement of the glory, freedom from/

Earth's bondage to its own perpetual fear./ Our crimes are going to be erased at last."[87]

While faith in the redemptive possibility of the emperor Augustus's son could not be shared

beyond Virgil's day, the underlying experience remains the same. Once the common

groundwork is established, the experience can be represented in conversation and practice.

Augustine is aware of this commonality and depends upon a shared symbol of

salvation when he criticizes the Romans by using examples from their own history.

Throughout the polemical first ten books of the *City of God*, Augustine has defended

Christianity from the charge that the misery Rome endured when sacked would have been

averted had the Romans remained faithful to their traditional gods. Faithful service would

have prompted divine intervention to save their favored city. Since, it is impossible to

determine exactly what would have happened to Rome had they kept faith with their gods,

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[85] Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 30.

[86] Voegelin, *New Science*, 41.

[87] Virgil, *The Eclogues of Virgil: Bilingual Edition,* trans. David Ferry (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), 29.

Augustine prefers to turn aside this attack by offering counter-examples where Romans kept faith to no avail. According to the pagan criticism of Christianity, both Regulus, as an individual, and the Saguntines, as a corporate body, should rightfully have received salvation for keeping faith with the Roman gods and supporting the divine mission of the eternal city.[88] Augustine's polemical purposes can only be served because of the shared perception of the possibility and conditional nature of receiving redemption.

Counter-argument to Common Experiences of Redemption

The argument above for the common experience of redemption may find protests from those outside the Christian tradition, but it will also find complains from some within. The Christian counter-argument to what has preceded above would question whether it is permissible to ever speak about any true good – let alone redemption – outside of the Christian faith. Augustine himself seems to supply just such a critique. This is similar to the problem seen earlier in dealing with his denial of degrees of earthly justice in light of the divine nature of true justice. Augustine declares, "Just as the unrighteous make ill use not only of evil things, but of good ones also, so do the righteous make good use not only of good things, but also of evil ones."[89] It is possible to read Augustine as here denying that there can be any common goods or blessings for the unregenerate, that everything that they do is actually a condemnation upon them and never a blessing. Such a reading, however, stretches Augustine too far. He never extends the privileged status of the heavenly city into an outright denial that earthly goods are meaningful. Citizens of the earthly city abuse the goods of this life, but that does not mean that they are not benefited or blessed in temporal life by their possession. The methodological focus on his Pelagian work does not overturn

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[88] Cf. *DCD* 3.20.

[89] *DCD* 13.5. *CG*. 546.

his earliest works against the dualism of the Manicheans. During this period in his work

Augustine declared, "Can anyone be so intellectually blind as not to perceive what an

ornament to all lands the human race is, even when only a few of its members live straight

and laudable lives, and what value public order has in restraining even sinners with the

bonds of a kind of earthly peace? Even the most crooked and depraved human beings, after

all, still rank in value above cattle and birds."[90] Even in their depraved state, human persons

do not unravel the ordered beauty of everything around them or pervert all of the existential

order. Despite the sinful purposes that dominate unregenerate persons, they are still a

highlight of creation and can meaningfully participate in the common blessings that remain

in and over creation.

Conclusion

After indicating that the theological symbols of redemption convey a broader

experience than is strictly contained in their soteriological situation, we must touch upon the

ways such theological ideas are capable of serving as political symbols. The next chapter is

concerned with demonstrating Augustine's usage of theological symbols in his more practical

political statements. Here it is necessary only to connect the broad outline of the idea of

appropriation and the experience of Augustine's symbols with the usage in political order. It

is sufficient here to negatively convey the boundaries of the political usage of the

differentiated symbols of redemption.

In the first place, the reader must be sensitive to Augustine's own explicit disavowals

of the importance of the temporal order. The reader must remember some of Augustine's

provocative statements, such as the probing question, "Justice removed, then, what are

[90] *DGL* 9.9.14. Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in *On Genesis*, ed. John Rotelle
(Hyde Park, NY: New City Press), 383.

kingdoms but great bands of robbers? What are bands of robbers themselves but little kingdoms?"[91] There is a definite temporal limit to the efficaciousness of redemptive symbols in the political order because of death. The deadly separation of body and soul cuts short earthly accomplishments, and concern for the second death whereby human may be permanently separated from the divine focuses ultimate attention on the eschatological end of humanity. Augustine can write that, "Human peace is…sweet because of the temporal salvation of mortals,"[92] but he can never be misunderstood as to be indicating that the temporal salvation offered in the political order is sufficient to be eschatologically efficacious. The appropriation of the symbol of redemption into the political order can neither elevate politics to the heavenly realm, nor lower the heavenly realm to the earthly level.

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[91] *DCD* 4.4. *CG.* 147.

[92] *Ep.* 189.6. Augustine, "Letter 189," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 156-210*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 261.

Demonstration of Augustinian Appropriation

"There is hardly any human action, however private it may be which does not result from some very general conception men have of God, of His relations with the human race, of the nature of their soul, and of their duties to their fellows. Nothing can prevent such ideas from being the common spring from which all else originates."[1]

Introduction

Since Augustine lived within a political context that was collapsing even as he was writing, there are limited correspondences between his immediate situation and our contemporary context that would allow his comments to be pulled from their direct context and remain insightful as well as relevant. Despite the absence of solid correlation, most interpreters of Augustine have scoured his writings for even the smallest reference to a political concept or scenario. While on their ill-fated attempt to piece together Augustine's politics from his diverse polemical writings, social scientists traditionally have focused on a list of topics and themes in Augustine's writings that are related to political life and have attempted to work backward from his position on these topics to a general political attitude or stance. The most popular empirical topics from Augustine include: "(i) the Roman Empire, its place in the divine plan of salvation and its relationship to Christianity; (ii) human nature and relationships in society, and the effect of the Fall upon them; and (iii) the Church in relation to the secular world…(iv) religious coercion; and (v) the just war."[2] For our purposes here we may easily dismiss any approach to Augustine that consists entirely in collecting his assorted statements on law, justice, war, etc. as providing an accurate rendering

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer (New York: Perennial Classics, 2000), 442-43.

[2] R.A. Markus, "The Latin Fathers," in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (Great Britain: Variorum, 1994), 103.

of Augustine's political importance. While this approach does have the strength of

clearly cataloguing what Augustine in fact said – a valuable service to be sure – it falls short

of providing an accurate assessment of Augustinian theory by either incorrectly or

prematurely extrapolating in order to reach these summary statements. The inherent

problem with this approach at reverse engineering a political doctrine from Augustine's

corpus is that it misses how all these matters can and should be dependent on his experience

of redemption in human history.

Redemption is usually limited to a theological sense alone, but Augustine actually

transfers the symbol of redemption to political experiences that bear a certain relation or

similarity (while remaining different) to redemption in theology. The experience of

redemption is present in dual fashion from the very first chapter of the very first book of the

City of God. Augustine begins his polemic against and in response to those pagans who

blamed Christianity for the recent sack of Rome by drawing attention to the hypocrisy of

some of these non-Christians who themselves only survived the siege by taking refuge from

the invaders in Christian churches. Augustine notes, "[Pagan critics] forget that they would

not by able to wag their tongues against [the church] today had they not, when fleeing from

the enemy's steel, found in her sacred places the lives in which they take such pride."[3] He

continues further, "Indeed, whenever those savage men [the invading Goths], who elsewhere

rage in the usual fashion of an enemy, came to the place where what the rules of war would

have permitted elsewhere was forbidden, all the ferocity with which they smote was curbed,

and their greed for captives subdued."[4] While for Augustine the important point is the

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[3] *DCD* 1.1. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), (Henceforth *CG*) 4.
[4] *DCD* 1.1. *CG.* 4.

hypocrisy of these pagans, for our purposes the importance of the observation is the

demonstration of a parallel earthly salvation or redemption that Augustine connects to

Christianity.

The experience of redemption operates on two levels in this example. In the first

place, the invading Goths are Arian Christians, who, despite holding heretical beliefs about

the deity of Christ, are sufficiently Christian to offer mercy on a Christian model in sparing

the lives of those in the sanctuaries. The Goths have transferred their experience of

Christian mercy in redemption to their political practice in "honour of Christ."[5] Secondly,

the pagan opponents of Christianity have now received their own experience of redemption

during the sacking of Rome through God's providence of earthly affairs and should

recognize this redemption as an opportunity for correction and repentance. Augustine

identifies God as "Redeemer" here and states that pagans are "ungrateful" for such

"manifest blessings" as they have experienced.[6]

The difficulty of seeing this connection of theology and politics is the absence of an

explicit framework for its explication. Interpreters have assumed simply because Augustine

does not provide a fully developed theory that no practice is consistently at work within his

corpus. The exact opposite, however, is true. The functional practice of Augustine in

political matters indicates that a theory can and should be expounded that supports and

vivifies Augustine's actual operations. Augustine showed no difficulty in being engaged in

political activity or making political recommendations to concerned parties during his public

ministry. As James O'Donnell has pointed out, modern readers too often imagine Augustine

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[5] *DCD* 1.1. *CG.* 4.
[6] *DCD* 1.1. *CG.* 4.

as more of a reclusive mystic than the public intellectual he actually was.[7] He also offers

more than just a negative standard formed by injunctions against certain activities. In his

actual practice he gives demonstrable representation to Christianity within the Roman

Empire that depends on the appropriation of theology.

We should here pause momentarily to address a counterargument propounded by

John Milbank. Milbank – and the larger movement of radical orthodoxy – is not entirely

opposed to such an approach; rather, he over-extends the idea. Milbank wants to suggest

that the practice of Christianity in itself is entirely different from pagan culture. Milbank

claims, "There can only be a distinguishable Christian social theory because there is also a

distinguishable Christian mode of action, a definite practice."[8] This "Christian mode of

action" is the "discovery in the 'shape' of Jesus's life and death, of the type of an exemplary

practice which we can imitate and which can form the context for our lives together."[9]

Hence, for Milbank, "Jesus's practice is only atoning in the form of a new social mechanism

in which we can situate ourselves."[10] This exemplary practice comes from the ontological

priority of peace instead of conflict. Milbank claims that Augustine substantiates this

development in intellectual history. He writes, "[Augustine] isolates the [narratives] which

support the universal sway of antagonism, and contrasts this with [a narrative] of a peaceful

mode of existence, which has historically arisen as 'something else,' an *altera civitas*, having no

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[7] "We would think of him as resembling in the first instance not so much Aquinas or
Heidegger as Cicero or Pascal." James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York:
HarperCollins, 2005), 189. (It should be noted that O'Donnell overextends this observation
in his biographical construction of Augustine to insist that Augustine was constantly striving
for public engagement in North Africa because he had been a rhetorical failure in Rome.)

[8] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers,
1993), 380.

[9] Ibid., 396.

[10] Ibid., 397.

logical or causal connection to the city of violence."[11] Thus, Milbank concludes, "It is in fact the ontological priority of peace over conflict (which is arguably the key theme of his entire thought) that is the principle undergirding Augustine's critique."[12] Milbank has inspired numerous followers of this interpretation of Augustine through his leadership and participation in the movement of radical orthodoxy.

While making an impressive argument, we must remain skeptical of Milbank's claims in light of the historical development of Christian history and articulation. That is to say, Milbank's claims can be contradicted both theoretically and practically. More precisely, we cannot agree that Augustine's two-cities model offers support for this renunciation of violence in any form of human conduct, thereby offering a radically alternative practice. Augustine truly bemoans the evil of this world that leaves man largely ignorant, but he find that it only forces him to make his way as best as possible through the paths of established practice.

In contrast to Milbank, consider how Augustine handles the lamentable predicament of the earthly judge discussed in Book 19.6. Augustine writes, "Those who give judgment can never penetrate the consciences of those upon whom they pronounce it. Therefore they are often compelled to seek the truth by torturing innocent people merely because they are witnesses to the crimes of other men."[13] Augustine is even quick to point out that, as well as being tortured, innocent men will often be unjustly executed. However, he does not use this as an excuse to withdraw from the confusion of life and disengage from the political order. He continues at length, "Given that social life is surrounded by such darkness, will the wise

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[11] Ibid., 389.
[12] Ibid., 390.
[13] *DCD* 19.6. *CG.* 926.

[Christian] man take his seat on the judge's bench, or will he not venture to do so? Clearly, he will take his seat; for the claims of human society, which he thinks it wicked to abandon, constrain him and draw him to this duty."[14] Augustine does not countenance the judge either giving up or offering a radical alternative practice, but has every confidence he will simply proceed on the same course assured of his final peace and justice beyond this world. Augustine notes, "These numerous and important evils he does not consider sins; for the wise judge does these things, not with any intention of doing harm, but because his ignorance compels him, and because human society claims him as a judge. But though we therefore acquit the judge of malice, we must none the less condemn human life as miserable."[15] Man's nature and existence was corrupted by original sin and its effects are not removed from human social life, despite the presence of some regenerate individuals. Devout Christian life does not require overthrowing all previous practice in its substitution of a new animating principle. As Peter Kaufman comments, "Christians transcend rather than transform the social and political order."[16] Milbank's claims for an ontology of harmony and peace cannot be fully supported within Augustine's corpus, which demonstrates the extent to which Milbank has altered orthodox Christianity in his reconstruction. Therefore, it is more advisable to search out the minute details and distinctions of Christian practice that may appear wholly consistent with prior pagan practice, but will reveal greater clarity and depth upon investigation.

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[14] *DCD* 19.6. *CG*. 927.

[15] *DCD* 19.6. Augustine, *City of God*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: Vol. 2*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 405.

[16] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 104.

Letter 138

What is needed is a framework for drawing out both the practice and the theory that supports this non-radical practice in Augustine. If we consider the larger context of the *City of God*, we are provided with clues to develop just such a framework. The *City of God* is dedicated to Marcellinus, an inquiring Roman official with whom Augustine frequently corresponded on questions regarding Christianity, and examining the correspondence that precedes the *City of God*, particularly Letter 138, provides a lens with which to interpret the work.

Marcellinus writes to Augustine because he is curious about certain difficult Christian doctrines, but also bothered by charges that Christianity is inimical to political order. Marcellinus has heard such practical contentions from Volusianus, another of Augustine's correspondents,[17] as well as other pagans, and he is concerned that he does not know how to effectively respond to the charge. Marcellinus narrates to Augustine the charge of Volusianus:

> The preaching and teaching of Christ is in no way compatible with the practices of the state, since, as many say, it is clear that it is his commandment that we should repay no one with evil for evil, that we should offer the other cheek to one who strikes us, give our coat to one who insists on taking our cloak, and go twice the distance with someone who wants to force us to go with him. He states that all these are contrary to the practices of the state.[18]

Marcellinus concludes his letter noting, "I beg that in answer to all these objections you compose books that will be of extraordinary benefit to the Church, especially at this time."[19]

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[17] See *Ep.* 137.

[18] *Ep.* 136.2. Marcellinus, "Letter 136," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 100-155*, ed. Boniface Ramsay (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 211.

[19] *Ep.* 136.3. Ibid.

The immediate context of the *City of God* is clearly responding to the sack of Rome, but we should not neglect this underlying impetus provided by Marcellinus.

In response to Marcellinus' concerns and Volusianus' contentions, Augustine provides a letter of response to each respective correspondent that presents the political observer with the same theme. Rather than being a hindrance to political order, Christianity is a great benefit for politics. In his letter to the pagan Volusianus, Augustine is more concerned with defending the Incarnation, but he does provide space to refute the anti-political charge against Christianity. Augustine writes, "What arguments, what writings of any philosophers, what laws of any cities are in any way to be compared with the two commandments upon which Christ says that the whole law and the prophets depend? 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind,' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mt 22:37-39).'"[20] Augustine continues:

> In these commandments there is also found the praiseworthy safety of the state, for the best city is established and protected only by the foundation and bond of faith and solid harmony when the common good is loved, namely, God, who is the highest and truest good, and when human beings love one another in complete sincerity in him by loving one another on account of him from whom they cannot hide the disposition with which they love.[21]

To this uninitiated pagan, Augustine is concerned to demonstrate that the simple message of Christianity does not undermine the political order. On the contrary, loving one's neighbor promotes the securest bonds of order within a polity.

As Marcellinus is a professing Christian, Augustine can expound more fully upon the outworking of Christianity in the commonwealth because he does not need to argue for the truth of Christianity to a fellow believer. In response to the suggestion that Christ's

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[20] *Ep.* 137.17. Augustine, "Letter 137," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 100-155*, ed. Boniface Ramsay (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 222-23.

[21] *Ep.* 137.17. Ibid., 223

commandments mentioned in the earlier critique are anti-political, Augustine assures

Marcellinus that, "These commandments pertain to the disposition of the heart, which is

something interior, rather than to action, which is something exterior."[22] This difference

keeps the commandments from being understood in a shallow fashion that would only apply

to the most basic level of strict practice. It has been asserted above that Christianity is

fundamentally about what has been done for the individual rather than what the individual

performs, and this is born out in Augustine's distinction. If Christ's statements were simple

commandments that pertained only to practice, they would be limited to the three acts listed

rather than containing a principle that should be applied across the breadth of the Christian's

life. As inner dispositions of the heart, these commandments do speak to political matters,

but not in such a superficial way as to immediately yield rigid practices. What is needed

instead is for Christians to appropriate their experience of Christianity into their political

lives.

Because Christianity cannot be reduced to shallow political practice and offers

substantive appropriation, it provides greater long-term benefits for the polity.[23] Augustine

emphatically states:

> Let those who say that the teaching of Christ is opposed to the state give us an army
> of the sort that the teaching of Christ ordered soldiers to be. Let them give us such
> people of the provinces, such husbands, such wives, such parents, such children,
> such masters, such slaves, such kings, such judges, and finally such taxpayers and tax
> collectors as Christian teaching prescribes, and let them dare to say that this teaching
> is opposed to the state; in fact, let them not hesitate to admit that it would be a great
> boon to the state if this were observed.[24]

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[22] *Ep.* 138.13. Augustine, "Letter 138," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 100-155*, ed.
Boniface Ramsay (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 232.

[23] This should be compared to O'Donovan's overly broad assertion that, "[Augustine] fail[s]
to allow for the progressive transformation of the social order." Oliver O'Donovan,
"Augustine's *City of God* XIX and Western Political Thought," *Dionysius* 11, 1987, 90.

[24] *Ep.* 138.15. Augustine, "Letter 138," 233.

Here Augustine's reply to Marcellinus provides the greatest assistance toward understanding how the interpreter may approach the two-fold nature of redemption in the *City of God*. When we consider Augustine's statement from *Letter 138* on the political benefits of Christians in society, two important points must be distinguished. In the first place, the focus on the individual believers greatly limits wide-scale efficacy. Augustine states, "Let us aim at true virtue, which can bring happiness also to a community. For the source of a community's felicity is no different from that of one man, since a community is simply a united multitude of individuals."[25] Because a community is nothing more than a collection of individuals, the main benefits derived for communities proceed from the blessings and changes that affect individuals. The number of individuals that are converted to Christianity seems the best indication of what kinds of affects Christianity will have for the political community. For Augustine, the political order would clearly be better were everyone a faithful, practicing Christian. However, he says nothing to indicate the likelihood that this will ever be the case. Rather, should Christianity improve politics, it would be because everyone would attempt to be at peace with others and would follow the derivative moral teachings of Christianity. As Peter Brown correctly notes, "Put briefly, Augustine's political theory is based upon the assumption that political activity is merely symptomatic: it is merely one way in which men express orientations that lie far deeper in themselves."[26] A mass conversion to Christianity would affect the fundamental desires of human hearts and would address the root causes of political faction and strife.

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[25] *DCD* 1.15. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), 25.

[26] Peter Brown, "Political Society," in R.A. Markus, *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 319.

As a second point, we should note that Augustine never devotes any discussion

to the likelihood of Christianity's benefit; he only notes its possibility. However, the fact

that he allows the possibility is crucial for our study. He writes, "If…people of every age

and each sex…were to hear and embrace the Christian precepts of justice and moral virtue,

then would the commonwealth adorn its lands with happiness in this present life."[27] Along

the same line, it should further be noted that whenever he mentions the possibility of social

benefits from Christianity he never proceeds to elucidate Christian doctrine or social

teaching that would be directly responsible for this improvement. Augustine never details

performative requirements for Christians in the political realm. Hence, he is not making

boldly triumphant guarantees about the political effect of Christianity, only noting the

possibilities that are offered and could be realized through the operation and appropriation

of faithful Christian practice.

Augustine's view of the benefits Christianity may provide for the political order are

largely centered on the notion that Christians make good citizens. Citizens engage in the

order of their political community, and Augustine does not indicate that believers will

transform the nature of the community's order in their political activity as citizens. It has

absolutely nothing to do with a form of politics that would be implemented should all

citizens profess to be Christians. Augustine seems in line with the early mode of Christian

apologetic famously elaborated by Justin Martyr's *First Apology* and continued through other

patristic writings. Namely, Christians serve the political order where they can and

particularly pray for their rulers. There is no mention of a new order or substance in

government.

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[27] *DCD* 2.19. *CG.* 74.

For Augustine, individual Christians spread throughout the citizenry are crucial. Through the individually transformed lives of Christians living within the empire, the truth of Christianity gains existential representation at different personal and institutional levels. As Todd Breyfogle has indicated, "For Augustine, political relationships are always specific relationships between persons."[28] These interpersonal relations, whether all parties are Christian or only one, fundamentally affect the political order by instantiating Christian ideas and symbols. Augustine indicates three particular levels of elemental representation where Christians have an existential affect: empire officials, soldiers of the army, and citizen households. In each of these levels the truth of Christianity can be manifested through the practical actions of believers filling these roles. Augustine does not say that it will be a unique practice that is displayed, but he is very clear that it will be a better practice than that which would be offered by a great mass of pagans holding these offices and roles.

The Christian Difference

Despite lacking a fully developed theory and a radically distinct practice to elaborate, we must emphasize something of the unique change that would appear with Christians living and acting within society. This can readily be accomplished by acknowledging the validity of the pagan concern for the commonwealth after the suppression of their cults and considering Augustine's response. The first question raised in this context is why political material even makes an appearance in the *City of God* in the first place? More particularly, given that the overarching purpose of the *City of God* is a refutation of paganism as a religion, why does the opening section end with the famous "mirror of princes" commentary on

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[28] Todd Breyfogle, "Toward a Contemporary Augustinian Understanding of Politics," in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin Hughes, Kim Paffenroth (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 223.

Christian emperors? Answering this question goes a long way toward understanding the

connection of theology and politics in Augustine's work and the classical world.

In his *Retractions*, Augustine summarizes the purpose of the first five books of the

City of God writing, "These books refute those persons who would so view the prosperity of

human affairs that they think that the worship of the many gods whom the pagans worship

is necessary for this; they contend that…evils arise and abound because they are prohibited

from doing so."[29] In the *City of God*, Augustine more pointedly states, "The first five [books]

were written against those who believe that we should worship the gods for the sake of the

blessings of this life."[30] Despite the basic fact that the subject matter contained in the first

books of the *City of God* is essentially a theological polemic against paganism, we should also

notice the very political nature of the focus on present worldly benefits and prosperity.

Augustine feels that the first argument that must be addressed in his "great and arduous

work" is a sort of prosperity theology that views religion not as a necessary expression of

truth, but as a beneficial incantation to charm this world. In light of this political context, it

is puzzling that these early books of the *City of God* are often neglected or marginalized in the

discussion of Augustine's political philosophy.[31] The early books of the *City of God* are often

marginalized because scholars have failed to see the connection between Augustine's

theology and the worldly practical details of life in the Roman Empire. With a proper

concern for Christianity's representation through appropriation, it is possible to see the early

books of the *City of God* as setting the first stage for further development.

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[29] *Retr.* 2.43.1. Augustine, *The Retractions*, trans. Sister M. Inez Bogan, R.S.M. in *The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 60* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 209

[30] *DCD* 10.32. *CG.* 447.

[31] Such texts are neglected in comparison to the almost exclusive concentration on Book 19 in contemporary political commentary.

For Romans, the relation of an attack on paganism to the Roman political project would have been as clear as day because their religion insisted that their political position and mission was divinely willed. Augustine himself references the connection of theology to Roman politics in the preface opening the *City of God*. Noting that it is a "maxim of divine law" that "'God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble,'" Augustine attacks the arrogance of the Roman's self-praising assertion that it belongs to them "to spare the humble and subdue the proud."[32] Augustine's reference is taken from Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* and it deserves full exposition. Here in Virgil's epic poem Aeneas' father, Anchises, prophesies from the underworld of the divinely ordained greatness of the coming city of Rome.

> Others will cast more tenderly in bronze
> Their breathing figures, I can well believe,
> And bring more lifelike portraits out of marble;
> Argue more eloquently, use the pointer
> To trace the paths of heaven accurately
> And accurately foretell the rising stars.
> Roman, remember by your strength to rule
> Earth's peoples – for your arts are to be these:
> To pacify, to impose the rule of law,
> To spare the conquered, battle down the proud.[33]

This elucidates the context of Augustine's approach to his theological polemic; namely, the view of his adversaries. For the Romans, the confrontation with Christianity is both political and theological. The great Roman question is essentially political in nature: how can I have present political power and prosperity? For the Romans this question has a theological answer; namely, it has already been divinely willed, so simply keep the gods appeased. All the focus and concern are rooted in the context of the present situations of life. The great

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[32] DCD 1.*praefatio. CG.* 3.

[33] Virgil, *The Aeneid,* trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 190.

Roman principle of *do ut des* ("I give in order that the gods give.") expresses the matter entirely. The devout Roman does certain rituals and sacrifices to successfully sanctify both his common and special activities. This sanctification is entirely correlated with benefit, prosperity, and worldly success. At its core, therefore, the Roman experiential question is political in nature with a theological answer.

In contrast, the Christian has a theological question – albeit one rooted in the present experience of life – namely, how can I have eternal life in paradise. This different question has a wholly theological answer, namely have faith in the atoning work of Christ. However, that answer stretches from the eternity of a transcendent God all the way into the temporal affairs of this life because faith and the Gospel message have implications for the Christian life. These implications are alluded to in that Augustine offers a commentary on the political rule of Christian emperors to conclude the opening section of his theological polemic.

Scholars have problems understanding the political importance of the *City of God* because they are looking for answers to exclusively political questions – just as the Romans were – while Augustine asks theological questions whose answers affect our political existence without being essentially political in nature. As Charles Norris Cochrane insightfully writes, "The error of Classicism may be summarily described as a failure to identify the true source of power and, therewith, its true character and conditions. The error thus indicated is original, and to it may be ascribed the whole tissue of fallacies which frustrate the secular aspirations of men. These fallacies Christianity explodes in a sentence:

all power cometh from on high."[34] Theology is undoubtedly connected to political questions because only God holds the greatest power in the universe. Understanding that God is the primary actor in salvation, which is the most important question for our present life, must subsequently also influence more politically oriented questions regarding how shall we then live.

Right-by-Nature and Von Heyking's critique

In suggesting the nuanced connection of theology to politics, I am explicitly separating Augustine from those who posit a classical, right-by-nature approach and interpretation of Augustine. For instance, John von Heyking argues that, "The aim of Augustine's antipolitical rhetoric is to tame inordinate political passions and ambitions," and that the proper interpretation of Augustine separates his rhetoric from his substantive position, which will not vary from his "Roman philosophical interlocutors on virtue and politics."[35] Right-by-nature interpretations successfully pick up certain nuances of Augustine's work that support certain established political practices. Right-by-nature interpretations properly acknowledge that Augustine does not seamlessly fit within a natural law framework, and they also provide themselves some justification by noting their similarity to the biblical, Christian category of righteousness,[36] however, right-by-nature scholarship does not sufficiently account for the Christian root of Augustine's thinking. Von Heyking's work would strip Augustine of his polemical rhetoric, defined as any statement that is irreconcilable with classical philosophy, and, thereby, deny any fundamental transformation

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[34] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), 552.

[35] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 12.

[36] Cf. James Rhodes, "Right by Nature," *Journal of Politics.* 53:2 (May 1991), 320, where he intimates that righteousness is an equivalent symbol to right-by-nature without elaborating.

that Augustine claimed to have found upon his conversion to Christianity. A detailed

analysis of Augustine's political practice will demonstrate similarity between some traditional

practices and his own evaluations and recommendations, but it must also handle the shifted

emphasis and intention that he derives from his theological reflection. The theological

context of Augustine's vision of society in the time of Christianity has been seen above in

general comments, but remains to be demonstrated in fine detail.

Tripartite Analysis of Christian Society

As a framework for analyzing the practical precepts of the *City of God* in order to

arrive at a theoretical foundation that accounts for his theology and politics, we should

follow the suggestion Augustine offered to Marcellinus in *Letter 138*. The reader must

examine three basic levels of political society and see how Christianity has been appropriated

and represented at each level. We must analyze what Augustine says throughout the *City of*

God on individual Christian households, Christians filling the offices and leadership of the

empire, and what he says about Christian conduct of war. The discussion should proceed

from the lowest level outward because they are hierarchically connected. The individual

households provide the lowest levels of order for the empire, and war is the culminating

discussion because it is the solidification and extension of the empire.

Christians at the Individual and Household Level

The first logical category to deal with is the experience of Christians at the level of

individual citizens and households. Augustine writes, "A man's household, then ought to be

the beginning, or a little part, of the city; and every beginning has reference to some end

proper to itself, and every part has reference to the integrity of the whole of which it is a

part. From this, it appears clearly enough that domestic peace has reference to civic

peace."[37] For Augustine, the household and citizenry are first connected because the

Roman *paterfamilias* directs the household and is the only real political representative for the

entire family and domestic staff.[38] This is not to say that Augustine does not make

comments that are directed toward or applicable to individuals who are not the head of the

household, but that his primary attention is on the accepted political reality of his

contemporary world. The Christian conception of the household is structurally similar the

pagan household, but it offers two fundamental critiques of classical culture. In the first

place, the Christian household concretely demonstrates and instantiates the moral critique of

paganism because it is the simplest level of moral interaction. Secondly, the Christian

household offers a critique from the perspective of a pilgrim that extends beyond the pagan

household to the entire political structure.

     As has already been mentioned, Cicero's definition of a commonwealth suggested to

Augustine that Rome never was a commonwealth on the terms given. Because the Romans

did not possess or display true justice they cannot claim to be a republic. This is just a small

piece of Augustine's larger moral critique of paganism. More broadly, Augustine connects

the morality of a people with the judgment of its political order and practice. We may take

Augustine's example of Nineveh as indicative, Augustine states, "For though the walls and

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[37] *DCD* 19.16. *CG.* 945.

[38] "Augustine is strikingly non-revolutionary in his sense of the impact of Christian faith upon the institutional structures of the family: the household is still under the headship of the paterfamilias, who still may and should correct those under his authority, by force if necessary. And those under his authority include not only family members, but also slaves." Kevin Hughes, "Local Politics: The Political Place of the Household in Augustine's *City of God*," in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin Hughes, Kim Paffenroth (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 149.

houses were standing, the city was overthrown in its depraved morals."[39] Augustine lays

the chief blame here not on the mass of the citizenry, but on the city's supposed gods who

should have offered divine guidance on matters of morality. Augustine notes, "It behoved

[sic] the gods who were their protectors not to hide from the people who worshipped them

the precepts of a good life, but to instruct them by means of plain commandments."[40] On

the contrary, the Roman gods have not only neglected salutary moral instruction, they have

further offered shameful and immoral examples and supported the public presentation of

shamefulness.[41]

In contrast to the moral inadequacies of paganism, Christianity offers individual

moral instruction and institutes moral principles. Augustine states, "Our Christ so often

delivered precepts directed towards the highest morals and against wicked ways, whereas

their gods never gave such precepts to the nation that worshipped them, to save that

commonwealth from destruction. On the contrary, they made its destruction all the more

certain by corrupting its morals by the harmful authority of their own example."[42]

Christianity's moral teachings are delivered in divine revelation and exposited to all the

faithful during their regular assembly.[43]

The regular assembly of the Christian body actively disseminates moral instruction,

but the authority within the Christian household is also important in Augustine's analysis. If

the teaching of Christianity is limited to the assembly of fellow Christians it can only remain

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[39] *DCD* 21.24. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21-22*, trans. William Green (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 123.

[40] *DCD* 2.4. *CG*. 54.

[41] *DCD* 2.4-5. *CG*. 54-56.

[42] *DCD* 2.25. *CG*. 87.

[43] "Let our adversaries read our many commandments against avarice and luxury, found in the prophets, in the Holy Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, which are everywhere read to the people who assemble to hear them." *DCD* 2.19. *CG*. 74.

an insular affair. Instead, Augustine states, "[The Christian] will take care to ensure that

his neighbour also loves God, since he is commanded to love his neighbour as himself.

Also, as far as he can, he will do the same for his wife, his children, his servants, and all other

men."[44] The Christian householder will inculcate Christian teaching within his family and

domestic staff, and he will extend the reach of teaching to his surrounding neighbors. Here

the words and examples of Christians are exhibited in the wider world whether or not

neighbors are actually converted. It is important to clarify that Augustine is not suggesting a

moral crusade or moral imperialism. He elaborates further on the importance of individual

Christian citizens, "[The Christian] will be at peace with all men as far as in him lies…And

the order of this concord is, first, that a man should harm no one, and, second, that he

should do good to all, so far as he can."[45] This is a limited and salutary conception of

appropriating Christianity's moral teachings to the wider, public world.

Secondly, Augustine's Christian household offers a pilgrim's critique of Roman
paganism. Augustine writes:

> A household of men who do not live by faith strives to find an earthly peace in the
> goods and advantages which belong to this temporal life. By contrast, a household
> of men who live by faith looks forward to the blessings which are promised as
> eternal in the life to come; and such men make use of earthly and temporal things
> like pilgrims: they are not captivated by them, nor are they deflected by them from
> their progress towards God.[46]

In Augustine's description, the two households are identical in the goods of temporal life,

whether they are physical possessions or certain intangible attributes, but they are different

in their intention and relation toward these earthly goods. The Christian household

possesses these goods as though they were fleeting because members individually understand

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[44] *DCD* 19.14. *CG.* 941.
[45] *DCD* 19.14. *CG.* 941.
[46] *DCD* 19.17. *CG.* 945.

themselves each as a *peregrinus*. Peter Kaufman explains, "Augustine's term, *peregrinus*, is tricky to translate. Given connotations that the English equivalents acquired over the centuries, none just noted infallibly conveys its meaning. 'Sojourner,' 'pilgrim,' and 'resident alien,' however, come close; they denote 'passing through' and do not imply complete contempt for the territory through which one passes."[47] Peter Brown reminds us not to conflate Augustine's deliberate usage of *peregrinus* with the "jovial globe-trotters of the *Canterbury Tales*" because "Augustine detested traveling."[48] Augustine's usage should also not be taken so literally as to hold that Christians should renounce their political citizenship, Roman or otherwise. The modern reader must understand the analogy at work. In antiquity, a true "resident alien" lacked the full political rights of the citizen, and would be desirous of returning to his homeland once his intended business was completed. He would recognize, however, that while he was far from home he depended on maintaining peace with an environment that was not within his complete control.

The effected change of these critiques is more theoretical than practical, but it does bear practical implications for corporate life. The Romans followed the Greeks in privileging the public political activity of humanity over the enclosed domestic realm, which, in being labeled "private," clearly lacked the full substance and importance of the political life. The private household existed for the sake of survival and the necessities of life,[49] but it was not self-sufficient and could not provide for more than the simple necessities. Between

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[47] Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political*, 104-05.

[48] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 323.

[49] "The distinctive trait of the household sphere was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs…Natural community in the household therefore was born of necessity, and necessity ruled over all activities performed in it." Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 30.

the ancient world and the Middle Ages, however, something changed. As Hannah

Arendt stated, "Augustine seems to have been the last to know at least what it once meant to

be a citizen."[50] Instead of privileging the public world of action and glory, Christians

develop a wholly new conception of community based on the creative and redemptive work

of God. Arendt's comment is meant to emphasize the otherworldly possibilities of

Christianity because the new community of the church can replace the singular importance

of the public realm and, thereby, decrease the importance of politics.

Scholars of antiquity such as Hannah Arendt may lament the Christian destruction of

the public realm's privileged status, but we cannot so easily leap to the conclusion that

maintaining the private realm excludes the greater community and is detrimental to political

order. Augustine writes, "[God] has given to men certain good things appropriate to this

life. These are: temporal peace, in proportion to the short span of a mortal life, consisting in

bodily health and soundness, and the society of one's own kind; and all things necessary for

the preservation and recovery of this peace."[51] The necessity of sociability with one's own

kind is the basis of Augustine's famous aphorism that, "A man would more readily hold

conversation with his dog than with another man who is a foreigner."[52] Augustine's

statement does not disparage the humanity of the foreigner or elevate the dignity of the dog,

but simply acknowledges the frustrations that exist when human communication is

impossible. This "society of one's own kind" would haven been understood by the Greeks

to be friendship in the political realm. Augustine, however, allows a much broader

understanding. Contemplating the monstrous Cacus from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Augustine declares

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[50] Ibid., 14.
[51] *DCD* 19.13. *CG*. 940.
[52] *DCD* 19.7. *CG*. 928.

his pitiable state in writing, "His kingdom was the solitude of an awful cavern…He had no wife with whom to give and receive caresses; no children to play with when little or to instruct when a little bigger; and no friends with whom to enjoy converse."[53] Here Augustine has widened the scope of beneficial human society to include simple private existence within the household. Because Augustine emphasizes the aim of growing in righteousness within the household, the household becomes the bellwether for the polity at large. Rowan Williams explains, "So far from being the sphere of bondage and necessity, the household has become a 'laboratory of the spirit,' a place for the maturation of souls (the souls of the ruler as well as the ruled)."[54]

Augustine is helped to understand the importance of the individual household, particularly as it relates to his allusion above to "the preservation and recovery of…peace,"[55] by his conception of depravity and its effects that were developed previously. Consider again Augustine's account of the conditions of man's creation, "God created in such a way that, if [man] remained subject to his Creator as his true Lord, and if he kept His commandments with pious obedience, he should pass over into the company of the angels and obtain, without suffering death, a blessed immortality without end. But if he offended the Lord his God by using his free will proudly an disobediently, he should live, as the beasts do, subject to death: the slave of his own lusts."[56] As Markus has pointed out, "At bottom, sin was a retreat into privacy."[57] While humanity was made to participate in corporate

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[53] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 935.
[54] Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the *City of God*," *Milltown Studies*, 19/20 (1987), 64.
[55] *DCD* 19.13. *CG.* 940.
[56] *DCD* 7.22. *CG.* 533.
[57] Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51.

perfection, Adam chose to lean on his own understanding and withdrew into a sort of privacy of the will. This is not to say that humanity no longer has any access to truth or goodness, but that sin enters by man's prideful self-preference. When we parse out any sinful action or statement, "The lie is ours, but the truth God's."[58] The effect of this sin is a rupture of community between God and humanity, as well as the individual's retreat into the privacy of his own will, which also further destroys the possibility of human community. Augustine elsewhere states, "Many people…have no interest in making a place for the Lord; they seek their own interests, love their own possessions, rejoice in their own power, and are greedy for private property. Anyone who wants to make a place for the Lord must take the opposite line. He or she should rejoice not in what is privately owned but in what is common to all."[59] There is no need to stretch Augustine's statements to the extreme of renouncing all private, earthly property, but, rather, we should understand that lessening our retreat into sinful privacy in any fashion works against this sinful inclination or at least limits its manifestation in certain forms. When Augustine expands meaningful human society to include the lowest levels of household relations, he is suggesting that participation in what is common to the household is an improvement over the sin of privacy, and that well-ordered households will promote further political order.

This conception of responding to sin is helpful for thinking about how Christians existentially represent Christianity at the household level and how the political order can appropriate something of Christianity. It is not enough to be aware of the existence and possibility of human sin, but we must also work against it. It was noted earlier that

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[58] *DCD* 14.4. *CG.* 586.
[59] *EnP* 131.5. Augustine, "Exposition of Psalm 131," in *Exposition of the Psalms: Vol. 6,* ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 158-59.

Augustine included "society of one's own kind" among the "certain good things appropriate to this life." This alone is somewhat problematic given the above declaration that sin destroyed the possibility of human community. Augustine, however, concludes the above quotation in noting that along with these temporal blessings God has also included "all things necessary for the preservation and recovery of this peace."[60] This would seem to give support to the notion that maintaining and participating in human community in some ways works against or limits aspects of human sin. We can go so far as to say that such thinking depends on appropriation as a representation of the theological experience of redemption into the political realm.

Christian Emperor and Officials

The second level of representation where Christians appropriate redemption is in their conduct as imperial officials, particularly when an emperor professes Christianity. The so-called "mirror of princes" that concludes Book 5 is explicitly a discussion of the Christian Roman emperors, but it is a difficult passage in which to hold the tension that arises between noting that Christians do not provide innovative practices, and yet support the claim that Christianity makes a political difference. Our difficulty in this passage is increased because this section is a political commentary for a theological polemic and not a strictly political commentary or prescription. The overarching topic under examination is happiness. Under this rubric Augustine questions whether the Christian emperors were happy because of their respective political situations, and he answers that the happiness of Christian emperors cannot depend upon such worldly concerns. Augustine writes, "We do not say that certain Christian emperors were happy because they ruled for a longer time, or because they died in

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[60] *DCD* 19.13. *CG.* 940.

peace and left behind sons to rule as emperors, or because they subdued the enemies of

the commonwealth or because they were able to avoid and suppress uprisings against

them."[61] Rather, Augustine notes that pagans, even openly hostile opponents of Christianity,

have had such worldly benefits. In contrast to the superficial political criteria of happiness

previously offered, Augustine offers a lengthy passage detailing the righteous conduct of

properly Christian emperors.[62] Perhaps the most important point to note about Augustine's

subsequent description is its basic generality with the exception of one explicit instance. The

majority of the passage could be descriptively applied to any good and moderate ruler,

Christian, pagan, or otherwise. Augustine predictably counsels justice, humility, mercy, and

self-restraint. This is perhaps what leads Peter Brown to declare, "Augustine's summary of

the virtues of a Christian prince, and his portraits of Constantine and Theodosius, are, in

themselves, some of the most shoddy passages of the City of God."[63]

Only in one point does Augustine depart from this general stance. He states as a

proper condition of the Christian emperor's happiness, "If they make their power the

handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent; if

they fear, love and worship God; if they love that Kingdom which they are not afraid to

share with others more than their own."[64] Here Augustine has clearly stated that to be

happy an emperor must be a Christian and act accordingly. But though he has departed

from basic political recommendations, he still has not moved beyond a rather generic level

of counsel assumed in his historical context. While his instruction to "make their power the

handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent"

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[61] *DCD* 5.24. *CG.* 231.
[62] *DCD* 5.24. *CG.* 231-32.
[63] Peter Brown, "Political Society," 319.
[64] *DCD* 5.24. *CG.* 232.

may strike fear into the heart of modern advocates of toleration and pluralism, Augustine

has not clearly communicated how Christian emperors accomplish this task. In light of past

history, we might jump to the conclusion that he is recommending religious persecution, but

Augustine does not here state as much. Augustine could not assume religious toleration, as

we do today, but by the same logic, he can neither easily be condemned for lacking it. The

instruction could just as easily be benignly understood to entail not obstructing the work of

the Church or, to provide an anachronistic contemporary example, using diplomatic tools to

promote the free passage of missionaries to foreign lands.

Despite the benign literary nature of Augustine's prescription, his involvement and

justification of government persecution of the African Donatists stands as a glaring obstacle

to the easy discussion of Christian officials. The Donatist controversy and Augustine's

involvement is a sufficiently large and important issue that it will be handled separately in a

further chapter, however, a few words in the present moment are necessary to still skeptical

readers. Appropriation exists as part of humanity's effort to symbolize the reality within

which we find ourselves, and it cannot be a tool of arbitrary domination because this would

deny the common nature of reality that drives its existence. The desire to elucidate

Augustine's implicit appropriation of the theological category of redemption is directed

toward denying persecution in favor of developing common understanding and united

effort. Augustine's position within the development and prospect of appropriation is crucial,

but not without blemish. Without meaning to gloss over or make light of his support of

persecution, the present section is only concerned with demonstrating the beneficial and

correct nature of appropriation, and not with the definition and demonstration of

misappropriation that will be handled in a later section.

For now we can simply notice the parallels between his theology and good political practice. At the imperial level, corruption must be restrained. On this point, Augustine praises even the ancient Roman Republic that knew nothing of Christian redemption. Augustine notes of the Romans, "They were passionately devoted to glory; it was for this that they desired to live, for this they did not hesitate to die. This unbounded passion for glory, above all else, checked their other appetites."[65] Personal glory should not be the overwhelming impetus for human life and is clearly not a righteous desire. God, however, chose to reward these Romans with the grant of the greatest empire ever. If we consider why, the only answer that satisfies is that though love of glory was a vice, it served a socially advantageous purpose. The love of glory prevented other desires from interfering in Rome's development and determined their conduct. He writes, "If men have not learnt to restrain their discreditable passions by obtaining the help of the Holy Spirit through their devout faith…at least it is good that the desire for human praise and glory makes them, not indeed saints, but less depraved men."[66] The early Romans undoubtedly experienced many desires and temptations, but they remained so wholly committed to the pursuit of glory that they restrained themselves from many other socially egregious vices and so were able to attain their coveted world dominion. Augustine's appreciative comments here should be taken not as an indication of his desire for a secular politics,[67] but as a foreshadowing of the operation of appropriation.

Despite the proud accomplishments of the ancient regime, Augustine is confident that their example should only spur Christians on to greater achievements because they have

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[65] *DCD* 5.12. *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, 197.
[66] *DCD* 5.13. Ibid., 202
[67] Cf. R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 58.

a greater understanding of truth. Politically speaking, greater accomplishments mean

rule that is more just. One of the ways that Augustine stresses the superiority of Christian

leaders is that such rulers show moderation in rule and punishment. In his conditional

description of the happy emperor Augustine writes, "If they are slow to punish and swift to

pardon; if they resort to punishment only when it is necessary to the government and

defense of the commonwealth, and never to gratify their own enmity; if they grant pardon,

not so that unjust men many enjoy impunity, but in the hope of bringing about their

correction."[68] In being deliberate and moderate with punishment the Christian ruler offers

redemption to the evil and unjust by aiming for repentance and offering conversion.

This is an example that would fit nicely into the analysis of Augustine's

recommendations for Christian statesmanship offered by Robert Dodaro. Citing examples

ranging from Abraham and David to Paulinus of Nola and Theodosius I as examples of

Christian statesmanship, Dodaro asserts, "Common to each of these Augustinian 'heroes' is

an admission that his virtue is not his own, either at its source or in its deeds, and that the

most noble political accomplishment is to thank God for the gift of pardon and to show

mercy to others."[69] Dodaro further elaborates on what he has termed "penitential

consciousness" in Augustinian rulers, "Augustine is convinced that, without neglecting their

duty to safeguard order, public officials should employ the least violent means at their

disposal to promote the moral reform of wrongdoers."[70] As Kaufman explains, "[Dodaro]

imagines that the bishop's 'experiential basis' serves as the foundation for a Christian

commonwealth in which policymaker's sense of sinfulness and humility beget strong,

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[68] *DCD* 5.24. *CG*. 232.

[69] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 213.

[70] Ibid.

creditable impulses to reconcile others and in which those impulses are enshrined in customs or laws that encourage civic virtue."[71] Augustine expects the Christian official to accept that, "Our righteousness…is in this life such that it consists only in the remission of sin rather than in the perfection of virtue,"[72] and to further extend an appropriated form of redemptive righteousness to all wrongdoers in the hopes that this will promote an order that is good in the proportion that it resembles divine order.

Dodaro's work offers a particular example of Augustine's use of appropriation, and it should be praised accordingly. Dodaro, however, neither extends the analysis of appropriation far enough, nor do his thematic choices promote clear comprehension of the breadth of the topic. Dodaro's first mistake is his reliance on the category of virtue, which is clearly ambiguous in Augustine's work. For Augustine, pagan virtues can be both temporally good and eternally lacking. With any given statement a whole range of nuances must be determined and maintained for interpretation. In fact, Augustine attacked virtue on one end of the spectrum as represented by pagans and on the other end of the spectrum as represented by Pelagians. So we may say that virtue is a category that carries a great deal of interpretive baggage.

Secondly, Dodaro's work is surprisingly limited in his apprehension and demonstration of Augustine's theological appropriation in politics. Dodaro singles out the humble virtue encapsulated as mercy or forgiveness and uses it exclusively. Forgiveness is a necessary component of a fully differentiated experience of redemption, but it is far from capturing the entire range of the experience. Dodaro seems to be so concerned to avoid the charges of authoritarianism leveled at Augustine by modern scholars such as William

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[71] Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political*, 228.
[72] *DCD* 19.27. *CG*. 962.

Connolly that he can only bring himself to allude to humble expressions of the redemptive work. It remains superficial to label Augustine an authoritarian thinker whether or not we acknowledge that he provides assertive expressions of redemption. We should, therefore, commit to the fullest expression of his implicit teaching rather than limit his application from fear of offending tolerant sensibilities.

Temporal salvation through the restraint of corruption is perhaps the lowest level of appropriation possible within the political order. At a more explicit level, the Christian official can use his clearer understanding of the order of existence to formulate good policy and just laws. As we have seen earlier, Augustine declares, "The maker of temporal laws, if he is a good and wise man, will consult that eternal law itself, which no soul has been given the right to judge, so that in accordance with its immutable regulations he may discern what at this juncture in time is to be commanded and forbidden."[73] In this case, the ruler does not enact eternal and immutable laws. For Augustine, rulers can only consult the eternal order to the degree in which they are individually capable and they appropriate good policy accordingly.[74] As the Christian, by virtue of redemption and the revelation of Holy Scripture, has a more complete account of immutable reality, he is better able to enact good policy and just laws. Hence, he can conclude that Christians have improved political rule. "It is beneficial, then, that good men should rule far and wide and long… [it is beneficial

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[73] *DVR* 31.57. Augustine, "True Religion," 68-69.

[74] While we need not develop the point in full detail here, it should not be forgotten that there are ethical preconditions of knowing. As B.B. Warfield notes, "We must guard, indeed, against supposing that, in Augustine's view, the human mind is passive in the acquisition of knowledge, or that the acquisition of knowledge is unconditioned by the nature or state of the acquiring soul." B. B. Warfield, "Augustine's Doctrine of Knowledge and Authority: First Article," in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. 4: Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 149.

not] so much to themselves as to those over whom they rule."[75] Here we must

remember to maintain the tension of Christians in politics. As Kaufman notes, "Only a

Christian magistrate's exemplary religious devotion, drawing constituents to worship, could

be truly [soterially] advantageous…[However,] Augustine did not propose that that positive

political results were meaningless."[76] The soteriological emphasis of Christianity can be

meaningfully applied and modeled in any political community, and though the ancient

Romans were a noble example, Christianity can appropriate further perception of reality into

the political order.

Christians in War

War must be the final topic of examination here because it is the culminating feature

of the empire that necessarily seeks expansion. Augustine develops the logic of expansion in

war in writing, "Even the wicked wage war only to maintain the peace of their own people.

They wish to make all men their own people, if they can, so that all men and all things might

serve one master."[77] We follow Augustine here in outlining a progression from household,

to city, to the world,[78] though, the world posses a greater challenge for Augustine than mere

empire. "The world, like a gathering of waters, is all the more full of perils by reason of its

greater size."[79] War as expansion is the imperial response to difference and danger.

Difference, in this case particularly the diversity of tongues that does not allow for

community or trust, represents danger and creates the impetus for the empire to remove the

difference in order to remove the danger. Augustine famously declares, "If two men, each

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[75] *DCD* 4.3. *CG.* 147.
[76] Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political*, 112.
[77] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 936.
[78] *DCD* 19.7. *CG.* 928.
[79] *DCD* 19.7. *CG.* 928.

ignorant of the other's language, meet, and are compelled by some necessity not to pass

on but to remain with one another, it is easier for dumb animals, even of different kinds, to

associate together than these men…For when men cannot communicate their thoughts to

each other, they are completely unable to associate with one another despite the similarity of

their natures."[80] The tragedy of this situation, for Augustine, is both that overcoming the

difference of language is accomplished at the great price of human slaughter,[81] and that with

the ultimate expansion of empire there is an even greater risk of social and civil wars, which

are the worse kinds of war.[82] Augustine understood that no lasting peace or happiness ever

came to the Romans from their expansion because it was impossible on the terms by which

it was sought.[83]

Particularly as Christianity became a socially dominant force within the empire and

its administration, war became a particularly vexing issue in need of a resolution because it is

not clear if Christianity has really changed anything. At the most basic level, people will still

be killed in war whether the army is composed of Christians or pagans. Augustine could

have formulated a range of responses to the general issue of war running the spectrum from

pacifism to militarism, and it takes some effort to determine what his fully worked out

position would have looked like. John Neville Figgis, for example, points out that Augustine

casually recommends small, peaceful kingdoms,[84] and takes this to mean that he would have

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[80] *DCD* 19.7. *CG*. 928.
[81] *DCD* 19.7. *CG*. 928.
[82] *DCD* 19.7. *CG*. 929.
[83] "Is it reasonable, is it sensible to boast of the extent and grandeur of empire, when you cannot show that men lived in happiness, as they passed their lives amid the horrors of war, amid the shedding of men's blood – whether the blood of enemies or fellow-citizens…The only joy to be attained had the fragile brilliance of glass, a joy outweighed by the fear that it may be shattered in a moment." *DCD* 4.4. *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, 138.
[84] *DCD* 4.15.

appreciated the League of Nations that was being developed during Figgis' day.[85] The

comic nature of this suggestion in the present reinforces the important point that Augustine

did not work to prohibit warfare. Since he does not categorically rule out war, his criteria for

war demonstrate his implicit frame of mind.

The difficult character of war called for Augustine to make some comments on the

nature and conduct of war that laid the foundations for what has since developed into the

just war tradition. It is problematic, however, to label Augustine as the true origin or

founder of just war theory because he did not set out with this intention and he does not

provide a fully developed theory for explication. Rather, in the course his various polemics

against the Manicheans and pagans he had cause to make some comments on the Christian

view of war and violence. Augustine receives a place of pride within the just war tradition

because he provides incredibly suggestive comments that proved fecund for further

development. We should be mindful, however, that he is engaged in a larger endeavor than

simply justifying the political and moral uses of violence. Instead, his comments are directed

toward a theological polemic and are appropriated into political operation.

In its broadest expression, Augustine's view of war provides two basic tenets that are

implicitly contained in all his statements regarding war. The *City of God* contains the

following indicative example, "If men were always peaceful and just, human affairs would be

happier and all kingdoms would be small, rejoicing in concord with their neighbours. There

would be as many kingdoms among the nations of the world as there are now houses of the

citizens of a city. Hence, waging war and extending their sway over conquered nations may

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[85] John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God'* (Charleston: Forgotten
    Books, 2007), 46.

seem to wicked men to be felicity, but to good men it is seen only as a necessary evil."[86]

First, Christians are implicitly permitted to serve in the military, which necessarily entails an

acceptance and sanction of violent conflict and rules out strict pacifism. Second, while war

is a definite part of human existence, it is an unfortunate necessity and should only be

undertaken for good cause and not simply for territorial expansion or acquisition of wealth.

The first point is fairly uncontroversial in and after Augustine's time – excepting certain

minor dissident groups such as the Amish, Quakers, and various Anabaptists – and only

needs to be remembered as a boundary that marks one limit to the discussion of legitimate

expressions of a consistently Augustinian position. The second point launches the project of

just war in its search for the proper justifications for engaging in limited armed conflict.

Augustine's deliberations originate with the conception that all wars are fought only

for the sake of peace, either to create peace where there is none or to institute a better peace

than reigns at present.[87] Augustine's concern for the justice of war develops from this basic

point toward a conception of what expression of peace should be pursued as true peace and

justice. Augustine's thinking along this line is most succinctly contained in a comment he

makes during his polemic against Faustus the Manichean, "A great deal depends on the

causes for which men undertake wars, and on the authority they have for doing so; for the

natural order which seeks the peace of mankind, ordains that the monarch should have the

power of undertaking war if he thinks it advisable, and that the soldiers should perform their

military duties on behalf of the peace and safety of the community."[88] On the logic of his

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[86] *DCD* 4.15. *CG.* 161.

[87] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 934.

[88] *CFM* 22.75. Augustine, "Reply to Faustus the Manichaean," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4: Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the Donatists,* ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 301.

statement, it is clear that the cause for which a war is engaged in can only be justified if it proceeds from a proper authority working for the sake of peaceful order. Such an expression represents a foundational statement of the just war tradition, but it is less than helpful in determining any unique aspects of Augustine's approach to just war because he is very careful in his works never to expound in detailed descriptions the causes for which men are authorized to wage war. Augustine's awareness of and concern for the prideful state of humanity restrains his enumeration of just causes that would more likely be expropriated by depraved rulers searching for pious cover for their schemes of domination than be helpfully appropriated by just rulers.[89]

Augustine's particular approach to just war is not easily elucidated from his *City of God* alone, and it will be helpful to draw on a wider array of materials from his corpus and their themes. The unique aspect of Augustine's approach to war appears in the stress he places on the sinful state of humanity and its need for redemption. This pastoral concern leads to a distinct conception of just war as corrective military action that is aimed at the heart and soul of the unjust opponent against whom the just power acts in a conflict. Augustine writes:

> What is the evil in war? Is it the death of some who will soon die in any case, that others may live in peaceful subjection? This is mere cowardly dislike, not any religious feeling. The real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like; and it is generally to punish these things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authority, good men undertake wars, when they find themselves in such a position as regards the conduct of human affairs, that right conduct requires them to act, or to make others act in this way.[90]

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[89] Cf. Stevenson, William R., Jr., *Christian Love and Just War: Moral Paradox and Political Life in St. Augustine and his Modern Interpreters* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 42.
[90] *CFM* 22.74. Augustine, "Faustus," 301.

Here he is concerned with the righteousness of the actors on both sides in any conflict, both in the justification for war and in the conduct of any actual campaign. Augustine elsewhere writes, "If it is supposed that God could not enjoin warfare, because in after times it was said by the Lord Jesus Christ, 'I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but if any one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also, (Matt. 5:20)' the answer is, that what is here required is not a bodily action, but an inward disposition. The sacred seat of virtue is the heart."[91] The "inward disposition" that exists in the heart, from which actions originate, is the determinative aspect for evaluating the righteousness of respective actors in conflict. The "inward disposition" of which Augustine speaks does not only pertain for the purpose of responding to an aggressor, but is also determinative for the nature of the aggressor. On Augustine's view of war, it is not the actions of an armed aggressor that motivate the response, but primarily the state of his heart that is manifested through these actions that demands a response.[92] This means that self-defense is not a primary justification for war, but only a secondary issue dependent on the internal motivations from which one party invades and another defends.

John Langen, S.J. evaluates the elements of Augustine's thinking on just war and makes two related observations. He first notes, "The resort to violence that is inherent in war is undertaken, not as a means of self-defense, but as a punitive effort initiated by lawful

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[91] *CFM* 22.76. Ibid.

[92] Herbert Deane is incomplete when he asserts, "[Augustine's] principle argument is that it is our duty to punish evildoers for their sake and for the good of others; we punish them so that we may instill fear into them and into others life them and so keep them from doing further wrong. In acting in this way, we are doing them a service." Wrongdoers are not truly benefited by restraint unless they are thereby transformed. Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 164.

authority."[93] And, he continues, "[Augustine] is really interested in the preservation of a moral order which is fundamentally a right internal order of dispositions and desires and in which the question of whether action is violent or not is not fundamental."[94] The assertive, interventionist nature of Augustine's position might be further supported through certain statements such as, "We…have to do many things, even against the will of people who need to be punished with a certain kind harshness, for we have to consider their benefit rather than their will."[95] On Langen's reading, Augustine is most concerned with the necessity of punishing moral disorder regardless of whether violence was entailed or not. Further, the correction or punishment of moral disorder is not limited to defensive scenarios. Augustine is willing to contemplate the possibility of offensive situations when intervention may be required.[96]

Langen's presentation of Augustine, however, should not stand alone without balance or leaven. He stresses certain provocative statements with the intention of demonstrating that there is no single, easily formulated just war position, and with the hope that a modern just war theory may place greater weight in pacifist arguments than in elements drawn from the Augustine he chooses to picture as the alternative. A balanced appreciation of Augustine's corrective view of warfare would also require an explication of fallible man's relation to the omnipotent God. For a brief formulation we can be satisfied with William Stevenson's cautious warning that, "[We should not] attribute to Augustine a self-righteous, crusading spirit. Because God's plan is known to God alone and because

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[93] John Langan, "The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory," in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1991), 172.

[94] Ibid. 175.

[95] *Ep.* 138.14. Augustine, "Letter 138," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 100-155*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 232.

[96] See Deane, *Political and Social*, 160.

pride is the primary sin, the appropriate attitude for human beings is always one of

humility and forbearance."[97]   Augustine is certainly not gleeful at the prospect that God at

times uses war in his providence.[98]   Augustine states:

> The wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, however, if he remembers that
> he is a human being, he will be much readier to deplore the fact that he is under the
> necessity of waging even just wars…Let everyone, therefore, who reflects with pain
> upon such great evils, upon such horror and cruelty, acknowledge that this is misery.
> And if anyone either endures them or thinks of them without anguish of soul, his
> condition is still more miserable: for he thinks himself happy only because he has
> lost all human feeling.[99]

War is a miserable necessity that is sometimes unavoidable, though in God's providence, it

can be used to correct sinners and bring about repentance and righteousness after its

initiation and conclusion. Only the complete loss of human feeling would make anyone see

it as anything other than a tragic necessity.

While we must be mindful of the need for humans to be humble in their

presumption and operation of war, for our present circumstances it is still important to

focus on the emphasis that Augustine places on punishment in the hopes of conversion,

reconciliation, and repentance as his guiding principle in just war, as well as the implications

that follow. The full outworking of Augustine's conception of just war suggests that the

restoration of moral order and conversion – not personal protection, disarmament, regime

change, or the defense of vital national interests – are the correct motivations for conflict.

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[97] Stevenson, *Christian Love*, 42.

[98] While it is not possible within this space to consider the connection of Augustine's
thoughts on war and his acceptance of the Donatist suppression, it is important to
acknowledge the seriousness of coercion as a counterargument to conversion. In particular,
William Connolly rejects the authoritative moral claims of Augustine's theology as simply the
"hereticization" of difference through universalizing the representation of Augustine's own
confession. William Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality*
(Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993).

[99] *DCD* 19.7. *CG.* 929.

Here it is clear that Augustine has moved from the theological conception of redemption that is accomplished by conversion and he has appropriated this pattern into his justification for armed conflict.

His appropriated notion has, on the one hand, managed to criticize pagan conceptions of war and the desire for expansion, and on the other, he has established a regulating criteria that has been an undercurrent of just war since. The discussion of winning "hearts and minds" in the analysis and debate regarding conflicts from Vietnam to Iraq demonstrates the subtle assumption of conversion,[100] as did America's Cold War policy of containment towards the Soviet Union until their institutions and ideology changed.[101] These contemporary examples are fitting expressions of Augustine's desire to appropriate Christianity's apprehension of reality into the public world of politics and human affairs.

Conclusion

The possibility that through appropriation humanity can recover peace that has been ruptured by human depravity is an astounding notion that must be properly understood because it can be expounded on a range that moves from more limited conceptions to more expansive projects. In the most limited fashion possible, Augustine could be interpreted as suggesting that the political experience of redemption is only possible because human sin has not totally annihilated all traces of man's original state. As such, Augustine could be suggesting that human society can function passably at times. There is certainly a modicum of wisdom in such an interpretation. Augustine himself states that, "No vice is so entirely

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[100] Cf. President Lyndon Johnson's statement, "We must be ready to fight in Viet-Nam, but the ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and the minds of the people who actually live out there." "Remarks at a Dinner Meeting of the Texas Electric Cooperatives, Inc." May 4, 1965. This proverbial "hearts and minds" strategy has been debated regarding military engagements from Vietnam to Iraq.
[101] See Ch. 6 below for further details.

contrary to nature as to destroy even the last vestiges of nature."[102] It would then follow

to reason that enough vestiges of nature survive to guarantee that humans can fulfill

Augustine's definition of human peace; namely, "ordered agreement of mind with mind."[103]

The full context of the quotation reveals that this is too limited of an interpretation.

Augustine writes in full, "Pride is a perverted imitation of God. For pride hates a fellowship

of equality under God, and wishes to impose its own dominion upon its equals, in place of

God's rule. Therefore, it hates the just peace of God, and it loves its own unjust peace; but

it cannot help loving peace of some kind or other. For no vice is so entirely contrary to

nature as to destroy even the last vestiges of nature."[104] All that remains for certain after

humanity turned from God is some part of existence, since "evil has no nature of its own…

it is the absence of good,"[105] and the fundamental longing for peace that accompanies

existence. Augustine holds that, because humanity and all of creation was once at peace with

God, the desire for peace is so fundamental that it cannot be erased. Even the semi-man

(*semihomo*), Cacus mentioned earlier, "for all his monstrous and wild savagery, his aim was

peace."[106] Like Cacus, humans may naturally search for peaceful existence, but in such a

fashion that it cannot be truly found. Therefore, for meaningful peace to exist there must be

something assumed that is more than simply the last vestiges of humanity's creation.

Augustine's suggestion that redemption can be appropriated in the political realm

can also be understood far too expansively. To interpret Augustine's usage of appropriation

too expansively would be to suggest that individual souls could be regenerated as an

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[102] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 936.
[103] *DCD* 19.13. *CG.* 938.
[104] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 936.
[105] *DCD* 11.9. *CG.* 461.
[106] *DCD* 19.12. *CG.* 935.

outcome of a social process. Here, not only would certain social interactions fostered by the political order affect the restraint of depravity, but it would also accomplish the regeneration within individuals. On the face of it, it would seem unlikely that any Augustinian account of politics could ever reach such a point; however, modern Augustinian commentaries are rife with the groundwork for such development. Consider Rowan Williams' defense of Augustine from Hannah Arendt's classically oriented critique. Williams is to be applauded for his sensitive treatment of the true political importance of the soul that is not fully realized before the advent of Christianity,[107] but his explication of Augustine opens an incredibly expansive door. While developing the household as a meaningful political unit, Williams also indicates, "The *civitas* is itself, like the household, ideally a creative and pastoral community, educating the paterfamilias as to his priorities as he educates his own subjects…The commonwealth is, ideally, a pastoral reality, its ruler a director of souls."[108] In allowing the earthly, political *civitas* to serve a pastoral role, Williams is here appropriating a theological operation into the political process and can only be taken to assume that the political order invalidates itself in so far as it does not indicate and maintain the fullest expression of humanity's need for redemption.[109] This account appropriates too much redemption into the political order.[110] The political order requires an aspect of redemption, but not the full theological expression. While we do not want to

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[107] This should not be read to suggest that Greeks knew nothing of the connection of the soul to politics. Socrates clearly states in the *Gorgias* that politics is directed toward the care of the soul. Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, 464B.
[108] Williams, *Christian Love*, 64-65.
[109] "Both the small and the large-scale community are essentially purposive, existing so as to nurture a particular kind of human life." Williams, "Politics and the Soul," 64.
[110] In absolute fairness to Williams, he does not intend the furthest reaches of the argument that can be drawn from his work. However, he seems only capable of reintroducing limited politics through the cultivation of otherworldly attitudes on the part of the earthly rulers.

highlight some of Augustine's more sober political comments as an interpretive key to understanding his writings, he did not write such statements for no reason. We must remember that Augustine also said, "As far as this mortal life is concerned, which is spent and finished in a few days, what difference does it make under what rule a man lives who is soon to die."[111] Interpreting Augustine's appropriation of redemption too broadly would render such a statement meaningless because a social order that can provide for the actual redemption of humanity is a political order that should hold sway across the face of the earth. At the same time, Augustine cannot be read cynically. Though this life is not our final home, we should never be aloof about human suffering because we possess an earthly body. "[Bodies] should not be despised," Augustine writes, because "they are not an ornament, or employed as an external aid; rather, they belong to the very nature of man."[112] As such, peace should be maintained to prevent human suffering and death where possible. As Augustine states elsewhere, "Human peace is so sweet because of the temporal salvation of mortals."[113] In politics, the tension must be held between Augustine's emphasis on the limitations of political accomplishments and the complete neglect of political ameliorations.

The political ameliorations that Augustine intimates are not simply strict moral codes. Augustine insightful points out, "Prohibition only increases the desire for an unlawful act, if righteousness is not so loved that the desire to sin is vanquished by that love; and we cannot love or take delight in true righteousness unless with the aid of divine grace."[114] Charles Cochrane elucidates Augustine's thinking on this point. "The role of the

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[111] *DCD* 5.17. *CG.* 217.
[112] *DCD* 1.13. *CG.* 22.
[113] *Ep.* 189.6. Augustine, "Letter 189," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 156-210*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 261.
[114] *DCD* 13.5. *CG.* 546.

state is purely formal; as such, it can 'reconstruct' or renovate,' but it cannot possibly 'regenerate.' In these terms Augustine marks a sense of the limitations of political action which dissociates him, not merely from the claims of classical idealism, but also from much of the ill-conceived legislative activity undertaken by the nominally Christian empire."[115] Cochrane continues further, "But if Augustine thus emphatically rejects the pretensions of creative [i.e. classical] politics, it is not with a view to setting up a new heresy, comparable with any of the anti-political heresies current in the classical and post-classical world. He is not a Christian cynic, claiming the right to isolate himself either physically or morally or intellectually from the society of his kind."[116] Christians engage politics at all levels of its operation and manifest right order in their appropriation of the need for and possibility of redemption.

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[115] Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 562.
[116] Ibid.

Misappropriation and the Political Order

After developing the idea of appropriation in the work of Augustine, its mirror image, namely misappropriation, also appears and deserves sustained attention. The development of appropriation is not a simple panacea for all that ails the political realm because it carries its own dangers through mistaken endeavors and misapplication. Misappropriation is the ever-present possibility of misconstruing and misapplying a symbol into a realm where it cannot provide representation according to its constituent experiential basis. While the attempted representation is undertaken in good faith that the symbol can authoritatively represent an aspect of reality, it may become evident that the symbol cannot function as it was originally intended. This leads to the malfunctioning and disorder of political institutions and operations that were premised upon correct representation. The idea is evident in such examples as the misappropriation of freedom or personal autonomy into a defense of suicide or drug abuse. In both of these cases, the representative symbols of freedom or autonomy are geared toward human flourishing and have broken down by being applied to situations that corrupt the experience they are meant to represent. Acts of misappropriation need not be limited to individuals, but can also appear in societal actions that can bear severe consequences within the political order at large.

So as to develop misappropriation, is it advisable to follow the same path laid out in the above development of appropriation. We will first investigate the practical manifestation of misappropriation and then working back toward a theoretical account of its existence. Therefore, Augustine's practical recommendations during the Donatist controversy appear first, followed by the theoretical justification for the practical policy, and then the critique of this account.

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Donatist Controversy and Misappropriation

To this point the course of the argument has been fairly limited to the explication of Augustine's implicit development and reliance on appropriation as an interpretation of the *City of God*. This has been relatively straightforward because of the consistency of the *City of God*, but it must be put on hold for a lengthy digression. This is necessary because the methodology of examining Augustine's largely unremarkable practical statements on politics as an outworking of his theological understanding of redemption will remain incomplete without addressing the most provocative practical policy outside of the *City of God*. The *City of God* lacks any definitive evidence of Augustine misappropriating the theology of redemption. The same cannot be said for the entirety of Augustine's work. The specter of Augustine coercing the Donatists haunts his entire corpus.

The Donatist controversy has always presented an obstacle for any substantial interpretation of Augustine that does not wish to partition his work, condemn it, or treat it simply as fitting within the historical conditions of his age. As each of these approaches decreases or eliminates the richness of Augustine as a participant in a meaningful scholarly discourse regarding the persistent questions of humanity, they cannot be recommended. Yet his role and writings in the Donatist controversy cannot be swept under the proverbial rug and neglected by those who wish to present a consistent Augustinian interpretation.

By far the most common approach to the issue is to simply condemn Augustine for providing theoretical ammunition and support for the practice of willful domination. William Connolly's condemnation of Augustine goes so far as to label any attempt to

oppress or suppress a differing identity as the "Augustinian imperative."[1] Connolly

demonstrates the danger posed to the entire Augustinian corpus because of suspicions

aroused against him by his actions towards the Donatists. Connolly reduces Augustine's

Confessions and the outworking of his confession in all his writings to the development of an

identity/order that can be coercively imposed through authoritative confessional practice.[2]

All interpreters must acknowledge that Augustine did consciously sanction and

support the imperial persecution of a religious schism, and, in doing so, laid himself open to

charges of intolerance and authoritarianism in his own generation and through the ages.

Without addressing his position on the imperial involvement and persecution of the

Donatists we cannot in good conscience make any broad judgments on Augustine's work. If

the interpreter wishes to avoid the details of Augustine's relations with the Donatists, he or

she must also avoid the broader details of any of his other polemical works as well. In this

case, the interpreter would be limited to only the influential points that can be lifted out of

their context and applied to the situation of the interpreters choosing. This would entirely

prohibit the exploration of symbols as a representation of their motivating experience.

The interpretive solution to the difficulties presented in the Donatist controversy is

to meet the conflict head on and honestly. It cannot be denied that Augustine did justify

coercion, but the correct interpretive approach is to examine his justification and determine

how it fits within his larger project and if it is consistent there. This is a chief strength of

developing Augustine's appropriation of religious symbols as an interpretive method. It

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[1] William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality*
        (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993).

[2] "Augustine endows his god with [omnipotence, care, and salvation]…When these three
demands are combined…you generate a god who must be the author of an intrinsic moral
order and you have a moral order under powerful pressure to constitute itself restrictively
and coercively." Ibid., 48-49.

allows us to develop the proper representation of theology in politics, as well as provides a ground for critiquing the misappropriation of theology. This allows us to correct Augustine using his own techniques and tools, which should protect him from heightened scholarly suspicion.

The Donatist Controversy and Its History

The basis for the Donatist controversy was not some momentous event or disagreement, but rather the long accumulated development of a minor conflict.[3] During the last sustained Roman persecution of Christianity by the emperor Diocletian in 303-05 some bishops had given into imperial pressure and handed over their copies of scripture to be burned. These bishops literally had committed the offense of "handing over" (*traditio*), and any bishop who did this was accordingly labeled a *traditor*. After the official persecution ended, there was no clear agreement within the church regarding how to handle or reintegrate these bishops. African Christianity in Augustine's era had a particularly strong attachment to the notion of a pure church wherein all members are free from the taint of sin. There was a long tradition of fiery African Christians who had railed against the evils of the "world" before the official conversion of the empire, and this tradition stayed fresh in the people's minds long after Christianity had ceased to be a minority position. The existence of church elders, therefore, who had succumbed to imperial pressure rather than face execution challenged African Christianity's claim to represent a presently complete righteousness and purity.

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[3] For extensive details on the Donatist controversy see William H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); and Geoffrey Grimshaw Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

While there was no universal consensus on these bishops, the common ecclesiastical response within Africa was to assume that any *traditor* must have lost his individual spiritual authority and the power of his ordination since he had valued his present life over witnessing for the faith through facing execution. Since the *traditor* had lost his ordination he must be re-baptized in order to resume his place within the ranks of the purified church. Consequently, anyone baptized or ordained by a *traditor* bishop prior to reintegration also could not be considered a member in the true, pure church because the fallen bishop could not offer what he himself did not possess. It did not occur to the Africans to think of the sacrament as belonging to God and being efficacious by his power, rather than the priest's.

Around 311 the problems of reintegration crystallized in the accusation that Caecilian, the newly appointed bishop of Carthage, had been ordained by a *traditor* and was thus invalidly consecrated. A group of strict bishops ordained Majorinus as a rival bishop, who in turn was soon succeeded by the bishop Donatus, from whom the group eventually took its name. Caecilian resisted the attempt to displace him and refused to give way, as there was only a very weak case to be made against his ordination. The existence of two rival bishops created a further division as each bishop received adherents and support from other bishops. Eventually the dispute had created two distinct parties within the whole African church, the party of Donatus, and the party of Caecilian.

The Donatist controversy demonstrates the engagement of Christianity with the political order both in a practical and a theoretical manner. Practically speaking, the Donatist controversy connects to political questions through the intervention of Christian emperors.

Less immediately obvious is the important theoretical question of Christianity's relation

and interaction with the world at large presented by the Donatists' notion of purity.

Practically, the issue of "pure" lines of ordination was not as acutely felt outside of

Africa, and only when the emperor Constantine himself became Christian and his successors

followed suit would the matter command widespread public interest. After a series of

ecclesiastical conferences and councils without resolution, the Donatist party made the initial

request for imperial intercession to adjudicate between the parties.[4] As a Christian, the

emperor could not help but take an interest in this controversy, even though rooted in

distant territory, because he wanted to patronize a solidly unified institution. Imperial

involvement in the dispute through official imperial agents and arbitrators makes the

controversy immediately relevant for political analysis.

Imperial intervention on the basis of the emperor's professed adherence to

Christianity also sharpened the theological problem presented in the idea of the church as a

pure and holy entity. "What was at stake," Markus notes, "was the right way of conceiving

the Church and of representing it in relation to the world."[5] The notion of purity suggested

by the party of Donatus was so rigid it commanded complete separation from any sources of

impurity, whether of nominal Christianity or political society at large. While Christianity has

always interpreted exhortations such as, "Do not be conformed to this world,"[6] to mandate a

general separation from the pervasively depraved condition of the sinful world, the

Donatists stretched this notion to new lengths. According to the *pars Donati*, the church was

a gathering of those who had already achieved holiness, not a place for the realization and

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[4] F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian
    Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 79-80.
[5] Markus, *Saeculum*, 112.
[6] Romans 12:2

growth of individual righteousness. The Donatist concept of purity, therefore, called into question whether or not the Church could be open to interacting with society that can never be entirely holy. By refusing connection or interaction with any elements of imperfection, the Donatists were suggesting an isolated church that would have no possibilities to serve as a formative presence in history. As Markus suggests, "[The Donatist's] narrow, exclusive and self-contained world was too small for Augustine," and necessitated his opposition because "[Augustine's] Church could be nothing other than the one Church spread over the earth."[7]

When the imperial representative sent to arbitrate between the two parties could find no compelling reason for Caecilian not to be recognized as the proper bishop rightly ordained to the Carthaginian see, the course toward irreconcilable conflict was unavoidable. The Donatists refused to accept the decision and resisted Catholic and imperial efforts to move forward as one unified Church. When the Donatists would not freely and peacefully renounce their position against the Catholic party and accept the decision of the imperial arbitrator, imperial officials began to actively and physically coerce and suppress the Donatist party following a pattern that had been adopted for the suppression of pagan religion and worship. The Donatists, however, were the definite majority position in Africa and enjoyed widespread public support, particularly in the rural areas, while the Catholics and imperial supporters held the minority position in localities that were not Romanized urban centers.

The Donatists could not be as easily and consistently suppressed as the pagans had been. Strong obstacles – such as simple numerical concerns and the reasonable Donatist

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[7] Ibid.

claim that Christians should not persecute other Christians – prevented the enactment

and enforcement of a legal solution to the disagreement. The playing field was clearly tipped

in favor of the Donatist because their entire support was locally rooted and passionate, while

the Catholics in Africa had only the distance and formal support of the Empire. Each side

was confident of its own eventual victory, and so easily drifted into irreconcilable

opposition.[8] The Donatists were quite happy to withdraw themselves and wait for their

supposedly eventual vindication.

The arguments for the suppression of the pagan cults had gained widespread

acceptance because they could be conducted on the level of denying that the empire should

sanction pagan institutions or practices on the grounds that this was impious since they were

wholly different and opposed to Christianity. The same logic did not naturally extend to

others who professed themselves to be Christian. Augustine notes, "Who of us and who of

you [Donatists] do not praise the laws passed by the emperors against the sacrifices of the

pagans?...The wickedness of [the Donatists] may, of course, surpass idolatry. But since it is

not easy to prove them guilty, for this evil lies hidden in the heart, you are all restrained with

a milder severity, like people who are not extremely distant from us."[9] Certainly the

Donatists and the Caecilians shared the same liturgy and sacraments. Only with the

doctrinal development of rebaptism did the two sides disagree on the forms of religion.

Hence, as Peter Brown writes:

> Augustine may be the first theorist of the Inquisition; but he was in no position to be
> a Grand Inquisitor. For unlike a bishop of the Middle Ages, he was not bent on
> maintaining the status quo in a totally Christian society. He was faced not by small

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[8] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 210.

[9] *Ep.* 93.10. Augustine, "Letter 93," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 1-99*, ed. John Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 383.

sects, feared and hated by the whole community, but by a body of Christians as large as his own congregation, and in many ways very similar to it. Thus, for Augustine, religious coercion remained a genuinely corrective treatment: it was a brusque way of winning over 'hardened' rivals, rather than an attempt to stamp out a small minority.[10]

The differences between the context justifying suppression of paganism and the context hindering its easy application to the Donatist controversy made the situation more vexing. The situation, however, did demand speedy resolution.

For perspective, it is important to remember that the controversy did not simply exist as a theoretical argument within the Christian community. The conflict actually entailed sporadic violence and the constant threat of violence. The Catholics were the first to engage in and condone physical coercion after imperial officials ruled in their favor.[11] An imperial commissioner in 347 sought to end the conflict by frightening the Donatists into submission. His measures were violent, but brief because during the short reign of the pagan emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) the Donatists were given imperial toleration.[12] Julian wished to weaken the stability and disrupt the spread of Christianity, and saw toleration for Donatism as way to harass the Catholic Church. During these years the Catholics were without protection and themselves felt the pains of persecution.

Outside the official acts of persecution there was also a great deal of violence committed by the general population. The similarities between the extremism of Donatism and modern-day religious violence more than justifies using the anachronistic appellation of "terrorism" for the actions of some Donatists in Augustine's day. Both parties in this controversy had utilized violence at various times, but the nature of this violence within each

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[10] Brown, *Augustine,* 236.
[11] Ibid., 210.
[12] Ibid., 211.

groups thinking can be distinguished. Whereas, for the Catholics, violence was largely a

pragmatic practical matter, for the Donatists it arose from a more fundamental conviction.

Donatist thinking naturally lent itself to violence because of their understanding of ritual

group purity. While in externals and ritual the Donatists and Catholics were nearly

indistinguishable, the Donatists refused any affiliation or interaction with Catholics. The

Donatists adopted a sort of Old Testament attitude towards maintaining the "Law." As

Brown notes, "The feeling of having defended something precious, of preserving a 'Law'

that had maintained the identity of a group in a hostile world, these are potent emotions."[13]

Following a Jewish notion of "uncleanness," and out of fear of losing God's favor, they

adopted a separatist mentality coupled with a desire for "purification." Such an attitude

turned into an ideology of active, physical destruction aimed at the Catholic opposition by

extremists. "Like a late Roman version of *Billy Budd*, this communal desire for purity

appears to have resulted in violent acts, intended to cleanse the impure Catholics whom they

saw polluted by the world."[14] The Donatist extremists demonstrate what Eric Voegelin has

termed "pneumopathology," the "condition of a thinker who, in his revolt against the world

as it has been created…arbitrarily omits an element of reality in order to create the fantasy of

a new world."[15] This sickness of the soul moves from the denial of fundamental aspects of

reality and the construction of a "second reality" to the authorization and requirement that

the individual fight to live within his fantasy and transform the mundane reality for others as

well. Peter Kaufman provides an example of this from the imprisoned Donatist martyr

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[13] Ibid., 213.

[14] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 230.

[15] Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism: Two Essays* in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 5, Modernity Without Restraint*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 306.

Isaac, "He reported…a vision in which he soundly thrashed 'assistants to the emperor,' whom he called 'assistants of wickedness.' An enraged emperor then grappled with him until he clawed an eye from its imperial socket."[16] Here the Donatist is so confident of his own purity and self-righteousness that he is permitted to commit violent acts against those who are not as righteous as himself. No thought is given to limitations or constraints upon the exercise of his personal will because actions undertaken in the name of Donatism will always be right.

Theologically, the pneumopathology of the Donatists manifests itself in the dominance of pride over humility. As Dodaro states, "Given the absoluteness with which the Donatist church assesses its possession of justice, it is incapable of practising true penitence and reconciliation."[17] Since the Donatists hold that their already achieved holiness is the basis for their membership in the church, there is no place for forgiveness within the church. Paradoxically, the Donatist theory necessitates that one become righteous prior to joining the church, which calls into question what the church does in the life of individual believers or the present historical reality.

Peter Brown further elaborates on this theological problem in Donatism, "The Donatist church was a group on the defensive: it was immobilized by anxiety to preserve its identity. The Church, a Donatist bishop had said, was like the Ark of Noah. It was well-tarred inside and out. It was watertight: it kept within itself the good water of baptism; it had kept out the defiling waters of the world."[18] The *pars Donati* essentially claim that they

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[16] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 99.

[17] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 201.

[18] Brown, *Augustine*, 216.

represent the eschatological nature of the church within the bounds of immanent reality. They claim to already possess the final separation of humanity in judgment, and they base their actions on their ability to fully represent this reality. Therefore, they are themselves attempting to appropriate their theological understanding of the church, but, because it is impossible to bring eschatological finality into the present reality, their actions necessarily derail in misappropriation.

This pneumopathology and misappropriation were clearly endemic in both Donatist clergy and their communities at large. The violence of the *pars Donati* was not limited to isolated individuals. The main expression of Donatist violence came from bands of club-carrying countryside ruffians known as Circumcellions – from the Latin *cellas circumientes rusticorum* for their practice of encircling secluded farms and country parishes and falling upon them. These mobs were loosely associated with Donatist clerical hierarchy, but clearly committed to the Donatist movement.[19] These strong-arm squads would plunder supplies, burn or deface churches, and, equally troubling, because the empire represented support for the Catholics they would destroy records of financial contracts and documents of those leading citizens or local officials who were closely connected with the empire.

Augustine's attitude toward coercion cannot be taken as triumphant or whitewashing. Throughout the controversy he will constantly seek to maintain the tension between prompting government officials to carry out and effectively enforce the empire's religious laws and rulings as well as restraining officials from excessive measures motivated for their own personal aims or gains. Addressing the criticisms sent from the Donatist bishop Emeritus regarding excessive government punishments, Augustine writes, "If some

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[19] Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 82-83.

of [those adhered to our party] do…action without Christian moderation, we are

displeased."[20] John von Heyking notes, "He wanted the authorities to enforce most of the

imperial laws, but tried, often vainly, to make them stop short of capital punishment

(permitted by law) and other excessive violent punishments."[21] In this, Augustine is working

against the "primitive, Roman horror of 'sacrilege'"[22] that would automatically invoke the

death penalty for a range of Donatist offenses committed against Catholics. Augustine is at

pains to point out to Donatists that excessive punishments are not Catholic policy. He

states, "We also instruct our lay people, as much as we can, that they should hold them

uninjured and bring them to us to be rebuked and instructed."[23] The excessive punishment

that Augustine is generally worried about is the indiscriminate application of the death

penalty, which must have been fairly common to warrant Augustine's instruction against the

practice.

Augustine opposes the death penalty for Donatists on religious and practical

grounds. On religious grounds, he does not support the death penalty for Donatists because

it prohibits the possibility of repentance.[24] The conclusive nature of death will not allow

restoration of unity for those who are suffering the punishment in the first place because

they are outside of the unity of the church. Augustine also has to be very careful practically

about the use of the death penalty even for those Donatists who may rightly deserve it

because these individuals will be immortalized as martyrs. Donatists already claimed

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[20] *Ep.* 87.8. Augustine, "Letter 87," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 1-99*, ed. John
       Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 349.

[21] von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics,* 240.

[22] Brown, *Augustine*, 238.

[23] *Ep.* 88.9. Augustine, "Letter 88," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 1-99*, ed. John
       Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 357.

[24] Brown, *Augustine*, 238, citing *Ep.* 153.18.

authority for their principles in their appeal to the Christian tradition's history of receiving persecution. Frequent use of the death penalty would only create the problem of more appeal for the Donatists and limit Augustine's ability to highlight the murder of faithful Catholics by Donatist terrorists.

Details of Augustine's Justification

It is important to first note that Augustine actually did feel the need to provide a justification for coercion. John Bowlin observes, "It is this reason-giving enterprise, this attempt to make sense of a practice that most of his contemporaries consider morally unproblematic, that distinguishes Augustine, not his participation in this or that persecution."[25] As Augustine indicates, he was initially opposed to the Theodosian edicts that persecuted heretics and schismatics. "My opinion originally was that no one should be forced to the unity of Christ, but that we should act with words, fight with arguments, and conquer by reason. Otherwise, we might have as false Catholics those whom we had known to be obvious heretics."[26] Augustine claimed to have been concerned that coercion would lead to feigned conversions that would fill the Catholic Church with individuals not committed to its corporate life. When he changed his mind, he could have simply grown silent on the subject and tacitly ceded to the authority of the state to use its judicial machinery in this fashion. However, Augustine chose to make a forceful defense of the coercion that was already being applied to the Donatists. He is thus forced to answer explicitly for his changed outlook and respond to the charge that it is un-Christian to coerce fellow believers. It is from this justification that we can develop the lines of his thinking and

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[25] John Bowlin, "Augustine on Justifying Coercion," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 17 (1997), 53.
[26] *Ep.* 93.17. Augustine. "Letter 93," 387.

notice that his reasoning depends on the attempt to appropriate redemption into political practice.

Augustine most clearly spells out his reason for sanctioning the imperial actions against the Donatists in *Epistle 93*, which is a letter addressed to Vincent, a minor bishop only partially aligned with the Donatist party. It is commonly pointed out that Augustine here provides "the only full justification, in the history of the Early Church, of the right of the state to suppress non-Catholics,"[27] but commentators are too often satisfied with noting his justification rather than investigating it. No amount of exegesis (or isogesis) will render Augustine's argument palatable, but expounding the details assist us in finding where Augustine goes wrong and how he might be corrected without derailing the entire Augustinian project. In *Epistle 93*, Augustine elaborates four important points justifying his newfound position on coercion. The first two represent a practical approach; the other two are theoretical justifications.

It is tempting to lavish attention on his suggestion that imperial coercion is fitting because it fulfills the biblical promise that kings would serve God.[28] However, I do not consider this an important point of his argument. Augustine does seem to hold that verses such as Psalm 2:10-11 – "Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" – have been fulfilled in his own day and age. This, however, is not as important a point of the argument as it may appear at first glance because, as Markus has quite convincingly stated, by this time Augustine had abandoned any Eusebian assumptions that the Roman empire was a key part of the divine plan to bring salvation or enthusiasm for the "idea of an old pagan world rejuvenated by

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[27] Brown, *Augustine*, 231.

[28] *Ep.* 93.3. Augustine, "Letter 93," 379.

Christ be[ing] translated into political terms as the christianised Roman Empire of the fourth century, particularly of the Theodosian 'establishment.'"[29]   As such, Augustine's promotion of imperial service favoring Christianity is not meant to be theoretically expanded beyond practical details and support. Including the conversion of kings or rulers into his discussion of coercion only clouds wider interpretation of his argument.

As noted above, Augustine initially resisted the notion that Donatists should be coerced into Catholic churches on the grounds that the Catholics would be forced to deal with the problem of feigned conversions. In contrast to his initial fear, he claims that he was first caused to reconsider the issue of coercion by the practical success of the policy. He declares, "Ought I to have begrudged salvation to these people and called my colleagues back from such fatherly care, as a result of which we see many blame their former blindness?"[30] Augustine cannot contradict the fact that multitudes seem to have faithfully converted after their forced entry into the Catholic fold, and they may not have come in without the external impetus. He continues, "We rejoice over the correction of many who so sincerely hold and defend the Catholic unity and are happy that they have been set free from their former error so that we look upon them with great satisfaction. Given their former force of habit they would, nonetheless, by no means have been changed for the better, if they were not struck with this fear and turned their worried mind to a consideration of the truth."[31] Augustine suggests that many individuals were reached on a practical level by the external pressure. Perhaps they had never been fully confronted by the matter being in

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[29] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 22-23.

[30] *Ep.* 93.1. Augustine, "Letter 93," 378.

[31] *Ep.* 93.1. Augustine, "Letter 93," 377.

"sluggish sleepiness,"[32] or they already agreed with the Catholics, but were held in their former state by "tradition of [their] parents."[33]

He provides further practical impetus for coercion in finding biblical warrants for such actions, "You think that no one ought to be forced into righteousness, though you read that the head of the household said to his servants, 'Whomever you find, force them to come in' (Luke 14:23), though you read that…Paul was forced to come to know and to hold onto the truth by the great violence of Christ who compelled him."[34] Augustine reasons that since God has had occasion to work forcefully upon certain individuals for their conversion, church officials cannot shy away from or outright deny coercion as a tool of discipline without impinging upon God's divine prerogative.

The practical features of Augustine's defense do not elucidate the intellectual justification for the operation of coercion. Augustine must move from the practical success and biblical warrant for the policy to a theoretical argument to explain its effectiveness. This largely consists of developing the logic that he thinks underlies the biblical citation for compunction. He supports compunction because he understands that human decisions can be conditioned by myriad factors. This appears first in the form of habit, which he identifies at various times as, "the force of habit," the "grave disease of…long-standing apathy," and "the former burden of their destructive activity."[35] Augustine speaks of habits as affecting individuals both internally and externally, and preventing them from changing. Individuals can have mental habits or accepted modes of thought that keep them for considering the truth that is opposed to their errors. They can also have external conditions or habits that

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[32] *Ep.* 93.2. Augustine, "Letter 93," 378.
[33] *Ep.* 93.2. Augustine, "Letter 93," 378.
[34] *Ep.* 93.5. Augustine, "Letter 93," 380. Cf. also *Ep.* 173 and *Ep.* 408.
[35] *Ep.* 93.1-2. Augustine, "Letter 93," 377-78.

control their environment and protect them from new experiences. Breaking the bonds

of habit is crucial to transformation; however, it is not the entire matter.

Chiefly, Augustine's argument rests on his understanding of divine action. Just as

external and internal pressures affect human decisions, divine operations can also affect

human decisions. Immediately after his infamous application of "compel them to come in,"

he reminds Vincent of Jesus' words, "'No one comes to me unless the Father has drawn him

(John 6:44).' This takes place in the hearts of all who turn to him out of fear of God's

wrath."[36] Breaking the bonds of habit is not the definitive action, but a first step toward the

greater divine work of redemption. Augustine declares, "I do not say that a person can be

good against his will. I say, however, that by fearing what he does not want to suffer, he

abandons the stubbornness that holds him back or is compelled to recognize the truth he

had not known. Thus out of fear he either rejects the error for which he was fighting or

seeks the truth that he did not know, and he now willingly holds what he did not want to

hold."[37] Peter Brown explains Augustine's thinking, "The final, individual act of choice must

be spontaneous; but this act of choice could be prepared by a long process, which men did

not necessarily choose for themselves, but which was often imposed on them, against their

will, by God."[38] Coercion or compunction is not meant to do away with the divine initiative,

but to guide men along the right path or toward this divine confrontation.

After handling the intersection of habits and divine action, Augustine offers an

approach to evaluating external compunction. The Donatists have accused Catholics of

acting in an un-Christian manner by coercing other professed Christians. Donatists readily

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[36] *Ep.* 93.5. Augustine, "Letter 93," 380.
[37] *Ep.* 93.16. Augustine, "Letter 93," 387.
[38] Brown, *Augustine*, 232.

identify themselves with martyrdom and represent Christianity as the body that always

receives persecution, never gives it. Augustine must defeat the great rhetorical strength of

this position within his own North African context. He uses the biblical examples of Sarah

punishing Hagar and Paul ordering an excommunication in the Corinthian church as

examples of severe correction by faithful Christians.[39] He then develops his distinction for

evaluating severe actions, "Since the good and the evil do the same things and suffer the

same things, they must be distinguished, not by their actions and punishments, but by their

motives. Pharaoh wore down the people of God with hard labor; Moses punished with hard

chastisements the same people when they acted sinfully. What they did was similar, but they

did not similarly will to do good."[40] Augustine will not rule out any given action by

definition, but insists that a good or bad will, which is dependent on being in accord with the

divine will, determines the "merits of the agent."[41] A righteous actor cannot, therefore, be

blamed simply on the basis of the severity of the actions.[42] The righteous agent does not

violate the biblical injunction upon returning evil for evil,[43] but rather desires the recipient's

greater happiness and welfare that will come through conversion.

In both of his theoretical points Augustine depends on divine action for the final

operation and validity of any coercive measures. Here, as with his earlier notions of

Christians affecting politics, we can observe Augustine's dependence on the existence and

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[39] See Genesis 21: 9-14 and 1 Corinthians 5:5.

[40] *Ep.* 93.6. Augustine, "Letter 93," 380-81.

[41] *Ep.* 93.6. Augustine, "Letter 93," 381.

[42] Augustine will make a similar point about chastisements of a father compared with the "caresses" of a kidnapper when he expounds his famous aphorism in the *Seventh Homily on the First Epistle of John*: "Love, and do what thou wilt." *IoEp.* 7.8. Augustine, "Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7: Gospel of John, First Epistle of John, and Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 504.

[43] 1 Peter 3:9

representation of redemption for the policies he advocates. This feature has been

missed in a broad array of commentaries and critiques of Augustine's involvement with the

Donatists.

Common Approaches to Donatist Controversy

This simple overview of Augustine's arguments for coercion can hardly be satisfying

for any commentators. Even an appreciative admirer such as Herbert Deane indicates that

Augustine's view of religious coercion involves him in a serious inconsistency unless the

matters are "considered on the formal or verbal level." He continues, "When, however, we

seek to move beyond or beneath this formal level of analysis, we can hardly avoid the

conclusion that Augustine's general attitude toward the State does conflict in a fundamental

way with his final position of approval of the use of political and legal weapons to punish

religious dissidence."[44] The easiest option for responding to Augustine's work – and that

which is most commonly practiced – is to broadly criticize his efforts. Augustine's

proponents are placed in the position of dealing with his approach to the Donatist

controversy in a way that does not scuttle the entire Augustinian project. Since yet another

condemnation of Augustine's justification of persecution is not needed, the most

provocative approach is to attempt a charitable reading of his position that allows the

interpreter to shift the understanding of the situation and either distinguish it from

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[44] Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 219. Cf. Deane's realist revision, "When he tells a Christian ruler or magistrate that he ought to use his power not only to secure peace and prosperity for the people but also to promote and foster true religion and piety among them, he is reminding him of his duties as a Christian who is seeking to win eternal salvation – he is not discussing what a state must do if it is to be a state, nor is he advising the ruler to neglect the fundamental functions of the political and legal order." Ibid., 133.

Augustine's larger project, or to offer an approach that does not necessitate accepting his coercive conclusion.

R.A. Markus is forced to handle Augustine's treatment of the Donatists with some care because it disturbs his interpretation of Augustine as a great proto-secularist. Markus writes, "His statements on the duties of Christian rulers to enforce orthodoxy, above all his notorious defense of religious coercion with the aid of the Gospel text 'Compel them to come in' (Luke 14:23) have earned Augustine the reputation of being the first theorist of the Inquisition."[45] Markus does not think that "a man with Augustine's acute self-knowledge and reflectiveness"[46] is capable of unthinkingly accepting and supporting the position of coercion that would contradict the entire breadth of his thinking; so he is forced to come to terms with and reconcile Augustine's position on coercion. Markus' own interpretation of Augustine is particularly in danger here because the support of persecution would seem fully consistent with the attitude that the Roman Empire was the necessary next development of God's sacred plan to bring redemption to earth. Markus has already labored at great lengths to demonstrate that Augustine abandoned such triumphalist thinking, and so must develop Augustine' rationale in such a way that it connects with the main lines of Markus' interpretation.

Markus seeks to correlate his interpretation of "theology of the *saeculum*" with religious persecution by developing two separate components of Augustine's argument for coercion. First, coercion was a "pastoral strategy"[47] of disciplining the church body. Sinners are in need of correction, and those who truly care for their souls must be more concerned

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[45] Markus, *Saeculum*, 134.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 140.

with their ultimate salvation than squeamishly concerned about the severity of the measures. Augustine's argument here is entirely different from that involving anti-pagan measures because Donatists actually claim to be Christians. Markus writes, "Coercing schismatics was, in a sense in which coercing pagans could never be, part of the Church's pastoral activity among its own flock."[48] This allows Augustine to distinguish between a general justification of coercion that could be applied to any set of general circumstances and a specific argument for discipline that seeks to prevent Donatists from adopting the mantle of martyrs.

Second, he is able to not notice contradictions that arise within his thinking on coercion because of the habit of thinking of Christian rulers as members of the church, rather than as rulers of the political system. Markus would emphasize a statement such as: "You stir [imperial officials] up against yourselves, for you have dared to tear apart you're your schism the Church of which they are members."[49] He explains, "Neither in his dealings with imperial officials nor in his writings in defense of religious coercion did he even consider Christian rulers and civil servants as parts of a government machinery, of the 'state.' He thought of them as members of the Church."[50] Markus continues, "When Augustine defends the exercise of coercive power by the secular authority in the religious sphere, he always does so in a vocabulary of persons rather than of institutions."[51] Thus for Markus, though Augustine should be viewed as the first, true "pluralist," his thinking paradoxically leads him to sanction governmental persecution exactly because the "desacralisation of the

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[48] Ibid., 142.

[49] *Ep.* 87.8. Augustine, "Letter 87" in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Letters 1-99*, ed. John Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 348.

[50] Markus, *Saeculum*, 148.

[51] Ibid., 149.

Roman Empire" "disguised from Augustine this divergence"[52] from the main lines of his thinking. Markus, therefore, thinks that Augustine's proto-pluralist insights can be saved and coercion abandoned by simply ceasing the correlation of imperial officials with church membership.

Von Heyking is another scholar forced to explain Augustine's acceptance of religious persecution because his justification would seems to invalidate his overall interpretation of Augustine as a classical right-by-nature thinker. Any form of persecution as it is commonly understood as directed toward a strictly religious group on the basis of its beliefs is incompatible with a right-by-nature approach. In von Heyking's case, his interpretation of Augustine has depended on distinguishing Augustine's harsh rhetoric from his underlying principles. In the case of coercion, it would seem that Augustine's rhetoric is not merely heated words covering tolerance and moderation, but truly active assaults in both word and deed.

In that von Heyking is arguing for a right-by-nature interpretation of Augustine, he must find right-by-nature roots in the justification of coercion. Hence, for von Heyking, Augustine's sanction of the empire's coercive measures against the Donatists is necessitated for the preservation of order and safety.[53] He places great emphasis on the disruption caused by Donatists and depends on such comments from Augustine as: "These people…were…our fierce enemies…attacking our peace and quiet with various sorts of

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[52] Ibid., 151.

[53] Here von Heyking must work against the current of W.H.C. Frend as well as Peter Brown who notes, "The Donatists were not hostile to the State; they just thought they could ignore it in what mattered most, in the preservation of an untainted Divine Law." Brown, *Augustine*, 235.

violence and ambushes."[54] Von Heyking holds that, "Augustine justified coercion

inasmuch as he saw it as a last resort for a sect that expressed its principles through violence.

His general principles do not necessitate coercion."[55] Had the Donatists merely represented

a peaceful movement of protest and separation there would be no cause for persecuting

them. However, von Heyking states that, "Augustine thought the Donatist beliefs

undermined the physical security of the empire."[56] Since they were inextricably connected

with Circumcellion gangs of thugs and terrorists, they are not truly persecuted, so much as

restrained by the natural requirements of political order. Von Heyking would seem to agree

that there is also a pastoral impetus for Augustine's thinking,[57] but that his primary

motivation comes from the fundamental need to preserve order within the polity.

Critique of These Approaches

Both Markus and von Heyking are shortsighted in their treatments of the Donatist

controversy because both shortchange the theological basis of Augustine's justification of

coercing the Donatists. Throughout Markus' work he has shown himself incapable of

comprehending any theological discussion that is not strictly enclosed within ecclesiology.

Therefore, his discussion of coercion can only be conducted in a context of discipline within

the congregational body. Markus' approach does not need to be superficial, but because his

ecclesiological approach never delves into the soteriological basis that underlies all

ecclesiology, he is unable to offer a persuasive interpretation of Augustine's activities against

the Donatists.

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[54] *Ep.* 93.2. Augustine, "Letter 93," 378.

[55] von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics*, 222.

[56] Ibid., 223.

[57] "Augustine's view is that coercion takes the form of demonstrating to the heretic the insufficiency of [the] proximate good [that the heretic loves], while acknowledging that the proximate good intimates or shares in the highest good." Ibid.

More strikingly, von Heyking resists any substantive theological discussion within his work, choosing to only handle the *City of God* without reference to the larger themes of the Pelagian controversy that is overlapping and influencing Augustine's mind during the time he is writing. Von Heyking's right-by-nature approach makes Augustine seem like a perfectly innocent and upright supporter of law and order rather than acknowledging the fundamental theological issues of persecution. While highlighting Augustine's concern for limitations of disorder and violence, von Heyking glosses over statements in *Epistle 93* such as: "But with regard to yourselves, who…also are specifically called Rogatists after Rogatus, you certainly seem to us less fierce since you do not run wild with the savage bands of circumcellions, but no wild animal is called tame if it injures no one because it lacks teeth or claws. You say that you do not want to act savagely; I suspect that you cannot."[58] Here Augustine explicitly disavows that coercion is only needed to protect against manifest public disturbances. Hence, any interpretation which does not handle and correct Augustine's underlying theological reflections can neither be faithfully to his thinking nor satisfying to contemporary proponents.

True Theological Basis

To his credit, Peter Brown approaches the fundamental theological rationale for Augustine's position, though he does not seem to perceive the full significance. Commenting on Augustine's transition from opposing governmental coercion to its promotion, Peter Brown provides a summation of Augustine's arguments, "He had to absorb communities of reluctant Donatists: but he could reassure himself with the belief, that God's grace was able to bring about a change of heart even in men who had been

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[58] *Ep.* 93.11. Augustine, "Letter 93," 383.

forced into the Catholic Church. He would, therefore, leave the problem of feigned

conversions to God…to object to Catholic policy because it provoked such feigned

conversions became…tantamount to denying the 'Power of God.'"[59] Markus attempts to

follow the same path that Brown has marked out, but with fewer nuances. Markus notes,

"His confidence in his ability, and that of his congregations, to cope with 'corrected' sinners,

pagans and schismatics in large numbers overcame his reluctance to sanction large-scale

coercion."[60] Both analyses of Augustine's position are lacking in their focus on "absorption"

themes without the necessary depth. Augustine had initially opposed coercion because of

his fear of feigned conversion, but the vocabulary of "absorption"[61] is a particularly vexing

expression because it seems to indicate a problem on the level of culture, habit, or practice.

The suggestion seems to be that rustic, former Donatists would gall Augustine's urbane

congregation. In point of fact, behind these practical statements are the more profound

understanding that conversion is a divine act that humans experience and which transforms

them. He had worried that physically forcing individuals to attend church and perform

certain actions would mask the necessity of conversion and redemption that are first

accomplished interiorly by divine initiative.

Augustine claims that his mind was changed when he witnessed the great success of

Donatist lay people settling into Catholic churches when forced to do so, and their gratitude

for being corrected. Augustine mistakenly accepts coercion because he is confident he has

clearly perceived that God has accomplished the interior acts of transformation. He

understands success as divine approbation, since no one can be converted without a divine

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[59] Brown, *Augustine*, 231.
[60] Markus, *Saeculum*, 141.
[61] Cf. Brown, *Augustine*, 220, 231.

working. Further, he assumes that he and his fellow bishops are able to handle, operate, or participate in the divine correction of these poor sinners through their sanctioning of coercive imperial acts.

Augustine's views on coercing Donatists are an attempt to appropriate divine action of redemption to the human purposes at hand. After citing a long string of examples of God correcting his people, Augustine clearly intends appropriation when he declares, "Let us also love our enemies because this is just and God commanded it…But just as we praise his gifts, so let us bear in mind his scourges upon those whom he loves."[62] Here Augustine is not suggesting humility for believers because God works to correct his people; he is rather thinking that Christians should be lovingly severe to others because God has worked that way to transform their lives and they may appropriate this for their own actions. As such, his practical decisions and theoretical justifications seek to create a representative experience for the conversion of Donatists.

Misappropriation Derails Theological Symbols

In choosing to sanction the imperial persecution of the Donatists, Augustine intends to be moving along the same path that was outlined for appropriating theology; however, it is necessary to disabuse readers of this conception. Redemption underlies all of Augustine's thinking about the Donatists, but he has not correctly appropriated the symbol because he cannot artificially create through representation the experience that prompts the symbol. Augustine is attempting to appropriate redemption into the actions of governmental officials and his fellow bishops, but he manages only misappropriation because his efforts in the earthly realm fundamentally transforms the symbols that he bases his actions upon. Notice

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[62] *Ep.* 93.4. Augustine, "Letter 93," 379-80.

Augustine's comments on the ability of coercive actions to break long-standing habits: "If they learned something and were not frightened, they would be lazy about moving to take the path of salvation."[63] He continues further, "When the doctrine of salvation is combined with a beneficial fear, not only so that the light of truth drives out the darkness of error, but also so that the force of fear breaks the chains of bad habit, we rejoice."[64] His fundamental mistake is his inclusion of human action within the necessary conditions of a divine operation, which makes the one automatically follow the other. Without the intervention that Augustine has authorized, he seems to suppose that God's efforts would be delayed or frustrated. Further, it is assumed that human action can prompt divine action in a mechanistic fashion. Rather than remain firm on the sufficiency of conversion, Augustine desires to help the situation along.

Augustine seems to recognize part of the difficulty with this way of thinking, but it does not stop him from continuing on his path. He writes, "When they were given reasons and the truth was shown to them by the testimonies of God, many replied to us that they desired to pass over into communion of the Catholic Church, but feared the violent hostilities of the wicked. They, of course, ought to have scorned these hostilities for the sake of righteousness and eternal life, but we must support and not despair over the weakness of such persons."[65] He makes the faulty assumption that just because people who have been forced to enter the communion of the Catholic Church are converted, that they must have been converted by their entry, rather than in spite of their coercion. As a singularly divine initiative, conversion should not be held to include conditions that are

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[63] *Ep.* 93.3. Augustine, "Letter 93," 379.
[64] *Ep.* 93.3. Augustine, "Letter 93," 379.
[65] *Ep.* 93.3. Augustine, "Letter 93," 379.

operable by non-divine actors external to the individual. Augustine's own conversion

experience should be indicative for general details. Augustine was informed of the details

and provisions of Christian doctrine and theology, but was held in check by some internal

block that manifested itself in his unchanged attitude and habitual actions. He did receive

something of an external impetus in the sing-song admonition *tolle lege*, which prompted his

providential reading of Romans 13:13-14, but the external factors were not definitive and

most definitely not a conscious operation by the supposed child.[66] In fact, it would seem

that Augustine's own observation that he could not determine if the child's voice was a boy

or girl indicates that the external impetus was effectively provided by divine providence in

such a way as to prevent any human credit.[67]

In developing this approach to misappropriation, it is possible to agree with William

Connolly that Augustine has attempted to make his conversion experience authoritative for

the realization of the moral order. In contrast to Connolly, however, we should not

conclude that Augustine has been successful in this operation. In fact, he has failed to do

true justice to his conversion experience by derailing its proper application. Augustine's

misappropriation of conversion and redemption to the Donatists cannot be authoritative as

it stands, though it should be authoritative when properly understood and appropriated.

Political Problems with Misappropriation

The political problems that develop when theological symbols are misappropriated

to the political realm cannot be exhaustively delineated because the facets of reality cannot

be numbered and each can be incorrectly represented with detrimental effect. The practical

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[66] *Conf.* 8.12.

[67] "All at once I heard the sing-song voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say." *Conf.* 8.12. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 177.

effects will manifest myriad different malfunctions. The theoretical exposition of misappropriation will only begin to scratch the surface by demonstrating the root cause underlying any practical problem.

Appropriation functions and is a political benefit because it correctly symbolizes something of reality. The tension between *nomos* and *physis* has been recognized since the birth of philosophy. The greater the degree of correlation between the conventions of human existence and the true order of the universe, the better the chance of harmonious human relations, both between themselves and in regard to the cosmos as a whole. Conversely, misappropriation misrepresents reality and derails collective action through its assumption of faulty logic and operation regarding political representations and their institutions.

In the case of Donatism, Augustine's misappropriation led to the enforcement of physical compunction against a religious group, people who – by Augustine's own etymology of the word – are "bound" to the divine.[68] Since it is impossible to observe the invisible cords by which anyone may be connected with the divine, it should be immediately obvious that a physical operation will be useless for severing these connections. The precedent from this coercion is impossible to chart. We cannot prove that any subsequent movement of persecution or argument for inquisition would have faltered without the force of Augustine's justification, but it certainly did nothing to inhibit future manifestations of persecution.

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[68] *DCD* 10.1 where he connects *religio* to *religare*. Cf. also *DCD* 10.3 where he moves in a different direction by suggesting religion derives from *religentes* in order to emphasis the need for redemption. Humans have lost the connection with the divine and it must be "re-chosen." The notion that religion derives from redemption only increases the difficulties in ever countenancing religious coercion.

Augustine's claim, however, still stands that the policy bore good fruit in its immediate application. The matter of misappropriation is, thus, further complicated because the derailment of symbols and subsequent political problems are not necessarily immediately obvious or perceivable. This can be traced to the initial representation of the symbol. If the deformation of the symbol in misappropriation is immediately evident, there is little chance that the misappropriation will actually be carried out. Further, every misappropriation is evident when it reaches the stage of Orwellian doublethink and doublespeak where war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength.[69] The difficulty with misappropriation lies in identifying it before the full extent of its corruption is felt. Every misappropriation, however, initially appears to be an authorized appropriation that will correctly represent universal reality in concrete detail, or else it would not have been accepted.

Consider for example the Greek and Roman attempts to represent reality through the symbol of fate or fortune. Classical culture conveyed its sense that there were forces outside of human control that bound human life. This symbolic representation could have fostered a beneficial humility and reverence in human actions, but the internal constitution of the symbol could not prevent its own deformation. The Greek tragedians wrestled with the idea of a hero who cannot comprehend or accept what has been ordained for him, but works out his virtues in wrestling against the mere forces of necessity. In Greek tragedy, however, fate always wins and humility is not the lesson the polity took away, but rather rebellion. Hence, what appeared to be an appropriation of reality was actually misappropriation that did not support the order of reality because there is no satisfactory

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[69] George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Plume/Harcourt Brace, 1983), 3.

meaning to wrestling against insurmountable odds, which either breeds rebellion or disengagement.

Misappropriations are practically separated by the fact that they will eventually breakdown and skew the participation in and perception of reality. However, as the practical consequences are not always immediately evident on those issues that matter the most, this assurance provides us no meaningful comfort. Only a theoretical treatment of any symbolic representation can plumb the depths of the internal constitution of a representative symbol, and even then it must at times work against prevailing attitudes created by the appearance of temporal success.

Question of Dogma

The development of appropriation and misappropriation would not be complete without also considering in comparison the question of dogmatism and doctrinarian attitudes. Dogmatic formulations are liable to deformations similar to misappropriation; however, dogmatism should be distinguished from misappropriation because it represents a distinct problem for using theology as a resource. Where misappropriation is the attempt to move a symbolic expression of the experience of reality from one instance of perception to another, dogmatism represents the ossification of a symbol to the point that it is an object or topic for investigation that can be encompassed and controlled by the skilled technician of theology.

Misappropriation and dogmatism bare some similarities and do share an inferential connection. The *sine qua non* of misappropriation is dependence upon a symbol that cannot support the experience of reality in its shifted context. On first glance, it would appear that the way to avoid misappropriation would be to rely on the purest doctrine for drawing

existential representation.   Hence, though they are different theoretical problems, the

two issues often arise in related situations.

Eric Voegelin has provided a great deal of support for the development of

appropriation, and he equally represents a trenchant critic of dogmatism. We may take as a

typical example of his general criticism the statement, "The wisdom of the soul which is

engendered through Eros cannot and must not be put down on paper as a teachable

doctrine."[70] Voegelin asserts that human life is lived in the present *metaxy* of reality, that is to

say the "in-between" of the really real and non-existence. He describes the *metaxy* as, "The

In-Between, in the sense of a reality that partakes of both time and eternity and, therefore,

does not wholly belong to the one or the other."[71] Voegelin develops the symbol of the

metaxy from Plato's *Symposium* to describe the problem in human existence that man does not

fully participate in Being, yet does participate to a sufficient degree so as to exist in some

reality.[72] Voegelin later expands on the *metaxy*, writing, "Thus, the In-Between – the metaxy

– is not an empty space between the poles of the tension but the 'realm of the spiritual'; it is

the reality of 'man's converse with the gods', the mutual participation (*methexis*, *metalepsis*) of

human in divine, and divine in human, reality."[73] To commit the wisdom gained through the

experiential participation of the soul with the gods to a formal and rigid statement would

destroy the tension of the *metaxy* and harms future souls who will be blocked from the

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[70] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
    University Press, 1957), 18-19.

[71] Eric Voegelin, "Immortality: Experience and Symbol," in *The Collected Works of Eric
    Voegelin, vol. 12, Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana
    State University Press, 1990), 77.

[72] Plato, *Symposium*, 203c.

[73] Eric Voegelin, "Reason: The Classical Experience," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin,
    vol. 12, Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
    University Press, 1990), 279.

engendering experience by reliance upon doctrine. Michael Morrissey elaborates, "For

Voegelin, the truth of reality cannot become an object of intentionalist consciousness,

because to make it so would risk hypostatizing it."[74] Though Voegelin is often taken for a

critic of Christianity, his criticism of dogma is meant to protect "the mystery" of the

experience of the ground of being, which is the basis for Christianity's original symbols.

Voegelin emphatically states, "There can be no question of 'accepting' or 'rejecting' a

theological doctrine. A vision is not a dogma but an event in metaleptic reality which the

philosopher can do no more than try to understand to the best of his ability."[75] In the

experiential vision of the ground of being the philosopher, prophet, or saint participates in

the divine reality. If he communicates something of the experience in his attempts to

understand, he cannot form propositions, only symbols of myth.

Christians can certainly be amenable to Voegelin's critique of doctrinalization since

figures from Paul to Aquinas to Luther have considered the problem of the spirit versus the

dead letter of the law. Christians have always recognized the problem and its possibility

within the development of the institutional Church, but have also understood that there was

more to the development of the Church's life than simply ossification. Voegelin should be

commended for such statements as: "Habituation, institutionalization, and ritualization

inevitably, by their finiteness, degenerate sooner or later into a captivity of the spirit that is

infinite; and then the time has come for the spirit to break a balance that has become

demonic imprisonment."[76] Christians can also agree with Voegelin's warning against

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[74] Michael Morrissey, *Consciousness and Transcendence: The Theology of Eric Voegelin* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 220.

[75] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 4: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 242.

[76] Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 183.

doctrine on the basis that men must "be capable of imaginative re-enactment of the experiences of which theory is an explication…Unless a theoretical exposition activates the corresponding experiences at least to a degree, it will create the impression of empty talk or will perhaps be rejected as an irrelevant expression of subjective opinions."[77] However, within the Christian context this is not an indictment of Christianity, but rather of ossification that will always be escaped by a spiritual revival that will work within the traditional symbols and not discard them in favor of new formulations.[78]

In order to properly develop appropriation it is crucial to distinguish simple dogmatism from dogma because appropriation depends on the expressions of reality that are present within the theology of Christian life. If all such expressions were necessarily deformed symbols, we would be on questionable ground in recurring to them as resources for political life. However, because only doctrinarian rigidity must be avoided, political theorists are free to appropriate symbols of dogma, such as redemption, into the expression of political order.

Practically speaking, the difference between dogmatism and misappropriation are evident in the above analysis of the Donatist controversy. Augustine's problem with the coercion of the Donatists was not simply the coerced adherence to a particular dogmatic

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[77] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 64-65.

[78] Thinking through Voegelin's critique in his own work, David Walsh has reflected, "Nowadays we think of the formation of canons and the formulation of dogmas as controlling devices by which institutions consolidate their power. No doubt that is a component, but it is by no means the most important aspect. Of far greater significance has been their role in preventing the substance of transcendent experiences from draining away in a profusion of different directions…Dogmas arise out of the devotional life of the Christian community, but they also play a role in preserving that life against confusion and distortion." *The Third Millennium: Reflections on Faith and Reason* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 50-51.

expression of the Christian life and corporate existence. To understand the controversy in this way would reduce the struggle to the choice of words and would remove it from political concern. The true political problem in the Donatist controversy was the use of the symbols surrounding redemption for imperial purposes, and the belief that these symbols would be efficacious in the changed context.

Conclusion

Developing a theory of misappropriation and applying it to Augustine is crucial because patronizing or inconsistent interpretations of Augustine must be avoided at all costs. On the one hand, it is possible to outright condemn Augustine through self-righteous indignation regarding his religious intolerance versus our modern enlightened superiority. On the other hand, interpreters can promote inconsistency by seeking to protect Augustine from criticism in declaring that he naively or uncritically accepted the prevalent attitudes regarding coercion without seeing his interior conflict. In the first case, Augustine is un-enlightened and parochial; in the second, he is entirely unreflective. By emphasizing appropriation and misappropriation, the goal here is to develop the richness of Augustine's thinking while still acknowledging that he himself goes astray in his practical actions because the tension between types of representation is difficult to maintain and can easily be derailed.

Particularly as the consequences of incorrectly representing symbols in the political realm can lead to such catastrophic results, it may seem prudent to avoid notions of redemption in political actions. It cannot be denied that some of the most horrific actions of the twentieth century were motivated by regimes that were inspired by the notion that they could transform or redeem the world from its present state of corruption. If, as Eric Voegelin indicates, Gnostic movements arise out of Christianity's own soteriological

differentiation,[79] why should modern political theory not seek to avoid any connection

with theological material? Why should not Augustine be preserved in the Western heritage

for the sole purpose of reinforcing the depraved condition of humanity as a deterrent to

such perfective notions of political activity? The difficulty of such an eminently reasonable

inference is that after the Christian differentiation it is necessary to retain the symbols

representative of diremption. Voegelin notes:

> Theory is bound by history in the sense of the differentiating experiences. Since the
> maximum of differentiation was achieved through Greek philosophy and
> Christianity, this means concretely that theory is bound to move within the historical
> horizon of classical and Christian experiences. To recede from the maximum of
> differentiation is theoretical retrogression; it will result in the various types of
> derailment.[80]

Classical philosophy cannot independently function after the critique and advancement by

Christian revelation that proved technically superior philosophically. It is impossible,

however, to avoid the theoretical and practical connection of diremption and redemption.

As Charles Norris Cochrane notes, "'Forgiveness,' i.e. a realization of the possibility of a

clean sheet and a new deal…follow automatically as a consequence of accepting the

Christian starting point."[81] Every exploration of depravity as an inhibitor of collective

action, namely through its communal manifestations of ignorance, passions, and self-interest,

entails the concurrent introduction of salvation because depravity only exists as an

identification of difference from the correct position or state. Representative symbols of

redemption are unavoidably implicit or explicit within all contemporary political theory.

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[79] Voegelin, *New Science*, 107.

[80] Voegelin, *New Science*, 79.

[81] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2003), 557.

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The only option available is not to avoid the theology of redemption, but rather to appropriate it correctly so as to avoid or limit the harmful effects of misappropriation. As Reinhold Niebuhr similarly notes, "Neither the finiteness of the human mind nor the sinful corruption of the mind…can completely efface the human capacity the apprehension of the true wisdom."[82] Niebuhr elsewhere refers to this as, "the vitality of children of God."[83] While this is generally a blessing for human life, it also creates its own problems because the noetic effects of sin do impair humanity. Niebuhr further states, "It is this capacity for self-transcendence which gives rise to both the yearning after God and to the idolatrous worship of false gods."[84] In more pointed detail, Niebuhr will write, "Nothing short of the knowledge of the true God will save [humanity] from the impiety of making themselves God and the cruelty of seeing their fellow men as devils because they are involved in the same pretension."[85] Man will always worship something, so political theory cannot neglect the theological account that seeks to correctly represent the experiences of reality because it must recur to this to develop and evaluate its own efforts of working within the cosmos.

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[82] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, Vol. II: Human Destiny* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1951), 63.
[83] Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 146
[84] Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny, Vol. II*, 63.
[85] Niebuhr, *Interpretation*, 146.

Reassessing the Limits of Politics in Liberalism

Introduction

While throughout this work we have been diligent in avoiding pessimistic and otherworldly judgments against Augustine, we have also been keenly aware of the problems of coming to the opposite conclusion and labeling Augustine a proto-liberal or proto-secularist. A danger with the latter judgment is that it is self-satisfyingly appealing. Contemporary scholars can feel vindicated in reading Augustine and drawing support from certain of his insights, while still feeling superior by faulting him for not going far enough to have reached the fully enlightened position enjoyed at present. This type of thinking misunderstands important features of the development of the present liberal position as well as misjudges the stability of its present ascendance. In the hopes of rectifying certain similar errors, it is appropriate to apply the Augustinian appropriation that has been outlined above to thinking about the present position of liberalism, what liberalism needs, and what Augustine can truly offer to liberal thinking.

In order to apply the insights of appropriation to liberalism we must first situate liberalism by briefly charting the dominant position it now occupies as a result of its victory over the competing political alternatives of the twentieth century. After reaffirming liberalism's victory, we begin to wonder at its ability to have actually accomplished this achievement and what security liberalism has for its continued existence. Augustinian appropriation enters the discussion as a way to handle some of the concerns about liberal democracy's stability as well as connect with some of the hinted or dimly intuited desires for transcendence that modern liberal thinkers have elucidated. We conclude by developing the connection of appropriation to Augustinian resources that are commonly drawn in liberal

scholarship and outlining how appropriation makes the resources available and how it conditions our present judgment and use of those resources.

Ideological Revolt

After previously mentioning the unrestrained enthusiasm of some for the prospects of liberal democracy in earlier chapters, it is surprising that we should now consider problems with justifying liberalism and the search for its foundations. The impetus for much of the concern for the theoretical justification of liberal democracy is the appearance and affects of the totalitarian crisis that ravaged the last century. In many ways, the destruction of the totalitarian movements is highly paradoxical if we consider that their supposedly rational views and non-traditional ideals were thought to be the crowning achievement of human development and historical progress since the Enlightenment. Put simply, the First World War was waged under the banner of making the world safe for democracy and was supposed to be the war to end all further warfare. Only a generation later, however, the entire globe was once again enflamed in a conflict that publicly displayed some of the lowest depths humanity can sink to. It is a tragic understatement to declare that the twentieth century, which was meant to fulfill the glorious expectations of the Enlightenment, did not yield anticipated outcomes.[1]

The tragedy and destruction of the twentieth century, however, cannot be confined to battlefield losses. The truly horrific mass of casualties of the last century came not from battlefields and bombing campaigns, but from governments exterminating their own citizens

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[1] David Walsh notes, "The age that began with the glory of the Renaissance, the bright expectations of the Enlightenment, and the energies of the scientific, industrial, and political revolutions has devolved into the horror, vacuity, and mediocrity of the twentieth century. So sharp is the contrast that we are left wondering whether there is indeed any connection between these developments." *After Ideology: Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990) 9.

in the course of routine political action. From concentration camps, to gulags, to killing

fields, we are confronted with a new type of political force that is not engendered in

response to the normal problems of political action. David Walsh has long wrestled with

this dilemma in an attempt to recover from the effects of ideology in our new millennium.[2]

Walsh writes, "The horrors of our times have been attributable not so much to the perennial

lusts, stupidities, and misunderstandings that have always plagued the relationships of human

beings, but more to a quite novel passion to compel recalcitrant reality to fit within the

perimeters of one or another intellectual system."[3] This "passion to compel recalcitrant

reality" is the very heart of the ideological movements of the twentieth century that gave

momentum and justification to the various programs of destruction to which we severally

refer whether they originate in Russian and Chinese communism, Italian fascism, German

National Socialism, or any of the smaller variations that could be identified.

The coercion of reality is initially justified as a correction of a small element that does

not conform to the supposed character or nature of reality as a whole. It is hence supposed

that only a minor adjustment is required and the elements will then be free to follow the

course that they should have attained all along. However, as elements of reality continue to

resist the manipulation of human control, it becomes clear to those not blinded with

ideological passion that the root issue is beyond simple adjustment or correction.[4] Rather, as

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[2] Walsh has culminated this project in producing *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence.* This volume serves as the capstone for two previous works (*After Ideology* and *Growth of the Liberal Soul*), which he announces now form a trilogy.

[3] Walsh, *After Ideology*, 10.

[4] Cf. Eric Voegelin's comment on the inability to debate ideologists, "Rational argument could not prevail because the partner to the discussion did not accept as binding for himself the matrix of reality in which all specific questions concerning our existence as human beings are ultimately rooted; he has overlaid the reality of exitence with another mode of existence…called the Second Reality." "On Debate and Existence," in *The Collected Works of*

Walsh states, "In its ideological manifestation, the will to power is rooted in a hatred of reality and revolt against its divine source."[5] Albert Camus similarly described this attitude as "metaphysical rebellion."[6] Walsh connects this ideology with the destruction of the totalitarian age by explaining, "What has turned the various attempts to install a modern revolutionary order into orgies of unlimited bloodletting is [a] detachment from any finite political objective. Having arisen from a revolt against the comprehensive nature of existence, virtually no result can satisfy the motivating impulse."[7] When the revolution is undertaken in the name of transforming reality, it does not matter how much the economy produces or how many civilians die as long as the final goal remains to be accomplished. Satisfaction in small steps and improvements will not quench the desire to transform all of reality.

The need to respond to totalitarian ideologies provides the provocation for determining liberalism's theoretical justification, but also something of the perimeters and conditions, particularly in the area of relation to religion. In its search for a non-doctrinal description of reality, the Enlightenment set the stage for a complete disregard of transcendence and the eventual rebellion against every notion of a non-material existence. Walsh continues, "When [the ideological] sense of anguish and revolt has reached a fever pitch, it bursts the bonds of convention and becomes explicitly what it always has been: the revolt against God."[8] We may follow Walsh in noting that the revolt has not been so much

Eric Voegelin, vol. 12: Published Essays 1966-1985, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 36.

[5] Walsh, *After Ideology*, 30.

[6] See Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 23 and *passim.*

[7] Walsh, *After Ideology*, 93.

[8] Ibid., 94.

"atheistic as antitheistic or anti-Christian."[9] In light of this ideological rebellion from

reality and the transcendent character of reality, the great need of the modern age is to

restore balance to philosophy and its attendant political desires in relation to the divine.

Toward the end of his life, the renowned German philosopher Martin Heidegger confessed

in an interview:

> If I may answer briefly, and perhaps clumsily, but after long reflection: Philosophy
> will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This
> is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavor. Only
> a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and
> poetizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god.[10]

Heidegger was not alone in the last century among the great thinkers who recognized the

need to provide a foundation for a world emptied of the traditional religious and

philosophical underpinnings. This project has been a constant striving, but its success

remains ambiguous at best in the work of most modern scholars. Walsh locates the ultimate

failure of this effort in a root error in perceiving the fundamental problem. He writes:

> The analysis must recognize that the closure is motivated at root by the revolt against
> God, and that it is only the grace of divine reconciliation that can finally overcome it.
> If the problem could be resolved through the discovery of an acceptable intellectual
> formulation then it would have been remedied long ago; it would not have been a
> spiritual crisis, in which it is precisely the refusal to acknowledge what we know we
> should acknowledge that constitutes the crux of the issue.[11]

Gnosticism

Eric Voegelin was among the greatest political thinkers of the last century and is

particularly noteworthy for having analyzed and recognized the nature of ideology as a

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[9] Ibid., 96.

[10] Martin Heidegger, "'Only a God Can Save Us': The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)," in *Heidegger:
The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent, 1981), 57.

[11] Walsh, *After Ideology*, 33.

spiritual revolt.[12] Following Voegelin, we may define the totalitarian ideologies of the

twentieth century as gnostic derailments of the differentiation of Christian theology and

Greek philosophy.[13] What is unique about gnosticism is not that it denied human

redemption, but that it sought a redemption through human action from the experience of

reality. Voegelin writes, "Of the profusion of gnostic experiences and symbolic expressions,

one feature may be singled out as the central element in this varied and extensive creation of

meaning: the experience of the world as an alien place into which man has strayed and from

which he must find his way back home to the other world of his origin."[14] Voegelin

continues, "The world is no longer the well-ordered, the cosmos, in which Hellenic man felt

at home; nor is it the Judaeo-Christian world that God created and found good. Gnostic

man no longer wishes to perceive in admiration the intrinsic order of the cosmos. For him

the world has become a prison from which he wants to escape."[15] In order to escape the

prison-world in which the gnostic finds himself he must lash out at the surrounding reality

and create the world in which he was meant to live according to his speculative construction.

The destruction of the present reality is accomplished by destroying the God of the old

world and those who look to him as their creator. Usually speculative destruction is followed

by the physical destruction of the present reality. As Voegelin notes, "Historically, the

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[12] Voegelin includes under the general appellation of ideology, progressivism, positivism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, communism, fascism, and National Socialism. See Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2004), 61.
[13] Voegelin credits Ferdinand Christian Baur's 1835 work *Die christliche Gnosis, oder die Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* for using the appellation of Gnosticism, however, Voegelin deserves the greatest credit for popularizing the conception for modern political science. See Ibid., 3.
[14] Ibid., 7.
[15] Ibid., 8.

murder of God is not followed by the superman, but by the murder of man: the deicide

of the gnostic theoreticians is followed by the homicide of the revolutionary practitioners."[16]

Dostoevsky's literary works provide characters to demonstrate Voegelin's connection

between ideological speculation and revolutionary action. The radical Shigalyov in

Dostoevsky's *Demons* calmly claims, "I got entangled in my own data, and my conclusion

directly contradicts the original idea I start from. Starting from unlimited freedom, I

conclude with unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that apart from my solution to the

social formula, there is no other."[17] Shigalyov is not bothered by the enslavement of nine-

tenths of humanity for the sake of one-tenth, or even the annihilation of a hundred million

lives. Richard Pevear has formulated the problem in a similar fashion to Voegelin, "A direct

line leads from metaphysical naïvety to murder."[18]

In the case of revolutionary ideologists, their deformed reason renders it impossible

to afford them the respectful title of philosopher. Voegelin provides a trenchant explanation

of the distinction between a philosopher and a gnostic thinker that provides the sharpest

picture of the Gnostic propagandist, "Philosophy springs from the love of being; it is man's

loving endeavor to perceive the order of being and attune himself to it. Gnosis desires

dominion over being; in order to seize control of being the gnostic constructs his system.

The building of systems is a gnostic form of reasoning, not a philosophical one."[19] The

philosopher has personally been affected by the existing order of being and his submission

to its influence. When the philosopher attempts to articulate anything regarding his

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[16] Ibid., 48.

[17] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 402.

[18] Richard Pevear, forward to *Notes From Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xvii.

[19] Voegelin, *Science,* 32.

attunement to the order of being, he will do so only with reverence and humility toward that which he did not make, but rather received. Voegelin writes, "In historical reality, a philosopher's truth is the exegesis of his experience: a real man participates in the reality of God and the world, of society and himself, and articulates his experience by more or less adequate language symbols."[20] The gnostic system-builder, in contradistinction, attempts to capture reality in his web and control it for his own purposes. Voegelin writes, "Every gnostic intellectual who drafts a program to change the world must first construct a world picture from which those essential features of the constitution of being that would make the program appear hopeless and foolish have been eliminated."[21] If we are honest, we are forced to confess that we can never pin down reality or control the existence that has, and always will, perplex humans. In fact, the very effort to do so would be to fall prey to the gnostic temptation that Eric Voegelin rightly and astutely warned us against.

To rest on the acknowledgement that existence always outstrips our efforts to conceptualize it, however, does not mean that it constantly defeats efforts to live and think while attuned to reality. It is because reality is greater than our conception of it that we can live within it and not be limited by the short span of personal existence. The vitality of reality provides a source for our own movements, and it should not discourage even the humblest efforts of our paltry understanding. Aristotle right declared, "We must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in

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[20] Eric Voegelin, "On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12: Published Essays: 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 225.

[21] Voegelin, *Science,* 75.

accordance with the best thing in us."[22] As rational beings, humans cannot separate their

attempts at understanding from the life for which they formulate their understanding. As

negative examples, this is the fundamental defect Voegelin identifies with Thomas Hobbes's

Leviathan and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*.[23] It is here that we grasp the importance of

appropriation to political theory because appropriation seeks to attune humanity to the order

of reality as expressed through humanity's sustained theological reflections.

     The correct response to gnosticism is not to deny redemption. We must account for

redemption while acknowledging the dangers it presents through abuse and derailment.

Derailment has been the chief difficulty for philosophical reflection since the differentiation

of Christianity. As Voegelin notes, "The temptation to fall from uncertain truth into certain

untruth is stronger in the clarity of Christian faith than in other spiritual structures."[24]

Instead of denying discussion of redemption in political science we must restore balance

through a proper understanding of redemption's theological nature and divine

accomplishment, while also cautiously exploring the possibility of its human appropriation in

political life. The difficulty of doing so is immediately evident in the many unsatisfactory

attempts to justify liberalism on theoretical grounds as a response to totalitarianism.

The Failure of Liberalism to Provide and Secure its Own Justification

     Faced with the challenge of ideological movements in the last century, liberalism

responded politically by successfully defeating the massed armies of totalitarian fascism and

out-producing and outlasting communism while avoiding open conflict. These political

challenges, however, also engendered a theoretical effort to justify liberal democracy from

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[22] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New
     York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1105, (1177b32).

[23] See Voegelin, *Science,* 76-80.

[24] Ibid., 83.

the arguments of its opponents and assure itself and its friends of its superiority and continuing resources that have outlasted the political struggles of the twentieth century.[25] In contrast to its political success, it is not going too far to declare the failure of liberal democracy to provide a widely accepted and satisfactory account of liberalism's basis. Rather than providing a unifying force, political discussion within liberalism appears to be "civil war carried on by other means."[26] Everywhere we are surrounded by differing accounts of liberal values and differing justifications for these very values. We cannot agree on definitions of justice, liberty, or happiness and what they entail because the very neutrality of liberalism has opposed the efforts. David Walsh develops this crisis within liberalism and notes, "By extending the principle of neutrality far enough, liberal conviction has finally been unable to resist the last step. It has become neutral regarding itself. There can be no dogma that all must accept, because that would be an illiberal imposition contrary to the freedom of choice that the liberal construction is intended to promote."[27] This prevents any hope of reaching a shared philosophy or worldview within liberalism because we have taken it as axiomatic that liberalism does not need to have such a shared conception. Walsh further describes the outcome of this liberal crisis:

> Gone is the confidence that a community of free and equal individuals is a sufficient condition for the emergence of a good political order. We are no longer convinced that there is a universal human nature that can be relied upon to draw the vast majority in a common direction, toward their common good. In the absence of a

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[25] As examples of liberalism's attempt to reinforce its theoretical justification see among others: Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Friedrich Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*, John Rawl's *A Theory of Justice*, and Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*.

[26] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 253.

[27] David Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 16.

shared nature there seems to be less justification for treating one another as equal – equal in what? – or for regarding rights as anything more than a social convention.[28]

The crisis of liberalism seems to demand that we paint a very bleak picture of the chances of political liberalism's survival in the future.[29]

Yet, here is one of the most perplexing factors in the continuing discussions of liberalism's justification and prospects. Despite its inability to articulate its own foundations, it continues to persuasively function amid both critique and over-expectation. David Walsh writes, "The dogged durability of the liberal tradition testifies more powerfully than any arguments to the bedrock on which it rests, impervious to most of the critical assaults launched against it."[30] We see the vitality of liberalism not only in the continuing presence and power of liberal democracies across the world, but also in the popular uprisings witnessed across North Africa and the Middle East beginning in the spring of 2011. Practice articulates the "deeply intuited truth" upon which liberalism stands far better than the passing formulations and justifications that only stammeringly grasp "the depth" they delve into.[31]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] This conclusion is not universal supported, however. Eric Gregory declares, "Bad ethical theory, including relativism or 'Enlightenment' autonomy, rank rather low on my list of threats to…liberal democracy…Faced with extreme poverty, militarism, recurrent nationalisms, disease, scarce water, excessive consumption in rich societies, excessive preoccupation with problems in ethical theory seems misguided. Gregory further considers David Walsh's approach to the problems of liberalism and its resources "surreal." Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 102. Gregory, however, is only able to make such a judgment because he himself avoids the arduous task of considering the foundations of liberal order. Gregory can only suppose it from the outset.

[30] Walsh, *Growth*, 46.

[31] Ibid.

Practically speaking, authority and legitimacy are the keys to liberalism's survival and spread. Without authority and legitimacy, governments will either lack control of their population and territory or be forced to constantly apply violent force to secure obedience. Liberalism is so legitimately authoritative that even the most repressive current regimes try to clothe their hold on power with the trappings of democratic institutions in order to justify their actions and maintain their position. Emphasis on the durability of liberalism should not stretch to over-enthusiasm, however. Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* provides the clearest example of the temptation to gloat after the demise fascism and communism as the last potential challengers to liberalism's supremacy.[32] This latest victory adds to its record of having previously defeated tyranny, imperial rule, theocracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. As we stand, no possible replacement for liberalism can be envisioned which has not already been discredited by previous examples. Proper appreciation for liberalism, however, must be more guarded than Fukuyama in drawing the further implications that all nations and peoples will shortly come into the liberal fold, that no liberal polity will ever crumble and decay once it has established democratic institutions, or that liberalism can easily sprout where preexisting conditions have not prepared society for its practice. Such enthusiasm forgets the persistent problems of collective action. The supremacy of liberalism rests on its ability to remain a morally authoritative symbol even as its actual examples often fall short. Walsh notes, "The deepest level of its appeal is that this is the form of order that speaks to our human dignity as rational, self-governing beings…All alternative approaches

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[32] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1997).

represent a retreat into some form of tutelary relationship, in which citizens are treated

as wards of the state and not as fully mature human beings."[33]

The triumph of liberalism, however, should not encourage the delusion that

liberalism is not in need of continual rejuvenation and maintenance in order to prevent its

corruption or demise. This restorative maintenance returns us to the problem of articulating

foundations. If we struggle in vain to articulate the basis of liberalism's core convictions,

how can we be confident in our efforts to continually shore up those foundations?

Appropriation allows us to be more precise in our discussion of liberalism's foundations as

well as humbly acknowledging that we do not control this foundation or easily manipulate it

at our own choosing.

The Depth and Appropriation

In the account of liberalism above some things have been hinted at only and some

passed over in silence. Particularly problematic is a confident statement about first

principles. The durability of liberalism is developed from the moral authority it evokes from

its practice. The focus on practice provides an avenue for developing the underlying

existential basis of liberal democracy. This existential concern has often been avoided

because it is not easily articulated in common or philosophical language. For instance, what

is "the depth" from which it is possible to draw convictions for the practice of political

liberalism?

The symbol of "depth" serves in Voegelin's terminology, and those who follow him,

as the area of experience from which differentiated order is obtained. Voegelin writes in

explanation of Plato's Parable of the Cave, "From the depth of the psyche wells up life and

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[33] Walsh, *Growth*, 49.

order when historically, in the surrounding society, the souls have sunk into the depth of death and disorder. From the depth comes the force that drags the philosopher's soul up to the light."[34] The "depth of the soul" Voegelin discusses here is a symbol previously developed by Heraclitus, Aeschylus, and Plato to express the experience and area of humanity searching for the "constants in the history of mankind."[35] Here humans find "new truth of experience [that] can by hauled up to conscious experience."[36] The investigation of symbols in search of their equivalent experiences is a momentous spiritual task, but Voegelin is silent about its spiritual motivation. He writes, "When the night is sinking on the symbols that have had their day, one must return to the night of the depth that is luminous with truth to the man who is willing to seek for it."[37]

Appropriation represents the same desire to bring spiritual resources into humanity's consciousness through existentially representing them in practice, yet it is also an advancement in that it is more explicit about the order that can be unfolded in existence if the connection to the transcendent can be patterned and maintained. The language of appropriation also handles the references to the divine or transcendence casually displayed in many of the discussions that have been mentioned above because it offers a more differentiated symbol that works within Christianity as the greatest differentiation of philosophy.

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[34] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 62.

[35] Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History" in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12, Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 119.

[36] Ibid., 124.

[37] Ibid., 125.

Openness to the Correct Appropriation of Redemption

Throughout the twentieth century the most important thinkers have been spiritually sensitive to the relation of Christianity to their work and have often invoked theological or religious language within their work. We have already seen examples from Heidegger and Voegelin as two such thinkers. Voegelin explicitly writes, "Christianity is not an alternative to philosophy, it is philosophy itself in its state of perfection."[38] Said otherwise, to think philosophically and to consider the problems of philosophy is to work within a Christian context and realize that the problem addressed arises in light of Christianity because we can not longer conduct purely Greek philosophy. Christianity is the fullest differentiation of Being because it not only connects humanity with the transcendent divine, but also expounds Christ as both fully God and fully man. Recognizing Christianity as the fullest differentiation, however, is not Christian triumphalism because it is combined with an openness to recognize that other representations of Being are equivalent symbols in more or less compact form. After the differentiation of Christianity and its announcement of the eschatological fulfillment of history for humanity, it is not possible to return to more compactly symbolized accounts of human existence and history.[39] Therefore, human civilization cannot avoid the presence of eschatological longing for this realization, not only in Christians, but also in all civilizations and societies. In the ideological revolt against the order of Being that attempts to deny the fundamental construction of existence, ideology closes itself to the connection with the transcendent and declares itself the autonomous measure of all things. Liberalism prevails politically by retaining this connection, even if it is

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[38] Eric Voegelin, "The Gospel and Culture," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12: Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 173.

[39] Ibid., 182.

only dimly aware that it is doing so. Therefore, the maintenance of liberalism travels along the same lines as the resistance to ideology, namely the therapeutic need is to recover humanity's opening to transcendence. Walsh notes that after ideology, "All that remains is the opening of faith toward the grace of God, as the only means available to draw us up to the highest actualization of our humanity."[40] He continues further, "Resistance to the forces of ideological destruction is more than opposition to specific individuals, regimes, or ideas. It is the front line of the conflict with the larger spiritual crisis of the revolt against God, which has convulsed Christian civilization in the modern period."[41] The recovery of order can only be initiated in the rediscovery of the human necessity for divine redemption and its appropriation into human existence.

The necessity for transcendent grace is clearly comprehended in the "titanic striving for self-divinization and the ocean of human misery churned up by it" in recent history and the attendant suffering from this struggle has "served only to show how far away humanity is from being a god."[42] However, the operation or manifestation of grace is not fully comprehended in simply noting its necessity. On the basis of the humanity's vain struggle to control and realize the divine alone, we can intimate that the missing component of the equation is not the act of humanity, but rather the divine movement. Walsh explicitly states:

> The movement of human nature toward God could not take place unless God had previously inclined toward us. Even the stirring that urges us to seek God would not be there unless God had first moved us. The divinization of human nature is entirely the work of God, for the transcendent divine reality is unutterably beyond the reach of our power or the paltry determination of our will.[43]

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[40] Walsh, *After Ideology*, 140.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 181.
[43] Ibid.

The emphasis of the passage may appear to be directed toward explaining inclination of God toward individuals in the Christian tradition, however, this is clearly not the only case because the differentiated symbols of Christianity have been historically visible throughout the whole world. Therefore, Christianity has engendered transcendent and eschatological longings in spheres beyond its own adherents.

Looked at exclusively in light of Christian theology's development of salvific grace in redemption, this could be taken as counsel to despair for the political world at large. We might, therefore, despair of the possibility of balancing or controlling these longings outside of Christianity if it were not for the remaining possibility that Christianity can both engender and fulfill these longings without explicit profession of Christian adherence and faith through the operation of appropriation. Walsh explains the importance of Christianity in the world at large, "If the ground of being itself, God fully incarnate in Christ, has entered existence, then this event must be suffused with meaning for all other human beings as well."[44] Walsh continues later, "Henceforth the emergence of order must be understood as the divine activity within the soul. The primary source of this saving grace is the Spirit of God that is present in Christ and, through him, is communicated to all who open to Jesus in faith."[45] As well as referring to explicit confessions of faith, there can be an opening to the fullest differentiation of Being that is not limited by the necessary confines of strictly Christian theology. He continues again, "One cannot know the realities to which truth refers until one has made them present to oneself, through a submission to their ordering influence."[46] Appropriation allows attunement to the order of reality that validates itself, not

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[44] Ibid., 191.
[45] Ibid., 201.
[46] Ibid., 213.

on the basis of faith or dogmatic adherence, but by the experience of reality that sustains and supports the practice that is attempted. Therefore, we can further develop appropriation by examining the political practices it provides support to in liberal democracy.

Appropriation and Civic Virtues

A strictly theoretical treatment of appropriation by itself is lacking because it requires a practical exposition to complete its development. Augustinian appropriation indicates that the theological symbolism of redemption can serve as a resource for politics through practical application. This prevents the accusation that Augustine becomes entirely otherworldly through his focus on redemption. As a simple answer we might say that Augustine's focus on redemption will never become entirely otherworldly because redemption is accomplished through the incarnate Christ, whose life brings constant attention to humanity's present existence. This answer alone, though, does not direct us how we should precisely live in an ordered polity, let alone a liberal democracy. We must connect the theory of appropriation to its practical outcome in politics and society.

Now that the theoretical tools have been sharpened and the need has been demonstrated, we must consider the vehicles by which appropriation manifests itself. In practical politics, appropriation is the dependence or suggestion of any action or policy on an undergirding expression of redemption. For instance, the gnostic practitioners mentioned above seek after appropriation because they depend upon the existence of a possible redemption that they intended to forcefully imposed or realize in the transformation of present world. Without the experience of redemption, gnostic ideologies are not possible. As we have seen, the gnostic example, more precisely, demonstrates misappropriation

because of their failure to comprehend all that the experience of redemption entails; however, this should not discourage the pursuit of valid appropriation through present existential representation.

As a minor example of the idea of appropriation consider the source and development within the Western legal tradition of prohibitions on executing those deemed to be mentally insane. The underlying basis for this kindly, though poorly understood, tradition stretches back to the Middle Ages and comes from the necessity of providing the guilty with a last chance for confession and absolution before death.[47] Since an insane person could not make a valid confession and receive absolution, execution had to wait until the individual had recovered their sanity. The existence of redemption is represented in political society here through the injunction against an act that would deny individuals access to redemption by blocking proper preparation for judgment.

The appropriation of redemption is not limited in how it can make its appearance; however, there are a few readily identifiable avenues within liberal democracy. Of particular emphasis here are what we can term civic virtues in accounts of liberal democracy. For instance, hope, love, peace, justice, and equality are all considered vital to the social life of liberal democracy and so are exhorted in discussions and debate as the proper practice for citizenry. These civic virtues are neither the classical Greek virtues whose practice actually make men good, nor the Christian theological virtues that develop or testify to righteousness. Proponents of civic virtues mean to indicate the features that are necessary for the proper functioning of political community and whose increase would improve human relations. Because Augustine has offered many valuable critiques of pagan virtues

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[47] Jeffrey L. Kirchmeier, "The Undiscovered Country: Execution Competency and Comprehending Death," *Kentucky Law Journal* 98: (2009-2010), 265-68.

and comments on Christian virtues, liberal scholars are drawn to Augustine's work as a resource for sharpening their own thinking on civic virtues and as a place to draw ideas that can function as civic virtues in modern democracy. While developing their version of Augustinian civic virtues, what is often lacking from the commentator is the close connection Augustine's account of any virtue has with his account of redemption. Appropriation provides the development of civic virtues without severing the connection with Augustine's theology of redemption. This provides a better account of the functional possibilities of civic virtues, which explains their potency and limitations. As we have already considered peace and justice at some length in sections above, the next section can be limited to the outline of hope and love as civic virtues.

Civic Virtue of Hope

The first civic virtue that contains a clear connection to the appropriation of redemption is hope. Augustine indicatively writes, "Though human life is compelled to be miserable by all the great evils of this world, it is happy in the hope of the world to come, and in the hope of salvation."[48] Traditionally, hope is the chief realist virtue, but this has not been highlighted in the discussions above. Standing in for realists as a whole, we may observe that Markus writes, "In contrast to the revolutionary with his programme and his strategies for realising it, the man whose hope is eschatological has no programme, no ideology, and no strategy. His hope is set on a resolution of tension and conflict far beyond any ideology."[49] What has previously been emphasized in these pages is the realist concern for human depravity, but this attention to sin is chiefly a means to express the correct hope.

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[48] *DCD* 19.4. *CG.* 924.

[49] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 171.

The correct hope is not found in the overenthusiastic political promises of various

ideologies because proper hope is particularly an eschatological hope. This expresses

Augustine's idea for this life that, "We first need to be trained to mortality in this exile of

ours, and to have our capacity developed for gentleness and patience in affliction. And so

let us apply the point to that heavenly country…from which we are at the moment exiles."[50]

In this, the realist position is not mistaken. Eschatological hope, however, is not truly an

analogous response to human depravity since hope is not the opposite of the sin that is

being combated in this life. Redemption is the remedy for sin and, therefore, the better

contrast. On this point, those who see the Gospel as "revolutionary" are not mistaken. The

emphasis upon the eschatological hope that rightly serves to constrain revolutions is

sometimes premised on the conception that redemption, also, is only an eschatological

concept and not a present one. It is on this point that realists lose their connection with the

full expression of Augustine's theological reflection.

In seeking to restrain the excesses of present expectations, realism often obscures the

present pledge received of our future eschatological inheritance. The danger is that a proper

eschatological hope must institute its own limits while also retaining its understanding of the

logic of redemption that accomplishes and secures this future state even in the present.

O'Donovan insightfully writes:

> 'Secularity' is irreducibly an eschatological notion; it requires an eschatological faith
> to sustain it, a belief in a disclosure that is 'not yet' but is absolutely presupposed as
> the inner meaning of what we know already. If we allow the 'not yet' to slide toward
> 'never,' we say something entirely different and wholly incapability, for the virtue
> that undergirds all secular politics is an expectant patience. What follows from the
> rejection of belief is an intolerable tension between the need for meaning in society

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[50] *DT* 3.4.9. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 1991), 132.

and the only partial capacity of society to satisfy the need. An unbelieving society has forgotten how to be secular.[51]

The "expectant patience" of which O'Donovan speaks is an incredibly difficult tension even when it manages to avoid slipping into "never" because we are not left waiting for the entirety of our future expectations of redemption, which has given impetus to generations of revolutionaries of all stripes. This is to say that redemption is itself not a totally eschatological phenomenon. Consider Augustine's observation on the present state of humanity that combines both sin and redemption in the present life:

> [Evil in the world] teaches us to live soberly and to understand that, by reason of that first and most grievous sin which was committed in Paradise, this life has been made penal to us, and that all the promises of the new covenant refer only to our new inheritance in the world to come. For the time being, we receive a pledge of that inheritance, and we shall in time to come enter into the inheritance of which it is a pledge. Now, therefore, let us walk in hope, and progress from day to day.[52]

Augustine's disavowal of the presence of "all the promises of the new covenant" is easily grasped in its eschatological character as the fullness of righteousness "in the world to come," but it should not be taken to deny any present manifestation that alludes to our future state, or what Augustine refers to as "a pledge of that inheritance." Augustine's insistence that the "new covenant refer[s] only to our new inheritance" will be misconstrued if it is taken as definitively as its face value seems to indicate. This statement must be balanced against his own previous statements on repentance and conversion. If the redemption offered in the new convent of Christ is only eschatological, then there is no possibility of a changed life in the present. Rather, we should understand Augustine to be asserting that the complete righteousness of perfected virtue will only be accomplished in

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[51] Oliver O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 42.
[52] *DCD* 21.15. *CG.* 1073.

"the world to come." We "walk in hope" in this life, according to Augustine, not simply

on the basis of the future complete fulfillment of the promise of heavenly redemption, but

also because of the pledge (*pignus*) or "earnest" as it has been elsewhere translated.[53]

It is not an unwarranted stretch to suppose that the pledge of the future inheritance

can extend our thinking about appropriation. It has already been observed that Augustine

allows for certain forms of divine mercy – which could have been supposed to also be

entirely eschatological – to appear in human life since humanity's exit from the earthly

paradise of the garden.[54] This present mercy is also not limited to individual believers.

Augustine declares, "Divine governance does not wholly forsake those whom it condemns,

nor does God shut up His tender mercies in anger; and, for this reason, His prohibition and

instruction stand guard over the senses of the human race and repel those forces of darkness

to which we were born subject."[55] Augustine's statement should be compared here to

Markus' attempt to push certain blessings of Christianity entirely to the next life by insisting

upon what he considers to be "Augustinian agnosticism."[56] In contrast to the Augustine's

insistence on the noetic effects of sin, Markus states, "In recoiling from monstrous

wickedness or admiring heroism, in deploring the collapse of a great culture or applauding

an advance to a more humane society [the Christian] is drawing on the *normal resources of the*

human mind."[57] Augustinian Christians can display more confidence and hope than Markus

or many other realists credit because his explication of humanity's present condition is not

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[53] See *DCD* 21.15. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), 992.

[54] This is necessary to balance provocative statements from Augustine that, "This is a state of life so miserable that it is like a hell on earth." *DCD* 22.22. *CG*. 1156.

[55] *DCD* 22.22. *CG*. 1154.

[56] Markus, *Saeculum,* 159.

[57] Ibid., 158-59 emphasis added.

limited to the "normal resources of the human mind," but rather includes both the extension of some aspects of divine mercy to the present world at large and his conception of the present pledge of the coming inheritance of redemption. Augustine implicitly appropriates resources for the present life from his theological understanding of redemption in such a way that redemption is neither debased, nor is the metaxical tension in the present life lost.[58] Fear of the loss of tension drives Markus' work, but appropriation offers more than simply this initial correction.

Augustine's appropriation of redemption can serve a great political purpose by sustaining the civic virtue of hope that is necessary in liberal democracy, yet vexingly elusive. A proper understanding of hope particularly benefits liberal democracy because it is so necessary for it to keep the present stabilized amid democracy's natural tendency to disintegrate and diffuse its energies. Consider Alexis de Tocqueville's insightful comparison between the legislative capabilities of aristocracy and democracy, "An aristocracy is infinitely more skillful in the science of legislation than democracy can ever be. Being master of itself, it is not subject to transitory impulses; it has far-sighted plans and knows how to let them mature until the favorable opportunity offers…A democracy is not like that; its laws are almost always defective or untimely."[59] On Tocqueville's reading, democracy suffers from its impetuous desires for immediate gratification that do not promote a long-term vision of

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[58] The *metaxy* is Eric Voegelin's linguistic borrowing from Plato that represents the experience of humanity existing in an order that shares time-bound, as well as timeless, features. Voegelin writes, "The In-Between – the metaxy – is not an empty space between the poles of the tension but the 'realm of the spiritual'; it is the reality of 'man's converse with the gods', the mutual participation (*methexis, metalepsis*) of human in divine, and divine in human, reality." Eric Voegelin, "Reason: The Classical Experience," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12, Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 279.

[59] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer (New York: Perennial Classics, 2000), 232.

accomplishment or guarantee the possibility of its arrival. Hope is the operative

development of goals. Democracy needs a present hope as well as a distant hope for it to

envision, commit, and accomplish large-scale and long-term projects. Too often democracy

cannot contain its citizens' myriad enthusiasms and interests as the tide of public opinion

and purpose swings erratically back and forth before anything of lasting importance and

value can be successfully completed. To borrow again from Tocqueville, "An American will

build a house in which to pass his old age and sell it before the roof is on; he will plant a

garden and rent it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he will clear a field and leave

others to reap the harvest; he will take up a profession and leave it; settle in one place and

soon go off elsewhere with his changing desires."[60]

Hope provides a remedy for this democratic danger by stabilizing individuals in the

present. Hope can provide this benefit because it works in the mind of every individual

whether they realize it or not. Augustine writes, "The mind, which regulates this process [of

time], performs three functions, those of expectation, attention, and memory. The future,

which it expects, passes through the present, to with it attends, into the past, which it

remembers."[61] The attention that humans devote to the present—a present which can never

truly be said to have any duration—depends on the mind's expectation of the future. A

proper understanding of hope, therefore, is crucial here to prepare the mind for dealing with

the contemporary circumstances. On Augustine's reading, hope is unavoidably present, but

it is necessary to stress that it must be the proper hope – it must be appropriated hope.

As an example of the need for proper hope and the problems that develop in

absence of a developed understanding of appropriation we can examine the Cold War

[60] Ibid., 536.
[61] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 277.

concept of containment. The realist of the last generation only dimly intuited that their basis for the policy of containment was actually rooted in the hope of the redemptive possibility of conversion. Commenting on the foundational national security document that developed this Cold War strategy, Henry Kissinger writes, "The purpose of the Cold War was the conversion of the adversary: 'to foster a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system,' which was defined as 'Soviet acceptance of…free institutions…in which the Russian peoples will have a new chance to work out their own destiny.'"[62] Kissinger also rightly notes the difficulty with appropriating redemptive operations in human strategies. Kissinger writes, "In those early stages of America's journey into containment [(April 1950)], no one could have imagined the impending strain on the American psyche of conflicts whose principle goal was the internal transformation of the adversary, and which lacked any criteria that could be used to assess the success of each intermediate step."[63] Appropriation is the necessary task, but it cannot be commodified into an easily attainable product and so it risks despair instead of the hope on which it is premised.

Present appropriated hope prevents the abandonment of purposes to despair and nihilism, while the definitive eschatological character of redemptive hope serves to guard against aggrandizement of the present. The realist theorists, Augustinian and non-Augustinian alike, sought a justification for resistance to enthusiasms of perfectionism in the present life, but provided little protection against the subsequent prominence of a besetting spirit of despair and nihilism that would erode the basis of its hope. Markus seems to incidentally recognize the root problem for the continuing realist tradition when he notes,

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[62] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 462; quoting from National Security Council document NSC-68.

[63] Ibid., 463.

"Living with a transcendent hope but without a unifying political ideology, political discernment and action must become fragmentary, ad hoc, piecemeal."[64] The absence of a "unifying" political vision prevents realist from developing long-term criteria or prospects that provide comfort and support. Not surprisingly, realists from the last generation often evoke a sense of dual confidence that, on the one hand, they are right to be opposing utopian political schemes, but that, on the other hand, they are doomed either to fail in their quest to protect Western civilization from committing these fundamental errors or to safeguard it from the forces of its enemies. There may be some in every society who are capable of continued dedication and effort toward lost causes, but not a great many. Often this only expresses a romantic attraction toward the mystique of a lost cause, which cannot truly be considered either a realist or an Augustinian position. Augustine poses the pertinent question, "If there is a way between one strives and that toward which he strives, there is hope of his reaching his goal; but if there is no way, or if he is ignorant of it, how does it help him to know what the goal is?"[65] What the last generation of realists failed to fully elucidate was that Augustine provided a basis for eschatological hope, but also an appropriated present hope based on our redemptive state even prior to its complete fulfillment.

The proper appropriation of hope in political policy should have similar features to the theological symbols that have been developed previously. Democracy needs to foster projects that offer the chance to represent a hope that is not immediate and perhaps never truly accomplishable by human actions alone, but one that bears evidence of some present realization. A good example here may be various facets of the United State's space

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[64] Markus, *Saeculum*, 171.
[65] *DCD* 11.2. *CG*. 451.

program.[66] For instance, President Kennedy's 1961 ambitious goal to put a man on the

moon before the end of the decade placed an incredibly challenging and long-term goal

before the American public that was eventually fulfilled, yet also providing numerous small

benefits, whether psychological or technological, as part of a vision of exploration that

continues beyond any single accomplishment. The continuing existence of the space

program and the impossibility of ever exhausting the unexplored reaches of space through

human effort alone, promises to continue providing projects that test the patience of the

American people while habituating them to think in a terms of a time-horizon that is beyond

their individual powers of realization.

As was developed above, we cannot discuss appropriation without also giving due

consideration to misappropriation. The example of the space program should also be

compare to the harmful example of misappropriated hope displayed when governments

sponsor lotteries and other games of chance in order to boost revenue.[67] Lotteries foster a

misappropriation of hope through habituating individuals to think in an abbreviated

timeframe for "salvation" from their economic and social conditions. The participant's

continuing belief that the next ticket or turn may represent the lucky moment that

immediately realizes his heart's desire and transforms his present existence from drudgery to

heavenly enjoyment hides the impossibility of ever finding long-term happiness in solely

economic terms. While at a superficial level there are undoubtedly "winners" of every

lottery drawing, at a deeper level everyone loses in this situation. Governments justify

lotteries as a source of increased tax revenue in challenging financial times, but the damage

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[66] I am indebted to Professor Joshua Mitchell for observations that prompted this example
as well as the following counter-example.

[67] Cf. Joshua Mitchell, *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American
Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 244-45.

done to the citizenry far outweighs the monetary gains because it fosters the wrong type of hope for the immediate realization of our wildest dreams without effort or prudence.

In developing the civic virtue of hope we necessarily touch themes of redemption that are best handled in a secular context by the theory of appropriation. Appropriated hope gives liberalism more than just the limits of politics; it gives small realizations of the pursuits humans can never completely realize themselves. The small realizations or redemption are a crucial movement in developing liberalism with, but beyond the mere limits of politics. It acknowledges that redemption is a human possibility without seeking to encapsulated it within our control or realize it prematurely.

Civic Virtue of Love

Love is another civic virtue offered by scholars looking to shore up liberalism with resources drawn from Augustinian analysis. Love is by far the most common expression of civic virtues and, therefore, deserves extended attention. Love is predominant in most treatments because it was crucially important to Augustine's mature thinking and can easily encapsulate a wide variety of actions as well as the other virtues. Augustine himself offers an account of the cardinal virtues that represents them as expressions of love:

> The fourfold division of virtue I regard as taken from four forms of love. For these four virtues…I should have no hesitation in defining them: that temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders and helps it.[68]

Augustine's account here depends on the proper understanding that this division only works when in reference to God as the proper object of love, but it demonstrates the relation of

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[68] Augustine, *Mor.* 1.15.25. *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4: Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the Donatists*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 48.

love to expressions of human virtues which are often distinguished and independently separated. Therefore, we can say that if love is properly accounted for, it will entail all the subsequent virtues whose appearance benefits society. It is to reap all the political advantages of virtuous conduct within the citizenry without committing itself to any overarching ideology that liberal scholars turn to the more general discussion of love.

Augustine's account of love provides two board avenues of pursuit for liberal theorists. At a fundamental level, Augustine continually refers to love as the basic motivation for all human actions. Love is what drives the human soul. No matter what action or pursuit is consider, it can be traced back to an expression of love. This is the notion of love as the gravitational force that determines the direction and strength of the pull in our lives. As we have previously seen, Augustine states, "My weight is my love; by it am I borne whithersoever I am borne."[69] This works well as a liberal explanation of political behavior that finds commonality between all peoples without requiring agreement on contested principles. There are few if any who would question that all humans love, and that society should at least be hesitant to interfere with an individual's pursuit of his love. Focusing on love, therefore, is taken as a step toward validating the liberal promotion of compromise because we cannot impose on the loves of other persons.

More immediately applicable to structural considerations of liberalism, Augustine also provides a definition of political society that can justify liberalism's neutral political structures. Here advocates of liberalism can draw on Augustine's well-known redefinition of society in response to Cicero. In contrast to Cicero's inclusion of an element of justice in his definition, Augustine writes, "Let us say that a 'people' is an assembled multitude of rational

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[69] *Conf.* 13.9. *Confessions* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4: Confessions and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 193.

creatures bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love. In this case, if we are to discover the character of any people, we have only to examine what it loves."[70] On this definition, as long as the love does not exclude the possibility of loving other things concurrently, and as long as the love is basic enough to be widely supported, there is little impediment offered for the formation and maintenance of community. The citizenry exists because some feature of liberal society is loved—for instance, equality or freedom – and there is no need to impose any other requirements or metrics.

Despite the concurrence or similarity of many liberal tenets with Augustine, there are many liberals who are hesitant or scared of publicly authorized expressions of love. They are worried about violating the neutrality of the liberal public square. Suggesting that society is or should be bound together with a common love toward something or someone seems far too close to the experience of militant nationalism from the last century. In its more benign earthly forms, love as a civic virtue could still foster paternalism and forms of excessive civic responsibility that would damage the freedom and autonomy of liberal individuals.

Despite these fears, there are still those who find it necessary to urge modern liberalism to take account of Augustine's exposition of love for the purposes of building up the modern society. Eric Gregory, for example, holds that Augustine's account of love offers "profound resources for an ethics of democratic citizenship."[71] This suggests that Augustine's view of love provides benefits to individuals within liberal society that will strengthen the public bonds that connect them without offering an account that would harm the underlying structure of society or any individual's freedom. Emphasis on individual citizens and the love that should bind them together is important here because the

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[70] *DCD* 19.24. *CG*. 960.
[71] Gregory, *Politics*, 320.

fundamental worry is not with the structural operation of liberal democracy, but with the

people who inhabit it and the activities they freely choose. Jean Bethke Elshtain develops

such an analysis of democratic individuals and asserts that liberal democracy is in trouble.

She notes:

> Although a dwindling band of pundits and apologists insist that we are simply going
> through birth pangs en route to a more glorious and productive future, such
> reassurances ring increasingly hollow. By any standard of objective evidence, those
> who point to the growth of corrosive forms of isolation, boredom, and despair; to
> declining levels of involvement in politics; to the overall weakening of that world
> known as democratic civil society, have the better case.[72]

Elshtain would certainly acknowledge that none of the evidence that she alludes to is

conclusive for an assessment of liberal democracy; however, it has contributed to causing

her to "[join] the ranks of the nervous."[73]

If Augustine's resources on the topic of love are directed toward the loves of

individuals and not the structural nature of liberal society, how will it benefit the collective

rather than simply the isolated individual? The answer supplied is that fostering loving

individual interactions benefits society as a whole because it is impossible for the individual

to independently possess the good. Gregory states, "A healthy liberal society requires a

citizenry with developed habits and dispositions to care for others, not just formal

subscription to liberal principles and procedures."[74] Consider Gregory's claim in light of

Augustine's account of the similarity between the sins of Cain and Romulus against their

respective brothers.

> A man's possession of goodness is in no way lessened by the advent or continued
> presence of a sharer in it. On the contrary, goodness is a possession which is

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[72] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre
Dame Press, 1998), 2.
[73] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), xvii.
[74] Gregory, *Politics*, 318.

enjoyed more fully in proportion to the concord that exists between partners united in charity. He who refuses to enjoy this possession in partnership will not enjoy it at all; and a man will find that he possess it more abundantly in proportion to the fullness with which he loves his partner in it.[75]

Liberal democracy is not structurally flawed in that it allows individual autonomy, but it is in danger when it has no resources to indicate that citizens lead fuller lives when they lovingly interact and share with others. In the absence of loving commitment to one another, the individual will not enjoy happiness. As Augustine continues on to declare, "The strife that arose between Remus and Romulus showed the extent to which the earthly city is divided against itself."[76] This division of the earthly city must be combated through political practice if any semblance of peace is to be achieved and maintained.

Liberal theorists can easily turn to Augustine for the civic virtue of love because his entire project is entwined with concern for love. Particularly relevant is Augustine's continued references to love of neighbor, if understood properly.[77] Augustine's concern that we should love our neighbor as ourselves should nicely fill the liberal concern to reinforce interactions that will uplift public life in modern democracy as long as it is free of any suspicion of domination or imposition, particularly with reference to the neighbor's faith commitment or lack thereof. Augustine writes, "Now God, our Master teaches two chief precepts; that is, love of God and love of neighbour…It follows, therefore, that he will take care to ensure that his neighbour also loves God, since he is commanded to love his

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[75] *DCD* 15.5. *CG.* 640.
[76] *DCD* 15.5. *CG.* 640.
[77] "The 'second great command,' 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' dominated Augustine's moral thinking. In one or another of its biblical contexts, or indifferently, it is quoted or referred to on more than a hundred and twenty occasions." Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 112.

neighbour as himself."[78] Augustine's focus on the salvation of his neighbor worries

some who would take his disposition as rabid proselytizing that will hound his neighbor and

offer help in no other fashion. O'Donovan points out that this is a short-sighted reading of

Augustine's statements. "It is not that [Augustine] rejects other goals which may be adopted

from time to time but that [salvation] is fundamental, for it is the only purpose that the

subject can conceive for the object which he can be absolutely sure is not a willful

imposition."[79] Since God has revealed the possibility of redemption and commanded love

for others, humans are freed from the most radical skepticism about their motives, even if

the possibility remains that there can be remnants or hints of domination left in their will

even regarding the hope of converting others.

Radical skepticism about domination in Augustine's love of neighbor is only one

suspicion that needs to be addressed. It is also necessary to separate love of neighbor from a

shallow version of self-love that instrumentally utilizes others. This was the fundamental

concern that drove Anders Nygren's harsh criticism that Augustine viewed the world and

other people as "given to us to be used as a means and vehicle for our return to God."[80]

Nygren's critique is dependent on his view that Augustine's distinction between "use" and

"enjoyment" entails a Platonic *eros,* rather than a truly Christian *agape*.

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[78] *DCD* 19.14. *CG*. 941.

[79] O'Donovan, *Self-Love*, 35.

[80] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 505.

Nygren is factually correct in highlighting that Augustine's commonly makes references to a distinction between "use" [*uti*] and "enjoyment" [*frui*] or implicitly assumes it in his writings.[81] For instance in the *City of God* Augustine remarks:

> The earthly city…desires an earthly peace, and it establishes an ordered concord of civic obedience and rule in order to secure a kind of co-operation of men's wills for the sake of attaining the things which belong to this mortal life. But the Heavenly City – or, rather, that part of it which is a pilgrim in this condition of mortality…must necessarily make use of this peace also, until this mortal state, for which such peace is necessary, shall have passed away.[82]

Here Augustine distinguishes the earthly city's "desire" for peace and the "things which belong to this mortal life" and the attitude of heavenly citizens who only "make use of this peace." Implicitly contained here is a distinct attitude in each city.

Augustine notes that despite the ambiguity of common speech, properly speaking, we should draw a distinction between the attitudes of each city. "We are said to enjoy that which delights us in itself and without reference to any other end, whereas we make use of something for the sake of some end which lies beyond it."[83] In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine is clearer about the important connection to love, "Enjoyment, after all, consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining."[84] As God alone should be loved finally and for his own sake, it is clear that temporal things cannot be truly enjoyed and should only be used. However, only the citizens of the heavenly city can be said to "use" temporal things properly, while members of the earthly city "abuse" temporal goods. Augustine

[81] See O'Donovan, *Self-Love*, 25-29 for a fuller discussion of the distinction between "use" and "enjoyment."

[82] *DCD* 19.17. *CG*. 945-46.

[83] *DCD* 9.25. *CG*. 483.

[84] *DDC* 1.4.4. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part I-Books, Vol. 11: Teaching Christianity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 107

offers in support the example of "perverse men who wish to enjoy money and use God,

not spending money for God's sake, but worshipping God for money's sake."[85] All things

that are passing away cannot provide the final rest that is required of true enjoyment. Rather,

the earthly city must be said to either attempt to direct its "use" of earthly goods to some

end other than God, which would more properly be deemed "abuse," or it must be said to

attempt to "enjoy" what should only be used, and again fall into "abuse."

While Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment appears helpful for

thinking about physical goods, it can be problematic for thinking about persons. As

Nygren's critique above suggests, despite the logic of Augustine's terminology, it seems

unnatural to speak of using other people as a means toward God. The Kantian sensibilities

of modern readers are immediately offended at the notion of persons as means instead of

ends. While facets of the debate over Nygren's criticism still remain, there are generally

accepted counterarguments that blunt, if not dodge, the force of his criticism. Eric Gregory

helpfully outlines three common responses to Nygren within the standard literature.[86] In the

first place, we can note the exploratory and tentative nature of Augustine's discussion of *uti*

et frui. The explicit discussion of "using people" appears in *De Doctrina Christiana*,[87] a

secondary work, and does not fully reappear in any of the major works. O'Donovan

emphasizes this point to suggest "the experimental and finally inconclusive character of its

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[85] *DCD* 11.25. *CG*. 483. Augustine here demonstrates that the present popularity of the "prosperity gospel" is not a new phenomenon.

[86] Gregory, *Politics*, 335-50.

[87] *DDC* 1.22.20. "We are commanded to love one another: but it is a question whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake, or for the sake of something else. If it is for his own sake, we enjoy him; if it is for the sake of something else, we use him." *On Christian Doctrine* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2,* ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 527.

solution to the problem of the order of love."[88] Secondly, there are some who suggest

that we incorrectly read Augustine when we are influenced by Kantian notions. John Rist

emphasizes that uti is "merely a standard Latin locution."[89] He notes, "[It] is found also in

earlier English, e.g. 'He used him well' – indicating how people are to be 'treated'; the notion

of 'exploitation' is not to be read into it."[90] This is a particularly compelling practical

argument considering Augustine himself notes, "Properly speaking, fruit is what one enjoys,

whereas a practice is something of which one makes use…Nonetheless, in speech as it is

customarily used, we both use fruits and enjoy practices."[91] Our customary ways of speaking

should not always be indicted for conveying more than is actually intended. Finally, we can

avoid the force of Nygren's criticism in noting the connection of love of God and love of

neighbor and their participation in each other. In a sermon to his congregation, Augustine

declares, "There are two commandments, you see, and there's one charity…With the same

charity as we love our neighbor with, let us also love God. But because God is one thing,

our neighbor another, they are loved with one charity, and yet they are not one thing being

loved."[92] Augustine continues further to emphasis the participation of the two commands,

"So while love of God is the great commandment that first has to be impressed on us, love

of neighbor the second, one begins all the same from the second in order to attain to the

first."[93]

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[88] O'Donovan, *Self-Love*, 26.

[89] John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 163.

[90] Ibid., 163-64.

[91] *DCD* 11.25. *CG*. 483.

[92] *S* 265.9. "Sermon 265" in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part III-Sermons, Vol. 7: Sermons 230-272B*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 238.

[93] *S* 265.9. Ibid., 239.

These approaches to Augustine's account of love all seek to demonstrate that love does not threaten the autonomy or intrinsic worth of other individuals in the way that Nygren feared, but do so without adequately handling the theological root of the problem. Augustine's doctrine of love is primarily theological and its main point is the primacy of love directed toward the redemption of our ultimate end. These approaches are correct in noting that our highest calling of love toward God does not disparage other humans, but the first two miss what the final approach only adumbrates. Namely, that love toward the divine also makes possible the love of neighbor. Appropriation is crucial here because in connecting love of the divine and love of neighbor we must remember the theological symbols that are the root of what is being represented in love of neighbor. In the same way that divine movement of love towards humanity is not contingent upon prior human action, so the meaningful appropriation of love must represent love toward others that does not depend on their own merits or excellences. It must represent love that is not self-centered and self-advantageous, but rather seeks the fulfillment of the other. This love cannot harm the giver, but rather uplifts both the lover and the beloved.

With this vision of appropriated love it is safe to discuss the benefits Augustine can bring to the citizens of liberal society without the danger of introducing a debilitating element into the structure of liberal society as a whole. Since Augustine's view of love does not instrumentally use our neighbors, we can appropriate it to suggest cooperation and inaction between liberal citizens who are often separated and alone because liberalism has great difficulty in inculcating the virtues of citizenship.

The most accessible vision of love for liberal society is friendship within the citizenry or what Gregory coins "Augustinian civic friendship."[94] Earlier it was pointed out that, "At bottom, sin was a retreat into privacy."[95] This means that depravity ruptures community by impeding its collective action and existence. In an early version of his development of the two-cities, Augustine writes, "Two loves – of which one is holy, the other unclean, one social, the other private, one taking thought for the common good…the other putting even what is common at its own personal disposal because of its lordly arrogance."[96] Collective action is benefited by the first example of love, but can too easily fall into the trap of the second example's display of self-love. Friendship should be the proper attitude of individuals toward other individuals encountered in society. Augustine declares in a sermon, "Friendship begins with married partner and children, and from there moves on to strangers. But…who will be a stranger? Every human being is neighbor to every other human being. Ask nature; is he unknown? He's human. Is she an enemy? She's human. Is he a foe? He's human. Is she a friend? Let her stay a friend. Is he an enemy? Let him become a friend."[97] Augustine's statement here is contingent upon the acknowledgement of God as humanity's mutual father, but it demonstrates the extent to which appropriated love can be spread abroad. If the reference regarding God's paternal figure is neglected, however, there is the strong risk of misappropriating this love of others

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[94] Gregory, *Politics*, 351.

[95] Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51.

[96] DGL 11.15.20. *Literal Meaning of Genesis* in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part I-Books, Vol. 13: On Genesis,* trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 439.

[97] *S* 299D.1. "Sermon 299D" in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III-Sermons, Vol. 8: Sermons 273-305A,* trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994), 256.

into the suggestion that peace among humanity is easily and necessarily attainable. The error of misappropriation here is so glaring as to not require explanation beyond its identification.

Beyond its general applicability to liberalism, we can also extend Augustine's account of friendship as a model for civic relations to include support for resisting centralized governmental authority in favor of localized community interactions. Augustine notes, "If men were always peaceful and just, human affairs would be happier and all kingdoms would be small, rejoicing in concord with their neighbors. There would be as many kingdoms among the nations of the world as there are now houses of the citizens of a city."[98] In this life we cannot completely realize the peace and justice that Augustine envisions because of the depravity of humankind, but we can appropriate it through cautious movements toward a level of self-determination that allows for smaller governing units.

Just as with the previous civic virtue of hope, love as a civic virtue necessarily displays a connection with redemptive themes that must be addressed in order to draw resources from Augustine's account. Society in its earthly form cannot realize the true social nature of man, but love remains as a constitutive and defining element of humans and necessarily appears in political society. Love cannot be avoided, so liberalism must seek after the proper representation of appropriated love. This love is not the perfection of love that is realized in redemptive love between God and humanity, but it represents aspects of that love when it shows concern for others and avoids base self-interest.

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[98] *DCD* 4.15. *CG*. 161.

Conclusion

Despite the emphasis on appropriation as a non-dogmatic unfolding of order, there will undoubtedly be resistance from individuals of other faith traditions, or no particular faith tradition, at the suggestion of accepting symbolic derivations so closely allied with Christian theology. David Walsh poses the difficulty in this way: "The great hurdle to overcome is the incomprehension of the way in which the Christian differentiation might provide the overarching meaning for a world composed of a plurality of religions and a diversity of perspectives. How can Christ be the apex of a world that is not fully Christian?"[99] The emphasis throughout Walsh's works on openness is an attempt to draw from Christian language an explanation that can operate within other symbolic differentiations of Being. Walsh notes, "Spiritual traditions can only be related from within themselves – that is, from the perspective of the most differentiated, because only such will possess the conceptual means to comprehend what is only compactly expressed in the less articulate forms."[100] Here we must remember Voegelin's discussion of equivalent symbols of order.[101] Christianity must attempt to articulate its relation to other experiences and symbols in a shared understanding of the operation of divine redemption in human life. My argument throughout has been geared toward developing appropriation as the operation and terminology to accomplish this task.

The goal of developing appropriation in Augustine is to be able to articulate the existence of redemption and its application for humanity's present existence in a way that is

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[99] David Walsh, *The Third Millennium: Reflections on Faith and Reason* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 15.

[100] Ibid., 17.

[101] Eric Voegelin, "Equivalence of Experience and Symbolization in History," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol. 12, Published Essay: 1966-1985,* ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

not limited to theology or closed off from other traditions. Appropriation of

redemption does focus on the clear differentiation of Christianity's symbolizations of its

theology, but should offer its existential resources in such a way that it is not closed off from

anyone within what C.S. Lewis referred to as the Tao.[102] The Tao is more precisely that

order which reveals and validates itself in human existence the more individuals seek to

order their lives by it. The perception of this order has been a constant through human

history and creates the equivalence of symbols seeking to represent it. In this light,

Christianity's experience and symbol of redemption can be validated by any human who

grasps the simple truth that if there is any possibility for salvation, it cannot come by our

own finite efforts. At its basic level, appropriation simply extends this idea to say that if

there is any hope of correctly appropriating redemption into political society, it must begin

from the acknowledgement that mere politics alone cannot save us. There must be a

channel of transcendence into our mundane reality. From this simple admission begin to

stream the more particular experiences and manifestations of appropriated redemption.

David Walsh's concludes his trilogy displaying a serene confidence that the very

nature of appropriating action will secure its proper outcome. He notes, "The crisis, in so

far as there is one, is the obsession with crisis itself that turns aside from the possibility of

action. The last form that the crisis assumes is an endless discussion of crisis. By action, in

contrast, the preoccupation is broken, the perspective is enlarged to include the enlargement

of the heart by which remediative grace streams into existence."[103] Political action should be

grounded in a properly attuned conception of appropriation and will in its operation provide

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[102] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man; or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of School* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 27 and *passim*.
[103] David Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 464-65.

an avenue for the benefits or stability of "remediative grace."[104] As was mentioned

above, we must understand that humans cannot master existence or the redemption that is

only glimpsed in its appearance without falling into misappropriation. Therefore, it is

necessary to remain cautious about political benefits; however, caution is not the same as

inaction or despair. The best that can be said is that there is a definite line between

appropriation and misappropriation that must be observed, and we do not create or control

that line and can only continually respect it as we move tentatively forward.

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[104] Cf. Tocqueville's concurring statement, "Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another." Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 515.

Concluding Remarks

A stated goal of this dissertation has been to do away with the basis for attributing pessimistic or otherworldly labels to Augustine. These two ideas are listed together because they form a natural continuum. Within Christianity, if one is pessimistic about the present potentialities of human behavior and attainment, it stands to reason that one will also look predominantly to the next life for any actual improvement.[1] The reverse inference is also likely. If one is focused on the realization of blessing outside this life, then it is more probable that this world will be treated with contempt.[2] Both of these attitudes or perspectives have been attributed to Augustine or historically asserted on the basis of Augustine's authority. The concern here, however, is not simply for protecting the dignity or position of Augustine within the historical canon. These ideas will have consequences in actual political life. Both can encourage oscillation between inaction in the face of real evil or the brutal domination of political life by those who claim a monopoly on righteous authority.

Shadia Drury identifies these twin political temptations and locates the root of this problematic oscillation not in Christianity itself, but in its exposition by Augustine. Drury asserts that the trap of Augustine's thinking is that, "If our ideals are so high that they

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[1] Cf. Herbert Deane's judgment that his generation must be more prepared "to give a hearing to the doctrine of original sin and to the view that ceaseless application of coercive power is necessary in order to hold in check human pride and the fruits of pride – aggression, avarice, and lust – and to preserve the fabric of civilization which is constantly imperiled by these forces." Deane, Herbert, *Social and Political Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 242.

[2] Cf. Claes Ryn's concern that, "Concentration on the vision of otherworldliness leads in St. Augustine to a partial neglect of the potentialities of this life and, most importantly, of its potential for a moral refinement and happiness of its own." "The Things of Caesar: Notes Toward the De-limitation of Politics," *Thought,* 55, (Dec. 1980), 448.

transcend altogether the domain of mundane existence, then we will lose sight of them

and they will be of no relevance to the world in which we live."[3] Drury claims Augustine's

comments on just war are indicative of this problem. Drury references Augustine's

statement that the real evils of war are: "love of violence and revengeful cruelty, fierce and

implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust for power"[4] and interprets this to mean that,

"We can kill and plunder as long as we have good intentions and don't enjoy it too much."[5]

Drury thinks this example combines both tolerance for human wickedness and support for

using state power to accomplish religious purification. She claims, "If there were no

Christians around, a pagan man of decency might come to power now and again, and

temporarily provide relief from the usual abominations."[6] Therefore, in Drury's judgment, a

political practice derived from such Augustinian principles is far worse than the pagan

practices that Christianity supplanted.

Drury claims that Augustine's radical transcendence is the root of the problem that

his development of Christianity presents. She asserts, "The trouble with the Augustinian

version of Christianity is that the radical transcendence of God and the good drains

Christianity of earthly significance. Moreover, it makes Christianity so harsh and so

uncompromising that it invites a drastic leap to another extreme – the desire to sanctify the

world, to make it testify to the love and grace of God, and to use the power of the state to

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[3] Shadia Drury, "Augustinian Radical Transcendence: Source of Political Excess," *Humanitas*
12.2 (1999), 28-29.

[4] *CFM* 22.74. Augustine, "Reply to Faustus the Manichaean" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,*
    First Series, Vol. 4: Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans, and Against the
    Donatists, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 301.

[5] Drury, "Radical," 31.

[6] Ibid., 29.

that end."[7] She provocatively concludes her judgment on Augustine, "It seems to me

that Augustine's insistence on the radical transcendence of God accounts not only for the

paradoxical and contradictory nature of his Christianity, but for its moral indecency. If

Augustine were the definitive interpreter of Christianity, then I would be forced to conclude

that the appearance of that religion was a great misfortune for mankind."[8] Despite her

judgment on Augustinian Christianity, Drury thinks there is hope for Christianity through a

Hegelian exposition of Christianity. Drury here follows the outline of Hegel's *Philosophy of*

Right in advancing a particular connection between the universal and the concrete, which she

believes will save Christianity from the clutches of Augustine's harmful thinking.

It is important to carefully wrestle with the introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

to understand the argument that Drury is advancing against radical transcendence. Hegel's

discussion of abstract right, and its movement from the individual into civil society and the

state, is rooted in his underlying philosophy. The fundamental point of Hegel's philosophy

that must be grasped from the outset is that his study is not concerned with an abstract,

idealized thought that resides somewhere beyond this world in a sphere of unchanging

perfection. Rather, Hegel is concerned with the connection of the universal with the

particular in reality. His opening statement of the *Philosophy of Right* directs us toward his

philosophical project. "The subject-matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea

of right, i.e. the concept of right together with the actualization of that concept."[9] The

movement of analysis from abstract right of persons to the exposition of the state is geared

around developing the concrete actualization of the "Idea of right." It is insufficient and

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 32.

[9] G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University
    Press, 1967), 14.

superficial, in Hegel's mind, to simply develop a hypothetical right. "Since philosophy is the exploration of the rational, it is for that very reason the apprehension of the present and the actual, not the erection of a beyond, supposed to exist, God knows where."[10] Hegel's famous aphorism, "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational," is a warning directed against misguided endeavors.[11]

After situating the basis and impetus of his philosophy in the connection of the universal and the particular, Hegel expounds the idea of abstract right. The discussion of abstract right is situated in the individual person because it is only here that the perception of the universal is possible, and in fact, it is only because the person exists within the universal that he can be conscious of its existence. The person is thus the basis and development of right from its abstract to its concrete manifestation. "Personality is at once the sublime and the trivial. It implies this unity of the infinite with the purely finite, of the wholly limitless with determinate limitation."[12] Personality can be at once trivial and sublime because, as a particular and limited manifestation, man will pass away and come to nothing. In this passing particularity, however, is also contained moments and seeds of universality that are instances of sublime transcendence. "The concept's moving principle," Hegel suggests of this simultaneity of trivial and sublime, "which alike engenders and dissolves the particularization of the universal, I call 'dialectic.'"[13] Against shallow notions of the dialectic as difference, he continues at greater length, "The loftier dialectic of the concept consists not simply in producing the determination as a contrary and a restriction, but in producing and seizing upon the positive content and outcome of the determination, because it is this which

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[10] Ibid., 10.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 235.
[13] Ibid., 34.

makes it solely a development and an immanent progress."[14] The positive content that

Hegel strives to demonstrate in its fullest expression is the basis and existence of the state as

the proper end of individual and corporate human existence.

Hegel neither stops nor tarries at expounding the connection of the individual and

the universal, but rather he continues apace to develop his conception of the state in light of

his understanding of the individual. His conception of the state is meant to flow out of the

fulfillment of his conception of the individual because the individual requires the state for

his full ethical and rational development. Hegel writes, "The rational end of man is life in

the state, and if there is no state there, reason at once demands that one be founded…It is

false to maintain that the foundation of the state is something at the option of all its

members. It is nearer the truth to say that it is absolutely necessary for every individual to be

a citizen."[15] It logically follows that Hegel's concern for the actuality of the rational universal

in the concrete particular is most important in his political thought. It is the political that

contains and develops the fullest expression of right. Since the individual person is the basis

of abstract right, the spheres that connect individuals together (contract, family, civil society,

and state) are all higher realms that more fully demonstrate the expression of right. Despite

the evident diversity of civil and political forms, these spheres demonstrate the actuality of

the universal. "For since rationality (which is synonymous with the Idea) enters upon

external existence simultaneously with its actualization, it emerges with an infinite wealth of

forms, shapes, and appearances."[16] In contrast to common misconceptions about

philosophy, for Hegel, philosophy is not about what theoretically might be, but about what

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 242.
[16] Ibid., 10.

supremely is in its manifold expression. "This book, then, containing as it does the

science of the state, is to be nothing other than the endeavour to apprehend and portray the

state as something inherently rational."[17]

A benefit of the existential turn of modern philosophy has been to avoid the dangers

and deficiencies of abstract philosophy and the language in which it is formulated.

Existential language, however, has also created its own problems for philosophy, particularly

its seeming incomprehensibility for the uninitiated. While trying to avoid a derailed

understanding of propositional metaphysics and sheer dogmatism, life must still be lived and

decisions made about what is right. Even more problematically, humans are often

compelled by reality to expound and openly rationalize their individual decisions and general

life. For the sake of living life and talking about it, a way must be found through the tangle

of the existential turn of philosophy. Some connection or unity must be sought for practical

decisions and theoretical philosophy.[18]

The emphasis on dispelling otherworldly and pessimistic conclusions regarding

Augustinian Christianity has served the further goal of this dissertation's investigation of

Augustine contribution to contemporary political theory. Contrary to Drury's contention,

Augustine is not harmful to present theory or practice. Particularly, Augustine can still

contribute to political philosophy because his thinking has been expounded above in a way

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[17] Ibid., 11.

[18] In this light, consider Carol Harrison's remark that, "Christianity's distinctive emphasis upon the practice and rhetoric of love in its Scriptures and preaching enabled it to create a linguistic community in which the central message of the faith could both be understood and communicated in such a way that it was then practiced and lived. In other words, the central message of love of God and neighbour was interpreted and preached in such a way that it inspired and moved the hearer to love. We cannot therefore underestimate the social and cultural function of exegesis of Scripture, and preaching upon it, in the formation of Christian culture and society." *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 67.

that avoids the Hegelian criticisms outlined here. This provides a path to reintegrate

Augustine into contemporary philosophy. In contrast with classical Greek *science* that suffers

under Hegel's criticism of abstract thinking, Augustine elaborates Christian *wisdom* that gains

greater insight by focusing on the temporal manifestations of the eternal. As opposed to

science that attempts to gain "rational cognizance of temporal things," Augustine stresses

the importance of wisdom, which is "intellectual cognizance of eternal things."[19] Therefore,

while remaining in the world, Christian wisdom enables man to grasp at eternal verities.

Charles Norris Cochrane notes, "On this account it manages to avoid certain pitfalls of the

scientific intelligence which, proceeding as it does by way of analysis, breaks up the concrete

whole of experience into what it conceives to be its original elements, only to find itself

confronted with the problem of reassembling the scattered fragments and of galvanizing

them into life."[20] As Augustinian wisdom is not reductionistic, it can unify and verify truth

without damaging reality in the process.

Particularly, we must here respectfully disagree with John Rist's claim that, "A sane

theory of a *philosophia perennis* is that later thinkers develop the work of their predecessors,

not that later work reveals what is fully implicit in what went before."[21] Chiefly because

Augustine's thinking is geared around his explication of Christianity, there is every possibility

of later thinkers expounding differentiated aspects of Christianity that are compactly present

in Augustine's work, or that we have not perceived certain differentiated aspects of

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[19] *DT* 15.15.25. *On the Holy Trinity* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3: Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 165.

[20] Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), 459.

[21] John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6.

Augustine's work. In the terms in which this paper has developed, the advance of philosophy has shown that it is insufficient to contemplate redemption solely as an eschatological reality without also considering the actualization of redemption in our practical, existential lives. This is exactly what Augustine provides when we closely examine his works.

The solution to this difficult has been presented here as the appropriation of redemption. It is used to acknowledge that a finite human can never immovably fix the truth of the reality in which he exists. Consider Tocqueville's rather Hegelian observation, "God has no need of general ideas, that is to say, He never feels the necessity of giving the same label to a considerable number of analogous objects in order to think about them more conveniently."[22] Obviously, man finds himself on the opposite end of the spectrum and greatly in need of generalized ideas to assist him in working through the manifold expression of experienced reality.[23] Appropriation is one such attempt to work with an experience whose total actuality is far beyond the grasp of particular beings. Instead of lamenting human limitation, appropriation respectfully attempts to move forward nonetheless. Humans can acknowledge their finiteness and still find existential resources to appropriate as a ground or basis for themselves and others. Humans are not left in a tangle of uncertainty by their particularity; they can be attuned to the order of existence without seeking to control

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[22] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer (New York: Perennial Classics, 2000), 437.

[23] Schelling has a similar reflection on the influence of common and systematic labels on our thinking. "It cannot be denied that it is a splendid invention to be able to designate entire points of view at once with such general epithets. If one has once discovered the right label for a system, everything else follows of its own accord and one is spared the trouble of investigating its essential characteristics in greater detail. Even an ignorant person can render judgment upon the most carefully thought out ideas as soon as they are presented to him with the help of such labels." F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquires into the Nature of Human Freedom* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1992), 10.

it. Attunement to order is the first philosophical movement, and appropriation is the practical movement of deriving insight from the attunement. Appropriation, therefore, is the essential component and contribution of Christian theology to political philosophy and human existence.

It has been imperative to focus on an Augustinian development of appropriation instead of some other canonical figure within the Christian tradition because of his unique position as definitive expositor of the two-cities model, which continues to set the boundaries of political discourse. In the same way that only President Richard Nixon could visit China, only by developing Augustine can there be any hope to plausibly exposit earthly representations and realizations of the transcendent city through redemption. If a Democratic president had attempted to open diplomatic relations with communist China, they would have been open to the full strength of a withering Republican critique and opposition. Since Nixon's anti-communist credentials could not be impeached, he was able to open diplomatic relations without being realistically accused of capitulating to communist ideology. In the same way, any Christian thinker other than Augustine would be subject to his foundational critique if he sought to reformulate Christianity's traditional understanding of political action. From the Christian standpoint, Augustine's criticism of earthly politics cannot be disproved, so it remains to use Augustine's own work to provide the needed nuance. Augustinian appropriation can serve both the traditional function of limiting political projects because the division between the two cities remains intact, as well as suggest how Christian theology offers continuing resources to political theory through existential representation.

Appropriation makes it possible to work with the symbols of Christian theology and revelation because by their very nature they are transcendent, but, in contrast to Greek speculation, never radically so. James Schall notes of Augustine in this light, "Augustine saw that the doctrines of the Incarnation, immortality, redemption, resurrection, and the Church necessarily demanded, in their intellectual formations, that the One, God, be kept distinct from the many, yet not so distinct that God could not come into the world."[24] Christianity is not locked into an abstracted system where transcendence is isolated and self-contained with no outside contact. Christianity provides symbols that move between present particularity and an eschatological transcendent culmination. Without a technical vocabulary that can consider myriad manifestations of Christianity, the symbolic representations of Christianity will vacillate in the political realm between irrelevance and outright danger instead of representing ever-present resources for attunement to the existing order or reality.

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[24] James V. Schall, *Reason, Revelation, and the Foundations of Political Philosophy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 76.

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