

2015

Caving Into The Will Of The Masses?: Relics In Augustine's City Of God

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Recommended Citation

Gadis, Jessica, "Caving Into The Will Of The Masses?: Relics In Augustine's City Of God" (2015). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 694.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/694

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**CAVING INTO THE WILL OF THE MASSES?:
RELICS IN AUGUSTINE'S *CITY OF GOD***

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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APRIL 24, 2015

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I. Introduction: An Intellectual Elite Embracing the Superstitions of the Masses?

“*The City of God, for those who can understand it, contains the secret of death and life, war and peace, heaven and hell*” - Thomas Merton, 1948

“*Tolle lege, tolle lege*” - Augustine, *Confessions*

Augustine was born in the small North African village of Thagaste on the 13th of November 354. As a youth he was a reluctant student of the Greek and Latin classics in Madaura before being sent to a school of rhetoric in Carthage. It was there, after being temporally lured by the calls of theatre and women¹, that the teenager with his head buried in philosophy books found ‘a desire to embrace truth and wisdom in whatever form he might find it’². Upon a visit to Hippo Regius in 391, he became a candidate for the bishopric and was consecrated as such in 395. In the next thirty-five years of his episcopacy he concerned himself with the refutation of heresies of the Manichees, the Donatists, the Pelagians and the Arians on the grounds of multiple points of Catholic theology. In the following years he wrote over 113 dialogues, doctrinal and exegetical treatises, sermons and 218 letters³ both establishing his mark on church doctrine and defending Christian authority. Through this authorship and his participation in church councils, Augustine came to be recognized as one of the most important figures in Latin Christendom.

Written between 413 and 426, the 22 books of *De Civitate Dei*, or as it is known in English, the *City of God*, are arguably the most complex and intricate work which Augustine of Hippo Regius (395-430), and in fact, any author of the Late Antique world ever produced. The text was written in response to the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410. And, as many pagans, “who prefer(ed) their own gods to the Founder of this city”⁴, attributed blame for this disaster to the empire’s recent conversion to Christianity, it is Augustine’s most extensive defense of 5th century Church. The massive volume can be thematically divided into two halves. The first half employs historical accounts of the Roman empire to illuminate the “failings and systemic

I would like extend my thanks to Professor Wolf, for directing my interests and teaching me the value of concentric circles, to my family for supporting me without question, and to my friends Hanna McGinnis, for keeping me motivated through the long haul with laughter and empathy, and to Eric Caldwell, who has stood with me through everything else, academics least among them; to these people I owe my sincerest gratitude. This paper would not have been completed without their support.

¹ During this time, the mistress of the 18 year old Augustine gave birth to a son, Adeodatus, with whom Augustine was later baptized in 387 A.D. (Roy W. Battenhouse, *A Companion to the Study of Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 23, 37).

² Ibid. 24.

³ Marcus Dods, “Translator’s Preface”, *The City of God* (Glasgow, 1871), x; *n.b.* this is only a small percentage of a larger number of Augustine’s work which have survived to the present day.

⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, 1. Pref. 3, trans. Marcus Dods, 5th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2013), 3.

inconsistencies of the Roman gods”⁵. This is done in order to “refute those who fancy that polytheistic worship is necessary to secure worldly prosperity”⁶ and to argue that, even amidst the disasters, like the fall of the Roman Empire, which “will at all times attend, the human race”, religion is more important than ever in relation to “the life to come”⁷. The second half of the text, books 11-22, is consequently concerned with specifically addressing the attacks against Christian doctrine and theology. Through a dense, yet vibrant argument highly dependent upon Scripture, Augustine therein crafts the thesis, as it were, of the entire work: that the history of the world and mankind can be seen as the tale of two opposing ‘cities’: the City of God and the City of Man. And, as the City of Man and all its institutions, are made up of men and women (destined to error and sin as a result of their Fall) there is only one way to regain the repose and state of perfection which man originally possessed in the Garden of Eden. It is by serving and devoting oneself to the worship of God over the cares and concerns of the temporal world, that man may be granted a place within this City of God and achieve true wisdom and happiness.

Curiously enough, the final book of the City of God does not act as one might expect of the culmination of such a large work. Instead of solely reinforcing its thesis, book 22 introduces a new topic in the form of the relics of saints. Why then does his ultimate defense of Christian doctrine end with, of all things, a string of accounts of miracles associated with the bones of saints? Indeed, what explains this sudden, seemingly uncharacteristic concern with the common people and firm insistence to officially record and preserve such events?

The history of scholarship concerned with explaining this irony is aptly described in the first chapter of Peter Brown’s *Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* in which he outlines two very different approaches to the history of relics. The more traditional of the two, which he calls the ‘two-tiered model, is based upon the work of eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume. Even Brown acknowledges the importance of Hume’s 1757 *Natural History of Religion* both in regards to its insight into the workings of the religious mind and its apt portrayal “of the nature and causes of superstition in the ancient world”⁸. In an attempt to explain mankind’s ‘natural’ belief in polytheism, Hume cast aside the common scapegoat of human sin and attributed the weakness of theistic belief to the intellectual capacity of the average human mind⁹. It is only under certain external conditions, Hume claimed, that such a mind might be enabled to understand matters on a higher plane, like those of religion. However, according to Hume the right combination of conditions which would be necessary to instill belief in a single god are cyclical, and rare, occurrences¹⁰. Until

⁵ Dods, “Translator’s Preface”, xi.

⁶ Ibid. xiii.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Peter Brown, *Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Late Antique Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.13-15.

this environmental shift occurs, mankind supposedly oscillates between two poles , “ris(ing) from idolatry to theism, and sink(ing) again from theism to idolatry”¹¹. In this lens, any given society can be seen to rise and fall in relation to which of two distinct parties, the vulgar or the elite intellectual, exercises greater social influence and pressure. This model of history is characterized by series of systemic changes, instituted by the ‘vulgar’ masses, which force the cultural and religious sentiments of the elite to ‘slip’ down to, *i.e.* realign themselves with, those of popular design¹². However, it is in this claim that Hume displays a damning prejudice, for his champion of the ‘vulgar’ or the ‘popular’¹³ is rendered incompetent not so much by its lack of education or fortune but rather by an inability or mental deficiency which Hume deems ‘natural’ to the lower classes.

The second approach, and the approach which I aim to challenge, is Brown’s revision of this ‘two-tiered’ model. Brown centers his own study of the cult of saints in the Late Antique Mediterranean around the creation of this model of Late Antique power relations¹⁴. Unlike Hume, he does not base his analysis on categories of class or educational difference. Instead, he rejects this model for its assumption that the beliefs of any group are uniform and constant. Brown then builds on the work of French Byzantine historian Evelyne Patlagean to base his alternative model on a re-appropriation of the classical patron-client relationship¹⁵. In the secular world, this relationship is seen to undermine the trade of relics between patriarchal families¹⁶. In the clerical world, this relationship is manifested in the connection formed between the supplicant and the invisible *praesentia* of a saint¹⁷. These new forms of the patron-client relationship serve to reinforce existing modes of human dependence¹⁸ and new forms ‘by which power was exercised’¹⁹. Brown thus defines the two groups of his model, those who of the *reverentia* and those of the *rusticitas*²⁰, by their acceptance or denial of the authority of the Christian hierarchy and its new instrument of theological consolidation: the cult of relics.

¹¹ Ibid. 14.

¹² Ibid. 16-19.

¹³ The popular in the sense of the Latin word *populus*.

¹⁴ Brown’s focus is primarily upon the cult of saints and relics are only a small part of his larger argument. My focus is specifically on the ‘cult of relics’ which may be defined as the use of relics and any practices, rituals, or relationships which are manifested by or around these objects.

¹⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 45.

¹⁶ Ibid. 39-41.

¹⁷ Ibid. 58, 62.

¹⁸ In this set of interdependent power relations the individual is bound by an obligatory contract to serve a new (Christian) authority. For an extended explanation see section II.

¹⁹ Ibid. 22.

²⁰ Ibid. 119.

Augustine's seemingly uncharacteristic interest in relics serves as a good example of how differently Hume's 'two-tiered model' and Brown's revisionist approach function. When inputted into the 'two-tiered' model, Augustine's affirmation and acceptance of a practice of popular religion, like the cult of relics, is simply a necessary evil borne by the elite under the overwhelming pressure and "force of inertia"²¹ of the irrational masses. Augustine does, on one hand, appear to support the distaste of the vulgar that is central to the two-tiered model. Indeed, the overall impression one gets of Augustine's view of the common people in his early works is often damning at best: foolish and erring, they must be guided and controlled by others for their own physical and spiritual health²². It is also through their example whereupon Augustine clearly distinguishes between true and untrue belief; with latter manifested in the local practices and 'superstitions' that the common masses maintained in opposition to legitimate 'Christian' faith²³. Yet, ironically, Augustine does not apply this same attitude towards the cult of relics itself. Within Brown's model, Augustine would seem to be a member of the first party, that of *reverentia*, who helps maintain the beliefs which reinforce systems of patronage and authority. His intention, in Brown's mind, is, as a leader within a radically evolving late antique society, to subtly promote the transition of both parties into the acquiescence of new forms and relationships of power. Therein, the concern of Augustine's twenty-second book of the *City of God* can be seen as a reflection of a need that all levels of society, from the pauper to the bishop, had to embrace in accordance with the zeitgeist of Late Antiquity.

Brown's claim, however, does not give full credit to the significance to which Augustine attributed to relics and the power of the cult of saints in Late Antique Christendom. Nor can Augustine be safely secured within either historical model as both underestimate the subtleties embedded within Augustine's use of relics. In the 22nd book of Augustine's *City of God*, the cult of relics can be seen as a compromise between either model's diametrically opposed parties: as it accepts the inadequacies of those who constitute the bulk of their congregation (especially the public's need for sensory experience) in order to provide them with key empirical evidence of the truths of Christianity: the corporeal relics of saints²⁴. Moreover, according to Augustine, relics are explicit proof that a union between the divine substance of a soul and the lesser vessel of the body is possible. And, it is this union which then allows man to understand, follow, and channel the divine, respectively enabling: belief, devotion, and intercessory agency.

This thesis will attempt to argue that Augustine's use of the cult of relics within the 22nd book of the *City of God* was the culmination of a series of historical circumstances and events which had personal significance to the theologian. I argue that his emphatic support of this Late Antique practice was not solely for the sake of

²¹ Ibid. 15.

²² Augustine's opinion of the common man, however, changes drastically over time. This shift in thought and the reason behind it explained in detail later on.

²³ Specifically those that, in some manner, deny the validity of Christ's divinity: *i.e.* the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Ascension

²⁴ Corporeal relics being bodily fragments, usually of bone, as opposed to any secondary relics, such as clothes or oils, that have become imbued with power by physical contact with the body of a saint or martyr.

substantiating the tenet of the Resurrection, but that it was also aimed at a providing all of mankind, who struggle to believe on the basis of word alone, with an authority that could definitely remove any obstacles that obstructed individual belief.

II. Peter Brown's Model: the Role of Relics in the Late Antique World

In April of 1978, Peter Brown gave a series of six lectures on the cult of saints²⁵ which would later become the basis for a book of the same name; and the framework of this thesis. The scale of his book is much larger than the present work and the objectives of the two pieces differ to a significant extent. Brown has the resources to consider evidence not only of the written treatment of relics but also the material evidence which concerns the relics and the tombs of the saints, as well as any objects which might have been associated with the dead in the 3rd to 6th centuries in the Western Mediterranean. Brown bases his study off of the claim that a discernible theological shift transpired during this period which renegotiated the traditional barriers between the living and the dead. This shift was caused by the legitimization of the cult of relics which, in Brown's words, joined the metaphysical realms of "Heaven and Earth at the grave of a dead human being"²⁶ i.e. the *memoriae* or grave of a saint. The importance of Brown's work, for my purposes, is not so much in the details of his discussion of the rituals and influence of these *loca sanctorum*²⁷, as in, how he discusses them and the theoretical framework which he constructs around them. Brown's aim is to create a model of understanding the rise of this cult that is inclusive of all levels of society from the top down. He asserts that from this greater whole one can see:

" the lurching forward of an increasing proportion of late-antique society towards radically new forms of reverence shown to new objects in new places, orchestrated by new leaders, and deriving its momentum from the need to play out the common preoccupation of all, the few and the "vulgar" alike, with new forms of the exercise of power, new bonds of human dependence, new, intimate, hopes for protection and justice in a changing world"²⁸.

After laying out the roadmap of his book in this quote, Brown goes on to challenge the misconception, promoted by extant sources, that the debate over the cult of relics was a conflict between old pagan traditions and new Christian versions. Instead, Brown contends that it is a civil dispute within the Christian faith and that the conservative opinion which opposed the worship of these inanimate objects, and not the voice of authors that we know such as Augustine or Jerome, was the dominant one. This claim is based off documentary evidence and the belief that mankind as a whole naturally tends to lean towards stability²⁹. Given this claim, the greatest source of opposition to relics is

²⁵ Please note that the 'cult of saints' and 'cult of relics' are used interchangeably in the following summary.

²⁶ Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 1.

²⁷ Sites across the Mediterranean made 'holy' by bodies of the saints (Ibid. 11)

²⁸ Ibid. 21-22

²⁹ Ibid. 29.

the majority of the Christian laity who circumscribe burial and the body to the authority of the private sphere as it is traditionally a social experience over a religious one³⁰.

Brown's model, which was outlined in my introduction, is heavily dependent upon the recognition of his ideas of *praesentia* and *potentia*³¹. It is the 'potentia' or potential power of relics which enables the 'praesentia', the supernatural spirit and powers of a saint, to be diffused across long distances, imbued within physical objects or space, and, most importantly, enables it to channel the divine power of resurrection for the sake of granting physical or spiritual aid to mortal suppliants. According to Brown, the benefits which each level of society receives from the cult of saints directly correlates to the presence of these two factors in any given situation.

On the macro-scale of the Late Antique Mediterranean, Brown assesses that the cult of saints had the greatest effect on the urban and clerical elite, the secular and ecclesiastical institutions which controlled these groups, and the economic networks of goods and services that connected them³². One of the most visible effects of the cult is seen in the movement of power centers outside of their previous urban environments either into extra-mural cemeteries, where a 'town outside of a town' developed, or into the countryside, where a "articulated relationship" formed between the *memoriae* or shrines, of notable saints³³. In the former, bishops mobilized the 'potentia' of relics "to form the basis of lasting ecclesiastical power structures"³⁴. Under the guise of maintaining the cult of relics in a respectful and appropriate manner, the bishops of the western Mediterranean were able to liquidize the large reserves of wealth they had accumulated from a century of untouched endowments³⁵. They adorned reliquaries in the finest of materials and built splendid martyrums around these them all supposedly for the sake of 'glorifying God and his saints'. Whether we may be skeptical of their motives or not, such a display of wealth must certainly have endowed them with immeasurable social dominance and altered the relationship between the clerical elite and their former patrons: the secular elite. With a given saint as their new patron and spiritual benefactor, the clerical elite were relieved from a "freedom of maneuver [that] could only [previously] be gained by playing off [of] conflicting patronage networks"³⁶. It was they who could now bestow 'gratia' on secular authorities by the possession or

³⁰ Ibid. 31; Conscious of this fact, Brown bases his model on the interaction of two groups which are not defined along any religious lines.

³¹ Directly translated, the 'presence' and 'power' of the holy dead. That said, Brown uses the term 'praesentia' to describe the unseen spirit of a saint which, having been reunited to the soul by resurrection, serves as an intermediary between man and God (Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 88). 'Potentia', then, is the potential power of this relationship which may be exercised by individuals or institutions to enact changes in the physical world as opposed to the spiritual one. (Ibid. 107)

³² The gift or loan of a saint's relics, and the obligatory relationship which such 'gift-giving' formed, being a vital one of these services; Brown also perceives the translation of relics as a method of imposing symbolic unity across a scattered Christian church (Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 92, 89).

³³ Ibid. 8.

³⁴ Ibid. 10.

³⁵ Ibid. 39

³⁶ Ibid. 64.

lending of the holy in the form of portable relics³⁷. A trade in relics evolved alongside the pilgrimage networks that extended from the Holy Land westwards and this trade became a source of competition between the secular and clerical elite. These networks also greatly affected the minority and disadvantaged groups of the Late Antique population. The pilgrimage networks, themselves, were essential in promoting the economic growth and prosperity of small towns. This then made the expansion of local infrastructure necessary in order to facilitate new foot traffic. These bridges and roads increased the access of poor rural inhabitants to the town³⁸ and upon coming to the body of the saint the poor then found both a spiritual and physical benefactor. While the ‘praesentia’ of a saint might ‘render malleable seemingly inexorable processes’³⁹ like the communication with the dead or divine, it was the location of the shrine itself that became the new focus of the traditional patron-client relationship that articulated the Roman world: alms were distributed to the poor at the shrine and an even greater amount of private euergetism was redirected away from the civic space and monumental architecture towards excessive allowances of food that were granted upon the event of a saint’s feast day⁴⁰. This “lowering of social boundaries that haunted the urban Christian communities of the Mediterranean world” also had an impact on women⁴¹. For the sake of attending to the poor⁴², who had become the recipients of society’s charity, women were granted increased mobility and entrance into the public realm. Additionally, even though the bodies of the dead had always been places where the “movement and choice of company (of women) were less subject to male scrutiny and the choice of family”⁴³, women gained even more freedom in the ability to go on pilgrimage. In the distance between holy bodies, or holy body to home, some women were allowed to travel, often unaccompanied by men, for extended periods of time without serious reproach⁴⁴. Elite women were also able to capitalize on the ‘potentia’ of the relics trade and sponsor the construction of church buildings⁴⁵.

The control of relics and the prestige that went with it also altered the relationships between the provincial elite and clergy. Besides benefiting from the financial wealth that accompanied translations, prominent local families used relics and

³⁷ Ibid. 89.

³⁸ Ibid. 42.

³⁹ Ibid. 65.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 45.

⁴¹ *n.b.* this only applies to women of certain classes, primarily those of nobility or the political elite

⁴² Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 46.

⁴³ Ibid. 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; *n.b.* the vast distances which spanned these networks of holy bodies and relics also allowed for greater local variations of ritual and practice. Although some of these were forms of worship were chastised by the clergy as ‘superstitions’, they were also promoted at times for the sake of acculturation. For more on this see Alan Thacker, “Membra Disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult”, in *Oswald: Northumbrian king to European saint*, ed. Claire Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Watkins, 1995), 97-127 and George Demacopoulos, “Gregory the Great and the Pagan Shrines of Kent”, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 2 (2008), 353-69.

⁴⁵ See later footnote 234 and its commentary on church building as a source of competition for elite lay women.

their access to these spiritual commodities as a way of strengthening their connection to God⁴⁶ and attaining new positions of power that were independent of the imperial apparatus⁴⁷. Increasing imperial taxation during the 5th century had led to one of two actions by these local elites. Smaller fish, like the decurions, were forced to supplement any deficit in taxes collected within their town with their own estate holdings⁴⁸. Other provincial elites simply bribed the tax collectors and passed on this tax burden to smaller farmers. Many of whom, unable to pay these taxes, were then forced to transfer their holdings to these elites and become, in effect, tenants on their own land. In these growing country estates, or villae, provincial elites invested in the construction of churches or small chapels, (relics included) in order to procure new ‘quasi-religious’ positions⁴⁹. By controlling the access to relics and their ‘praesentia’, local elites adopted the “semiotics of the city in the countryside” and gained a level of social control over their local communities⁵⁰. In a very similar manner, the healing power of relics was also used by provincial clerics to reinforce the hierarchy and authority of the Christian church⁵¹ at a local level. In his last chapter on ‘potentia’, Brown uses the example of exorcism to show how the conventional systems of patronage are maintained, albeit in slightly different forms⁵².

These two examples function to demonstrate how the cult of saints did not benefit all groups of society, but instead, merely reworked the subtleties of existing power mechanisms to be more advantageous to certain groups. The groups who support this ‘new acquiescence of power’ form the basis of Brown’s model as the ‘reverentia’. The ‘rusticias’, then, are those groups who reject these modes of dependence and any submission to a new (Christian) authority for political, economic or social reasons as opposed to religious ones; *i.e.* these categorizations lack any religious component.

A. Augustine within Brown’s Revisionist Model

⁴⁶ This desired closeness to God, and to the divine, was physically manifested in the coveted privilege of *ad sanctos burial*. It was thought that the closer a deceased individual’s proximity to the body of the holy dead, the greater their chances of being admitted to the Paradise which the saint’s body promised; See later footnotes 144 and 227 for a lengthier discussion of this burial practice and Augustine’s thoughts on the matter.

⁴⁷ Although the province of North Africa remained vital to the Roman state for its yearly *annona* of wheat and olive oil - until the truncation of these maritime networks in 455 with the sack of Rome by the Vandals (pers. comm. M. Shane Bjornlie, 8 April 2015) - the epiphenomenal benefits of the Roman economic system were, by this period, already being overtaken by the burdens of increasing taxation and the costs of maintaining physical security without a strong Roman military presence. For the effect this change had upon the life of the *curiales* class and other local elites see the following footnote on the ‘de-incentivation of local political offices’ (Ibid.).

⁴⁸ As a result of this in-advantageous situation many younger sons, heirs to this inherited office, attempted to escape by various means. One very common method was joining the Church.

⁴⁹ See Gisela Ripoll and Javier Arce, “The Transformation and End of Roman Villae in the West (Fourth and Seventh Century Perspectives): Problems and Perspectives,” in *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Nancy Gauthier & Neil Christie (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 63-114.

⁵⁰ Pers. comm. M. Shane Bjornlie, 8 April 2015; See references to such elites in Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 185-191; Although not explicitly mentioned in Brown’s *Cult of Saints* this claim only serves to reinforce his categories of ‘reverentia’ and ‘rusticitas’ and the relationships of dependence (126).

⁵¹ In North Africa such ‘cures’ occurred at both Catholic and Donatist churches.

⁵² Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 111-120.

As an influential member of the ‘reverentia’ Augustine of Hippo, is given specific mention in the *Cult of Saints* primarily as a counterexample of the two-tiered model. After disputing the claim that Augustine’s support of relics in the last book of the City of God is a “clearly documented victory of the ‘vulgar’”⁵³, Brown proposes that Augustine employs the cult of saints as the basis for his doctrine of predestination. The saints are, therein, examples of the fate of the elect after judgement and their relics are “secure reference points of his seemingly vertiginous speculations”⁵⁴. In Brown’s opinion, the series of miracle accounts chronicled in the 22nd book is important for the valuable insight it provides into Augustine’s mind and how he understands the “unthinkable concept of a future integration of flesh and spirit”⁵⁵. But, Brown leaves one serious loose end in his treatment of Augustine: although he unremittingly insists that Augustine’s support of the cult is an “intellectual breakthrough of the first order” and not a “belated concession to the mindless weight of ‘popular belief’”⁵⁶ he is, at the time of the *Cult of Saints*, unable to convincingly support this claim. Although when Brown retouches upon the subject almost two decades later⁵⁷ he does provide some additional proof.

However, the question of how well a figure like Augustine of Hippo fits into Peter Brown’s model is complicated by the discovery of new evidence⁵⁸. Between 1975 and 1990 a series of 29 letters and 26 sermons were discovered in 15th century manuscripts in Marseilles and Mainz. The ‘Divjak’ letters and the ‘Dolbeau’ sermons, respectively named after their discoverers, caused a massive uproar in many academic circles. In his more recent epilogue to *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* Brown claims that these sets of documents are essential in capturing two separate but crucial, and previously unilluminated, stages of the bishops’s life: an eager preacher just elected bishop and an old man weary of public life and responsibilities⁵⁹. After examining these bodies of evidence in detail, Brown revises his earlier approximation of Augustine as a ‘stern, authoritarian figure’⁶⁰ and a man of the Church. He then argues that Augustine’s tone in the Dolbeau sermons and his attention to the daily affairs of his see reveal that Augustine’s “statements were by no means the *ex cathedra* statements of the

⁵³ Ibid. 27-28.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 72.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 77; This concept is the basis of Augustine’s theories of the first and second resurrection. For an elaboration of this see section IVA.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 78.

⁵⁷ This revision will be discussed in the following footnote and the remaining paragraphs of this section.

⁵⁸ New in relation to Brown’s *Augustine of Hippo: A biography* (1967) and his *Cult of Saints* (1981). The following information is from a chapter of his epilogue, ‘New Evidence’ pg. 1441-481, in the second edition of *Augustine of Hippo* published in 2000.

⁵⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 445.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

representative of a securely established Catholic hierarchy”⁶¹. But then he says that, the Divjak letters, written 14 to 24 years after these sermons, depict an Augustine “battling, unsuccessfully, to check the worst abuses of the Imperial administration”⁶². What happened between Augustine’s ordination as a bishop and the end of his life to transform him from an eloquent preacher, with a few slightly non-conventional views, to a weathered but sharp old man eternally dissatisfied with all temporal authorities, secular and ecclesiastical alike?

While Brown’s failure to satisfactorily explain this change can be justified by the nature of the extant sources, the main flaw in Brown’s argument is that it does not go far enough in hammering out the minutiae in the case of relics. He does not explain how this shift corresponds to Augustine’s support of relics either in text or practice; nor does he discuss the greater theological implications which relics had on Augustine’s own thought and on the contemporary Christian population. Furthermore, while Brown mentions the 22nd book of the *City of God* multiple times in the *Cult of Saints* and his biography of Augustine, he never employs any material from this text to aid his argument. A curious move for a man who stated that:

“ Augustine’s formulation of his later views, and his decision to add the records of local cases of healing to his final cannonade against all the unquestioned assumption of the pagan philosophical world view, are the only special cases in the working out of the imaginative dialectic surrounding the very special dead”⁶³.

Yet, before we dive into the details of these unanswered questions, a survey of the events in the life of Augustine, which Brown bases his claims upon, is necessary.

III. The Life of Augustine of Hippo

Much of what we know of Augustine’s life itself comes to us from his semi-autobiographical *Confessions*. Although the text is more concerned with using his life as a pedagogical narrative of conversion and some of the facts recounted therein have certainly been embellished for theological interpretation, many certainties remain⁶⁴. Augustine was the first born son of Patricius and Monnica of Thagaste⁶⁵. A small village in the North African province of Numidia 60 miles inland, Thagaste was geographically isolated from the sea and enveloped by a large mountain range. The

⁶¹ Ibid. 446.

⁶² Ibid. 447.

⁶³ Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 78.

⁶⁴ Battenhouse, *A Companion to the Study of Augustine*, 17; The narration of his conversion soon becomes a motif in many of his works.

⁶⁵ The following biographical information is a brief and selective summary of Peter Brown’s 1967, *Augustine of Hippo: A biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Any other extraneous information or included facts have been individually cited.

relative impoverishment of a town solely known for minor agricultural production was reflected in relative wealth of its local elites. Augustine's father himself was a decurion, a low ranking Roman official, who was charged with a multitude of civic responsibilities without any source of financial backing⁶⁶. His mother, Monnica, assumed from her name to be of Berber origin, was the first Christian influence in Augustine's life. At her urging that the later theologian was given proper rites upon his birth and enrolled as a catechumen. Of his two siblings, a brother, Navigus, and a sister, Perpetua, little is known save that the latter later became a nun in a monastery under Augustine's rule.

At the age of 12, Augustine was sent to school in the nearby town of Madauros. Although he excelled in Latin and had a remarkable aptitude for rhetoric, the "difficulty of thoroughly mastering a foreign language seemed to sprinkle bitterness over" and disillusion him from the study of Greek epics and philosophical texts⁶⁷. Oddly enough, while he is 'accounted as a boy of high promise' by his teachers, in later recollection Augustine equates his harsh treatment at their hands to the passion of martyrdom⁶⁸. His youth as a whole is described as a series of rebellions against his stern Catholic mother and strict school masters. In 371, when Augustine furthers his studies in Carthage through the backing of a local patron, Romanian, the impetuous youth devolves further into a self-proclaimed spiral of 'hedonism and immorality'. In 'love with loving' and 'spellbound' by the theater the teenager yielded to his carnal desires in every avenue of public life, including during Mass⁶⁹, and bears a son with an unnamed mistress at 17. Yet, it is his devotion to this woman, with whom he was to remain for the next 14 years, that most characterizes the young Augustine: a book laden youth clamoring to be more daring than he actually was.

Under the roof of an increasingly regulated education system, Augustine pursued rhetoric as a method of career advancement within the imperial bureaucracy⁷⁰. Although they were no longer promoted by imperial funds, the study of other liberal arts, like philosophy and theology, was tenaciously maintained within smaller, social circles of elite⁷¹. These circles, like those of today, were highly dependent on both personal connection and adherence to host of rising intellectual fashions. It is in this spirit that Augustine first reads Cicero's *Hortensius*. Although the text itself no longer survives, extant selections indicate that the book adjured the abandonment of ambition and physical pleasure for the pursuit of intellectual wisdom. Platonic philosophy thus becomes to Augustine, much like his later career in Christianity, "the midwife of what

⁶⁶ See footnote no. 49.

⁶⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, 1.23, trans. Maria Boulding. (Hyde Park: New York City Press, 1997), 54.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 1.26, 1. 23.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 3.1, 3.5

⁷⁰ Pers. comm. Edward Watts 13. Nov. 2014

⁷¹ Ibid.

stands for reason in the world⁷². And its main goal- not only to ascertain wisdom but, to use this wisdom, as it is static and immutable, to have a benevolent and long lasting effect on the world⁷³- becomes Augustine's sole defining purpose. Yet, the absence of any mention of Christ within the text, a 'name which he had drunk [literally] with (his) mother's milk', drives Augustine to undertake a cursory examination of the Scripture; only to be rebuffed by its coarse language and seeming lack of dialectic purpose. This distaste along with a "craving for sexual gratification which fettered (him) like a tight-drawn chain"⁷⁴ led Augustine to the faith of the Manichees. A type of mysticism similar to Gnostic Christianity, Manichaeism was based upon the teaching of the prophet Mani who was martyred in Persia in 277. Particularly popular in the 4th century, this faith claimed to present a solution to the continuously questioned existence of evil and presence of pain. Through a detailed cosmology, Manichaeism viewed evil as a primordial substance and a guiding universal principle which had no root in human agency or motivation⁷⁵. In this intricate dualism, good was, like evil, merely the other of two guiding forces which composed every being and object. This struggle was internalized in man and could only be temporarily resolved by devotion to certain persons who became messengers of 'Light' through their connection to Mani and, through him, Christ. These 'Elect' were bound by codes of asceticism, celibacy and vegetarianism and solely dependent upon the support of their often influential flock of 'Hearer's' like Augustine and his circle.

In 375, Augustine returned to Carthage to teach the children of his benefactor and reconnected with an anonymous childhood acquaintance. The two soon struck up a close relationship in opposition to their religious differences, only to be torn apart by tragedy. The premature death of his friend propelled Augustine into a self-reflective state on the nature of the soul and a misery most acute⁷⁶. Afflicted by violent emotion he was unable to find solace from this loss and he 'fle[d] from his native land' towards the refuge of Carthage. It is in Carthage, several years after his fierce defense of Manichaeism against his ill-fated friend, that Augustine meets the celebrated Elect, Faustus of Milevis. Ever the eager student, Augustine attempts to impress this new found mentor whose aura dominates the crowds of Carthage only to find the man's knowledge of doctrine wanting. The eminent speaker is unable to defend his faith against the inconsistencies Augustine perceives and his own unanswered about the nature of free will and true belief. Unsatisfied in his faith and with little success as a teacher of rhetoric, Augustine then sailed to Rome. There, through his contact with the

⁷² Miles Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 26.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.13.

⁷⁵ Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo*, 127.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 4.9-12.

renowned senator and prefect Aurelius Symmachus⁷⁷, he was appointed as the court orator to the imperial court at Milan. To complement his new position and further his social advancement, the orator then became engaged to a Christian heiress. Although his bride-to-be was below the marital age, the demands of his mother and new family forced Augustine to dismiss his mistress and the mother of his son. She “was ripped from my side... [and] so deeply was she engrafted into my heart that it was left torn and wounded and trailing blood”⁷⁸. That being said, it is only a few more months before Augustine, hounded by bodily desire, takes up another mistress.

It is during this period that Augustine first came into contact with Ambrose the bishop of Milan and one of the most powerful political players of his age. Ambrose was everything which the former figure of Faustus was not: patrician by birth and the former governor of Liguria. Upon his investiture, Ambrose led a *vita activa* and used his authority, strengthened by proximity to the imperial court, to influence both secular rulers and the clerical hierarchy which was dispersed across the empire. While, Augustine was impressed with the bishop’s command over Christian doctrine and laymen, his methods and mannerisms were corrosive to former’s sensibilities. At one time, Ambrose’s public disputes with the Arian empress Justina even placed Augustine’s own mother at risk when Ambrose refused to give up the Basilica of the Apostles to the empress’ guards. It was, however, Ambrose’s proclivity for sensationalism⁷⁹ which displeased Augustine.

Ironically, the man most responsible, of any, for Augustine’s conversion was Simplician, a Christian presbyter and Ambrose’s mentor. Simplician’s interlocutory style of instruction was familiar and palatable to the classically educated Augustine who had recently become disillusioned with the grandeur and falsity of his court position. What’s more, Simplician was instrumental in introducing Augustine to the work of the Neoplatonist Plotinus and his student Porphyry; the impact these philosophers upon Augustine’s thinking cannot be measured. These texts delineate the existence of a spiritual world and a deity, separate from, but fundamental to, the well being of a material one; and, it is when the inhabitants of the temporal world lose contact with the spiritual world that they can embrace evil. This revelation dissolves Augustine’s earlier difficulty at relinquishing the corporeal components of faith. But this bridge between Neoplatonism and Catholicism also created a new problem within Augustine’s mind: can man achieve salvation alone or must it be through God’s aid and the aid of his representatives on earth, *i.e.* the established clergy of the Catholic church?

The following winter of 386 Augustine retreated to a villa in Cassiacum in an attempt to take up ascetic practice which might purify his mind and soul. In writing a treatise titled *De ordine*, he employed the writings of the Neoplatonists to argue that the soul may indeed be purged of the evil which it voluntarily accrues and reach a higher state of being. However, Augustine had yet to divine the specifics of how to achieve

⁷⁷ Known for his contest with Ambrose of Milan over the maintaining of traditional, pagan monuments in Rome like the Altar of Victory (A. Douglas Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 56.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.25.

⁷⁹ This proclivity was exemplified in the former’s discovery and use of the relics of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius. For a fuller discussion of Augustine’s views of this *inventio* and its miracles see section III A.

such a state outside of the exhortation of wisdom which pagan sources adjured. On his return to Milan and advancement through the trials of a catechumen, Augustine was baptized by Ambrose. Following his baptism, Augustine then returned to this matter with *De immortalitate animae*. This treatise presented the very same problem which had first haunted the young Augustine upon the death of his friend 10 years before: the comprehension of the dissolution of a presence, so esteemed, so vibrant in life. How, indeed, can such a life and spirit simply disappear with the inevitable occurrence of mortal death? This line of questioning demanded a need to understand the journey of the soul after death and the nature of its relationship to the human body; an area which, again, held no precedent in Christian logic.

With winter's end came that of Augustine's philosophical meanderings and the new Christian convert set off with his companions to return home. Upon their arrival in Ostia, however, the troop found themselves stranded between the mobilization of the forces of Theodosius and Valentinian II to the east and Magnus Maximus' naval blockade to the west. Within the span of a few weeks, Monnica fell ill and died. This second loss was very formative upon Augustine's consciousness. For, although he as estranged and adverse to his mother's intervention for the majority of his life, the two had become closer during their sojourn at Cassiacum. The woman whom he used to chastise for her adherence to popular custom and superstition⁸⁰ had won him over with a fierce wit and strong devotion to her faith despite her 'mental handicaps'⁸¹. As she both lacked formal education and was, in the classical opinion, disadvantaged by her sex⁸², Augustine determined that another factor must have been instrumental in enabling Monnica to understand matters of faith beyond her normal intellectual capacity. In his prayer at Ostia, Augustine is finally able to place and name the factor that can lift one up towards contemplating the divine, regardless of individual acuity, as *socialis necessitudo*: the bond of company⁸³. Such a belief would become indispensable to Augustine in his future governance of entire communities of laymen and women like his mother.

It was this sentiment and his growing attachment to the last member of his family, his son Adeodatus, which spurred Augustine into becoming an active member of the Church; a Christian in deed as well as in name. Upon returning home, Augustine established the brotherhood of the 'Servi Dei', a proto-monastery dedicated to the study of Scripture, on his family estates in Thagaste. Augustine wrote several treatises, during this time, attacking Manichaeism⁸⁴ even at the cost of aligning himself with the same Old Testament scriptures that he had previously found 'crude' and 'inelegant'.

⁸⁰ See Augustine's correspondence with Ambrose over the matter of feasting upon the graves of the dead in Augustine, *Confessions*, 6. 2. 2.

⁸¹ See Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.23-26 for the transcendental experience which mother and son shared at Cassiacum.

⁸² See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) for the inferiority of the female sex to that of the perfect male in classic thought

⁸³ Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine: A Penguin Life* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999), 62.

⁸⁴ He did so partially in response to the growing presence of his former faith in North Africa. Manichaeism was officially purged from the city of Carthage in 386.

Contemporary dialogue between Augustine and Nebridius⁸⁵, a wealthy pagan companion of Augustine's, also shows Augustine's increasing reliance on tenets of Christian doctrine contradictory to philosophical tradition. It is in the defense of one such tenet, the Incarnation, that Augustine finds a new voice of locution in the dialogue of *De magistro*: the eloquent, adult Adeodatus. The prematurely born son is described as a prodigy and possessive of a "brilliance [which] filled me (Augustine) with awe"⁸⁶. Yet within a year the boy whom accompanied his father for all his life and the son of a mother whom Augustine was devoted for so long, dies inexplicably along with Augustine's companion Nebridius. Curiously enough, the effect which these events had upon the middle-aged Augustine are absent from any chronicle⁸⁷. One can only surmise the depth of his feeling. For this time it was not friend or a parent but the loss of his own flesh and blood which threatened to overwhelm the bodily and mental self-control that Augustine had so painstakingly honed. This is the pivotal moment wherein the man who adopted Christianity for political reasons fully embraced the implications and responsibilities of this faith. Bereft, the grieving father threw himself into making the 'monastery' of his brotherhood into a reality. Within two years, he was ordained as a priest and, within seven, he was consecrated as the successor to the bishop of the nearby port city of Hippo Regius.

A. On the Perception of the Populace in the Early Writings of Augustine

Having given a brief summary of Augustine's life up until the point of his conversion⁸⁸ we must now touch upon the intellectual efforts that complemented his physical labors. In the period immediately before, and just after, his ordainment as a priest, Augustine wrote two treatises which expose his continued struggle with mankind's, and his own capacity, for belief. Even though Augustine considers himself capable of understanding matters of religion and philosophy, there is still something missing, some missing link which he cannot attain by reason alone. Rather than admitting his own inadequacies, Augustine tries to find his answer by going back to the origins of his newly embraced faith. In section 25.47 of *On True Religion*, Augustine asserts that it was the miracles performed by Christ's apostles that first instilled belief in the hearts of Christ's followers. He contends, however, that this method was not one of choice, but, rather, lacking any written source of authority, one of necessity. In Augustine's mind the miracles which had charmed the masses several hundred years before were a necessary evil that had been rightfully discarded since "the Catholic Church, you see, had been spread and established throughout the whole world"⁸⁹. The continuity of such visible phenomena also posed the danger that "the soul would always

⁸⁵ Epistles 3-14 in Augustine of Hippo, *Letters 1-99*, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001).

⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.14.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 128.

⁸⁸ Not the allegorical episode described in detail in Augustine, *Confessions*, 8. 19-30, but rather his entrance on the public stage and into the *activa vita* of a clergymen.

⁸⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *On True Religion*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 60.

go on looking for visible sign and that, by getting used to things that had blazed up in their novelty, the human race might grow coldly indifferent”⁹⁰.

The question then remains, if miracles in Augustine’s time are not a credible source of authority then what is? In this treatise the most the infant theologian can do is maintain that even the human soul which has acquired Truth, presumably through some connection Christ, needs some ultimate authority to base their faith upon; and any “heretics or schismatics” who claim that reason alone can achieve the same object are blinded by pride⁹¹. In the second treatise, *On the Advantage of Believing*, Augustine continues this line of questioning by alleging that though some men may feign belief by imitating those wiser, they still cannot truly believe unless presented with clear evidence⁹². The miracles of Apostles “had to be presented for the eyes to see, which the foolish are better fitted to using than their mind” to accommodate this flaw, for only then would humankind “grow capable of being given understanding”⁹³. Augustine’s very definition of a miracle, “any event that is so difficult or extraordinary to be beyond the expectation or power of those it astonishes”⁹⁴, does more to question the credibility of popular intelligence than the validity of such miracles. However, the avoidance of this topic was short-lived. In 399, the imperial authorities took a harsher stance on pagan shrines which sparked a series of riots by Christian and polytheists alike. Augustine himself, supported the ‘cleansing’ of great estates and civic spaces from the pollution of these shrines⁹⁵.

Around this same time we also get Augustine’s first commentary on the cult of relics, which was flourishing in 5th century North Africa, in the form of sermons given upon the feast’s day of various saints. What is curious about these early sermons is how they tend to carefully avoid any direct reference to the martyrs who are being honored. When Augustine is forced to refer to them, he chooses to do so collectively or in relation to their location and he refrains from explicitly addressing any individual merits of or miracles performed by a saint⁹⁶. The only time he directly engages with the cult is in cases where it shows startling similarities to the rituals practiced at pagan shrines⁹⁷. The problem is that, over time, the cult of relics has accumulated various

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Augustine of Hippo. *On the Advantage of Believing*. trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 143.

⁹³ Ibid. 144.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 145.

⁹⁵ Sermon 62 was delivered after a riot in Carthage which was prompted by the seizure and destruction of a pagan idol on property which had recently been donated to the Church; Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons, (51-94) on the Old Testament*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 168.

⁹⁶ Frederik Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop; The Life and Work of a Father of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, Ltd, 1961), 487-488.

⁹⁷ See earlier footnote 80 and Dolbeau sermon 2 in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons (Newly discovered)*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 332-334; For an interesting discussion of the practices of the ‘*imperiti*’ (the ignorant) which Augustine condemned for their resemblance to pagan practices see Peter Brown, “Qui adorant columnas in ecclesia: Augustine and the practice of the imperiti,” in *Augustin Preicateur*, ed. Goulven Madec (Paris: Institut d’Etudes Augustinienne, 1998), 367-375.

‘oddities’ which are often specific to a single region or even to a particular village⁹⁸. While Augustine shies from tackling the regulation of the cult so early in his episcopacy, he does openly confront the matter of popular superstition in a series of letters sent to a Catholic laymen named Januarius. In section 19.35 of the second of these two letters, Epistle 55 (c.400), Augustine goes so far as to declare that all practices which are not supported by either scriptural or ecumenical precedent “but vary in countless ways in accord with customs of different places so that the reasons that led people to establish them can hardly or cannot at all be found, shall undoubtedly, I think, be eliminated when the opportunity presents itself”⁹⁹. Yet, before Augustine acquires enough authority to properly implement the correction of improper belief, against these local superstitions, he is forced to confront a new enemy altogether: barbarian invasion¹⁰⁰.

IV. Understanding the City of God

Whether Alaric the Visigoth’s sack of Rome in 410 was perceived by contemporaries as a devastating blow to the unity and social fabric of the empire or not, it definitely forced waves of refugees rippling out from the capital into provinces; and a significant amount of these refugees flooded into the ports of North Africa. While the integration of these elites into local social fabrics may have been beneficial on an economic level, it soon proved to be the biggest threat to the Catholic Church that Augustine had ever faced. For these “multorum peregrinorum, egentium, laborantium”¹⁰¹ naturally demanded both justification for the sacking of their city and a scapegoat that they could punish for the harm done to their persons, property and pride. The swiftly proffered answer was the very same quandary which had pitted Augustine’s former patrons, Symmachus and Ambrose, against one another years before: the termination of civic participation in pagan sacrifices and the abandonment of traditional, ‘pagan’ symbols. The obvious rebukes that, one, Rome had been sacked before and two, that the Goths, as Christians (albeit Arians) could not be retributory instruments of pagan gods, did not satiate the public. Thus, Augustine decided to set out a comprehensive answer to these and other accusations which were hurled against the recently legitimized Catholic church¹⁰². The form of this response was the 22 books of the *City of God*.

⁹⁸ Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 472.

⁹⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *Letters 1-99*, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 234.

¹⁰⁰ *n.b.* while Alaric’s sack of Rome has been traditionally been portrayed as the violent invasion of a foreign, Gothic king from outside of the empire, a re-evaluation of classical sources reveals that Alaric was actually a leader of the *foederati*, the foreign auxiliary units of the Roman army. His move against Rome can then be seen as a political usurpation rather than a hostile invasion (pers. comm. M. Shane Bjornlie. 25 March 2015)

¹⁰¹ Sermon 81.9 in Augustine of Hippo *Sermons (51-94) on the Old Testament*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991); James O’Donnell, *Augustine, City of God*, 1983. An unpublished study -<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/>

¹⁰² These accusations arose after Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire and after, the more recent consolidation against the Donatist schism by the Council of Carthage in 411.

Among other difficulties, the length of the text necessitated that it be published intermittently over the course of the 13 year period in which it was written¹⁰³. The first book can be dated to 413 by its dedicatory inscription to the unfortunate Flavius Marcellinus who was summarily executed later that year¹⁰⁴. The following volumes were released in groups of three to four roughly every two years until Augustine began writing his *Revisions* in 426. The sporadic publication required that each series of volumes summarize the preceding arguments to the point of repetition. Additionally, the nature of its publication also forced Augustine to favor clarity of voice over any grander styles in order that each sequence of volumes might be able to stand on its own. As a result of these two factors, the length of the text grew beyond its original bounds and came to include several, seemingly irrelevant, digressions¹⁰⁵.

The overarching goal of the *City of God* is twofold. First, and foremost, it is a defense of the Christian faith and Church against those who blamed it for the sack of Rome. Despite the fact that the city was no longer strategically or economically vital to Late Antique empire, it was both the symbolic center of government and, by its topography, the birthplace of all the polytheistic rituals and traditions which had defined Roman identity. Yet, although Augustine was educated from the same classical corpus which promoted these ideologies, he was, first, a provincial and Carthaginian elite and his allegiance to the city of Rome was idealized. Thus, aside from a desire to explain how and why Christian bodies and spaces were harmed by the sack, Augustine crafted his discourse on earthly and heavenly cities as a consolidation of Catholic doctrine, specifically those of Christological nature. Even ‘those matters which are not directly historical’ like the creation and the Resurrection are employed in such a way as to be evidentiary and causative of the fall of the Roman empire¹⁰⁶.

The following section will summarize Augustine’s argument within his *City of God* along the chapter divisions which the author himself recommended: the first consisting of two sets of five books, and the second half three sets of four¹⁰⁷.

The first set of books, books 1-5, are unique in that they are the only sections, prior to the last book, which directly engage with contemporary social, political and religious sentiment. Following the grand, if somewhat misleading, statements of the preface, Augustine addresses a specific audience which criticizes the Christianity of the empire not for religious reasons but rather out of physical and psychological bereavement. The issues he touches upon in book 1 can all be seen as acts of consolation for victims of the attack: the loss of property, slavery, violence upon the

¹⁰³ This dating is based off of an online, unpublished study James O’Donnell, *Augustine, City of God*, 1983.

¹⁰⁴ The imperial commissioner who presided over the Council of Carthage in 411 which ruled the Donatist church legally heretics and open to judicial prosecution. Marcellinus and Augustine quickly became friends to the latter’s dismay when Marcellinus was implicated in the revolt of Heraclian in 414. Although Augustine collected sworn testimony of his friend’s innocence and appealed to the emperor himself, Marcellinus was summarily executed for treason.

¹⁰⁵ The most important of which is the interjection of relics in book 22 which is to be discussed at length in due course.

¹⁰⁶ Dods, “Translator’s Preface”, xvi.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Letter to Firmus*, Epistle 1.A in CSEL 88 via James O’Donnell, *Augustine, City of God*, 1983.

body, rape, suicide, and lack of proper burial for the deceased¹⁰⁸. Each of these sections, has its own didactic commentary in which every supposed loss is shown to promote some aspect of ideal Christian behavior, *e.g.* the loss of temporal goods would only aid man in his pursuit of spiritual goods and the more important world to come¹⁰⁹.

The second and third books then proceed to examine the supposed morality and virtues of the Romans which were embodied in the civic rituals and traditions that the Christianized government had forsaken. This is done first, by general criticism: Augustine asserts that the portrayal of the gods on the public stage, *i.e.* in theatre and poetry, promotes immoral acts detrimental to the soul and society; and then, by historical survey, through which Augustine shows that these errors have always led to disaster even in times that were supposedly peaceful. Moreover, it is in these books that the reader is given the first taste of Augustine's experience as a rhetorician and the manner in which he diffuses an opponent's argument. Augustine takes Sallust's history of Rome from its Trojan origins to the formation of the republic and draws out specific episodes in order to reverse the laudation traditional derived from them. He is even able to introduce uncertainty into episodes of black-and-white heroism by claiming that the only truly virtuous characters are often those who are depicted as antagonists rather than the exemplars. One such episode is the feud between the Roman Horatii brothers and Alban Curiatii in which the sister who "seems to have been more humane than the whole of the Roman period" attempted, under divided loyalties, to preserve familial bonds at the expense of the welfare of the early Roman state¹¹⁰.

Having reduced the myths and presentations of the gods in theater to absurdity, Augustine changes tone in the next six books, numbers 4-10, and turns from a chastising polemic to a serious engagement with the representations and treatment of pagan gods within classical sources. Within this group, books four and five present the first example of a pattern essential to the *City of God*, in that they are built in contrast to one another. Book four appears to pry out philosophical claims interspersed within classical Roman and Greek authors such as Cicero or Scaevola that hint of the 'Truth', *i.e.* beliefs that are, often by sheer, dumb luck, similar or identical to those of Christian persuasion. One such important belief which Augustine supports is Cicero's categorical division between matters of *superstition*¹¹¹ and matters of *religion*¹¹². The reason for such an endorsement is then promptly revealed: while Cicero fails to find any efficient manner of separating the two categories, this is but another one of innumerable cases wherein God and his Church have "by the [humility] of Christ, by the preaching of the

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 1. 10-22, 1. 27-29.

¹⁰⁹ As for his explanation for the suffering of Christians within Rome, Augustine attributes it to the impartial nature of war and declares that all punitive measures, while sometimes harsh, are invaluable in strengthening faith,

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 3.14. 18-32.

¹¹¹ Incorrect belief or practice, often that associated with or propagated by the populace or masses though not with any particular religion. This term has a negative connotation in both modern and classical sources and is often presented as an indicator of mental inferiority,

¹¹² Augustine, *City of God*, 4. 30. 6-24.

apostles, by the faith of the martyrs dying for the truth and living with the truth¹¹³ succeeded to distinguish the two. The next book, on the other hand, is focused on the aspects of Roman belief¹¹⁴ which err in relation to their Christian equivalents/ counterparts. When moments of indubitable virtue are discovered within the behavior of the Romans, such virtue is either relegated to the rare actions of men (only empowered by their certain destruction) or to a selfish and innate need for praise¹¹⁵. These men are then painstakingly devalued in comparison to the heroes of Christian faith¹¹⁶, the saints¹¹⁷.

Books 6-10, then deal with the other two types of theology as defined by Varro: civil and natural theology. While admitting a few merits of civil theology, Augustine claims these merits are devalued by their interdependence upon the rites and festivals of mythical theology by which “surely in vain do the priests attempt, by rites sacred, to present their [the gods’] nobleness of character, which has no existence”¹¹⁸. If such pomp and circumstance has no value, then the rituals around it have no use, whether they are performed or not. That being said, Augustine does not irrevocably damn Varro and other ‘learned men’ for their error but, on the contrary, he excuses them and claims that they persist only “on account of the laws of cities and the customs of men, to be an actor, not on the stage, but in the temples”¹¹⁹. Yet, even the Platonists who, in ‘acknowledging God’s role as the Creator of the world and of the human soul and its facilities’ are closer to Christian belief than Varro, ultimately fail as they ascribe the role of divine intermediary to ‘demons’¹²⁰ *i.e.* lesser pagan gods; thus denying Christ and all he promises. The tenth book subsequently expands on the problems which arise from the preservation of this ‘malignant Platonic obstinacy’¹²¹. For, if Christ is not “both Priest and Sacrifice”¹²² then he can not bestow God’s ‘grace’ which will ultimately purify the body for resurrection and man will be trapped in pursuit of a ‘transitory and fleeting happiness’ and lost in ‘the whole fabric of temporal prosperity’ which is the city of Man¹²³. The chief problem, however, is that physical manifestation of faith in the ‘Word’, *i.e.*, Christ, who “was made flesh and dwelt among us”¹²⁴ is not

¹¹³ Ibid. 4.30. 37-38.

¹¹⁴ Primarily the notion of Fate as ‘descryed’ by astrology or divination.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 5. 18. 19-22; Supporting historical evidence Ibid. 5.18. 26-56.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 10. 22. 13-14.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 5.19. 60-63. Specific examples include” Ibid. 5. 19. 19-27 & Ibid. 5. 18. 64-69.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 6. 7. 57-58.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 6. 10. 82-84.

¹²⁰ The terminology appears to switch irrevocably in Ibid. 7. 33. 1-4.

¹²¹ Ibid. 10. 25. 62.

¹²² Assertions which imply belief in the Incarnation, as God’s intercessor on Earth, and in the efficacy of the Eucharist, that his body was both mortal and that one benefits spiritually by ceremonial connection to it.

¹²³ Ibid. 10. 25. 35-36, 10. 25. 18-19.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 10. 29. 86

enough proof for either the learned elite, who normally rely on abstract versus material concepts of the divine, or, for those whose ‘unenlightened minds are fixed on ancient opinion’¹²⁵ and require things that can ‘be detected by human observance or be readily verified by experience’¹²⁶.

As a result of this dilemma, Augustine’s purpose shifts after book 10 from demonstrating the superiority of his, and therefore the Catholic argument - which absolves Christianity of any responsibility for temporal disasters - over that of classical culture to grounding his theory of the two cities in the history of humankind in order to give those who remain skeptical undeniable proof. By relating the details of the origin of the two cities, that of Man and that of God, books 11-14, serve to flesh out the manner in which men might gain admittance to the city of God after having been cast out following the Fall. Books 15-18 then trace the progression of the city of God through the descendants of its first citizens, Abel, through his brother Seth, and Abraham through his son Isaac. Until the kingdom of Israel, membership in the spiritual city is restricted to a single, chosen people and this birthright is only derailed upon the birth of brothers, usually twins, between whom succession may be disputed. However, upon the slow attrition of political machines and the investiture in material goods necessary for the survival of such a state, membership in the city of God is divorced from this chosen people and permanently surrendered from the secular world. All kingdoms or empires therein are “as divine Providence either ordered or permitted, [...] both lifted up by prosperity and weighed down by adversity”¹²⁷ and all events are manifestations of divine will.

In this respect, books 18 and 19 argue that the Roman empire, as was the Assyrian one before it, was only granted territorial dominion and seemingly unchecked power in order that the whole mechanism of state might, after giving rise to martyrs ‘like gold purified from the fires of persecution’, be seized and reversed to then eradicate paganism and to further promote the expansion of Christianity and the city of God. Augustine is clear to note that any laudable aspects of the Roman empire are only due to to God’s beneficence, as any mortal institutions are ‘void of true justice’¹²⁸; Ergo how the empire “declined into sanguinary seditions and then to social and civil wars, and so burst asunder or rotted off the bond of concord”¹²⁹ and can be understood as a natural inevitability innate in any body composed of imperfect men.

On approaching the closing of the twentieth book in the *City of God*, in which Augustine had proposed to discuss the end of his two cities and the afterlife which all men shall face, the readers finds themselves all but completely detached from the initial line of questioning and the objective of the work. For not only does this book outline the parallel composition of the last two books, with one to describe “the punishment of

¹²⁵ Ibid. 7. Preface. 5-6.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 10. 32. 124-125.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 17. 23. 7-8.

¹²⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 19. 24. 21.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 19. 24. 10-11.

the wicked, and the other the happiness of the righteous”¹³⁰, but it also definitively ensconces the bulk of Christian ideology and doctrine, which has been championed through out the text, within Augustine’s twofold view of human nature. Augustine’s understanding of the society of Late Antiquity can be divided into two factions. The first are those who “instructed in divine things hold”, and are able to hold, “ the truth and omnipotence of God to be the strongest arguments in favor of those things which however incredible they seem to men” (*i.e.* the Incarnation, Ascension, and the Resurrection) purely on the basis of Scripture alone¹³¹. The second group, however, can neither do so nor can they always remember these truths which “ha[ve] already in many ways been prove[n]”¹³² throughout history. Book 21, although primarily concerned with the eternal punishment of those who inhabit the City of Man, supports this claim in its discourse on the existence and validity of miracles which occur in the natural world. Rather than blaming those who do not believe in such fantasies as fiery water or lunar controlled stone¹³³ on the basis of secondhand account alone¹³⁴, Augustine argues that it is the very same ‘frail comprehension’ which limits man’s understanding¹³⁵ that then grants him the capability to marvel at and admire true rarities - the things that “demonstrate, portend, [and] predict that God will bring to pass what He has foretold regarding the bodies of men”¹³⁶ and “the one object for which we are Christians”¹³⁷-relics and their promise of the Resurrection.

In the 22nd and final book Augustine does reach the object of this endeavor, that of the city of God, but he then goes further to present the ultimate aspiration of the total of his life’s pursuits: undeniable and empirical proof of the validity of faith. The first goal of the *City of God*, the elegant if somewhat unhelpful solution to the sack of Rome, is achieved in book 22 when Augustine returns to the problem of evil in the temporal world. An entire chapter is composed of a list of all of the calamities which befall mankind: from the countless crimes inflicted upon men by their fellow men or through the workings and beasts of nature, to the variety of diseases (hunger, thirst, and sleep among them) which incessantly plague him. Following which Augustine expresses his initial stumbling point and through it he acknowledges himself to be one of the second group of men whose minds fail to grasp true belief. Such men claim among other errors that the evils in life amount to a “hell upon earth [from which] there is no escape”¹³⁸ and one seemingly devoid of any beneficent entity or force for good. Augustine refutes this challenge to God’s existence by claiming that while such evils,

¹³⁰ Ibid. 20. 30. 144-145.

¹³¹ Ibid. 20. 30. 148-151.

¹³² Ibid. 20. 30. 152.

¹³³ Ibid. 21. 5. 12-32.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 21. 7. 34-37.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 21. 5. 50-51.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 21. 8. 100-103.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 6. 9. 103-104.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 22. 22. 80.

like the sack of Rome, may not be permanently combated or defeated in an earthly kingdom, they can, through Christ's grace, be endured. Endured, until the time in which God's will may grant them entrance into another life "from which all evil is excluded"¹³⁹. Proof of this entrance has already, conveniently, been provided for mankind in the form of miracles which are produced from the bodies of saints and their corporeal relics.

In the twenty-second and indeed last book of the *City of God* relics become Augustine's strongest empirical evidence that the Resurrection of Christ and that promise he made to his followers is possible. It is with the final resurrection on the Day of Judgement that "heaven [will not] disdain to receive, or at least to retain, this living and sentient particle", *i.e.* the resurrected body, as it "derives its life and sensation from a substance more excellent than any heavenly body"¹⁴⁰. The Christian body shall be purified of its mortality and finally be fit to inhabit "that holy and most delightful city of God"¹⁴¹. In this kingdom, Augustine argues that not only the saints but all of those who have ascended following the Rapture shall be 'fellow citizens' in the repose of the eternal Sabbath and "the children of the resurrection and of the promise shall be equal to the angels of God"¹⁴²; equal in the fact that all of these citizens will finally be able to understand the mysteries of God's will and grace. Additionally, in the context of this final book we also find the answer to question presented by previous scholars in Peter Brown's celebrated *Cult of Saints*: how specifically was Augustine able to navigate the treacherous waters of 'popular religion' and to transform these same subversive elements into empirical evidence for Christian theology?

With this question in mind, the next section is primarily a summary of Augustine's understanding of the doctrine of death, regeneration, and resurrection. This conversation is vital in introducing terms that undermine the core of the theological complexities in book 22.

V. Relics in the City of God

A. The Rhetoric of Resurrection in Books 1-21

Aside from the remains of the giant offspring referenced in 15.23, the only mentions of bones prior to the 22nd book are confined to bodily imagery in the Crucifixion of Christ, the creation of humankind through Eve, and the Resurrection of Christ as predicted through the prophet Isaiah. References to 'relics' appear only once in books 1-21 in the context of Aeneas' flight from Troy where the '*reliquiae Troianorum*' can be translated as the 'remains' or 'survivors' of Troy¹⁴³. The saints, however, are frequently mentioned throughout the text and employed within as the

¹³⁹ Ibid. 22. 22. 87-88.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 22. 4. 20-23.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 22. 29. 23.

¹⁴² Ibid. 20. 44-45.

¹⁴³ Whether this refers its citizens or the *penates*, household gods, which Aeneas carried from the ruins, is ambiguous .

Christian response to classical notions of death, the mortality of the soul, and the nature of the body. The following section will serve to summarize previous mentions of the saints in an attempt to ingratiate the reader with Augustine's portrayal of the resurrection.

One of the first issues raised by the victims of the sack of Rome was the matter of the burial, or lack thereof, of the Christian dead. In assuaging this fear, the 13th chapter of book 1 claims (without much further explanation) that respect towards the corpse is testament to a "faith in the resurrection"¹⁴⁴. Moreover, upon the subject of the violated bodies of pious Roman virgins, Augustine asserts that "the sanctity of the (Christian) body does not consist in the integrity of its members, nor in their exemption from all touch"¹⁴⁵ and thus the body cannot be contaminated by violence, wound, or natural corruption. This statement is then fully explained within book 10 in which the reader is presented with the 'body problem' that is embedded within classical thought.

While arguing primarily against the work of Porphyry and that of his teacher Plotinus, in this book, Augustine refuted the idea that, "a body of every kind must be escaped from, in order that the soul may dwell in blessedness with God"¹⁴⁶. For although the body may be the method by which sin weighs upon the soul, the flesh itself is not innately 'polluted' or 'corrupt'¹⁴⁷. Rather it is the will that is made evil, when it turns away from God's grace,¹⁴⁸ and host to all physical and moral ills. After maintaining that human bodies did not always exist in such a state, that they had been on the path to obtaining "a blessed and endless immortality"¹⁴⁹ before the Fall, Augustine continues to viciously deny any merit to the classical argument. He then ridicules the tenet of reincarnation as espoused by Plato wherein the destiny of a human's soul is accorded as to his intellectual capacity: "those, again, who have lived foolishly transmigrate into bodies fit for them, whether human or bestial"¹⁵⁰, while the wise are spared from this bodily prison so long as they value their peace in the heavens¹⁵¹. This belief is predicated on a cyclical nature of time "in which there should be a constant renewal and repetition of the order of nature"¹⁵² and in which is the "circulation of souls through constantly alternating happiness and misery"¹⁵³ and

¹⁴⁴ Augustine's treatise *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* which was written some ten years later in 420/422 continues this line of thought in regards to *ad sanctos* burial. Also see later footnote 227 for further commentary on this subject; Cf. Ramsay MacMullen's contradictory claims regarding the origin of this practice in Ramsay McMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 129, no.3 (2010), 579-613.

¹⁴⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 1. 18. 19-20.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 10. 29. 51-53.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 10. 30. 106, 10. 30. 123-126

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 12. 8. 8-11, Ibid. 12. 9. 1-5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 12. 21. 12-13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 13. 19. 25-26.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 13. 19. 21-25.

¹⁵² Ibid. 12. 13. 1-3.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 10. 30. 141-142.

a ‘necessary revolution’¹⁵⁴ which brings them to re-experience the same things and be swayed by the same errors. On the contrary, Augustine argues, through the history of the world as defined by God’s will, that humankind, in body and soul, can be redeemed, for “there has been vouchsafed to us, through the Mediator (Christ), this grace, that we who are polluted by sinful flesh should be cleansed by the likeness of sinful flesh”¹⁵⁵.

Proof of this assertion is in the figure of the saint. They who conquer by divine virtue “in the name of Him who assumed humanity”¹⁵⁶ may channel Christ’s power to cleanse sin. The saints are the ideal citizens of God whom in their ‘pilgrimage’¹⁵⁷ on earth have suffered endless torment “that by them proof may be given that we must endure all bodily sufferings in the cause of the holy faith, and for *the commendation of the truth*”¹⁵⁸. Indeed, they are proof of several things which are key to the Christian tenet of Resurrection. First, that the original death which, humanity became subject to as punishment for Adam’s transgression and which, was inherited by all of his descendants¹⁵⁹, might be circumvented. For, just as person will experience a ‘first death’, he may yet be saved from that of the second, that is the death of the soul (a substance only made immortal by God¹⁶⁰). By the ‘first regeneration’, *i.e.* baptism, a person may, while living, be admitted into the earthly community of Christ and perhaps spared from the pain of the second death¹⁶¹. Thus, the saints are proof of the first resurrection as they are ‘preserved from the second death’ until the end of time¹⁶² and “they are only justly said to be in death; as everyone is said to be in sleep until he wakes”¹⁶³. Furthermore, these martyrs or *beati sancti* are physical proof of the truth of the second resurrection and the ever present threat of the second death in lieu of the second regeneration. That upon the final judgment with Christ at its head, all of mankind, both blessed and wretched, will be, not restored to its prelapsarian condition¹⁶⁴, but, instead “changed into a higher kind of body by [this] resurrection”,¹⁶⁵ one “absolutely incorruptible and immortal”¹⁶⁶. Immortality is not, however, a blessing

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 10. 30. 135-136.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 10. 22. 14-15.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 10. 22. 5.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 5. 16. 10.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 10. 32. 38-41.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 12. 21. 13-15, 13. 1. 5-8.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 10. 31. 1-3, Ibid. 10. 31. 18-22.

¹⁶¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 20. 6. 59-60; Though this fate is not sealed, as Augustine admits that many ‘supposed’ Christians are not so in spirit and do not belong to be counted among the denizens of the city of God (Ibid. 1. 35. 3-10).

¹⁶² Ibid. 20 .6. 64.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 13. 11. 36-37.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 13. 20. 16-17.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 10. 29. 48.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 70.

to all and the unfortunate souls who are the subject of the 21st book of the *City of God* are thus destined to be trapped in an eternity of the worst punishments imaginable as this “death shall be deathless”¹⁶⁷.

Yet, as stated earlier, even the most esteemed and learned of men acknowledge the power of material evidence in comprehending the divine¹⁶⁸ (albeit such a thing is often a matter of superstition versus religion¹⁶⁹) and require the presence of an intermediary in order that they might “hold intercourse with the immortal purity which is above”¹⁷⁰. Such desired physical proof has only been hinted at over the course of the aging theologian’s text, and, as this dialogue began, in reference to burial¹⁷¹. Indeed, there is a power present at the shrines or tombs of their martyrs which causes evil and its instruments (demons) to be “tortured and compelled to confess, and [...] cast out of the bodies of men, of which they had taken possession”¹⁷². Such powers are unassailably aligned to God and their worship is clearly distinguished from that of any pagan precedent especially that of the Manes¹⁷³, the Roman spirits of the “well deserving dead”¹⁷⁴. Following this statement, Augustine contends that *loca sanctorum* are honored not as altars to dead men but “as the memorials of holy men of God who strove for the truth”, and the promise of Christ’s and all future resurrections, that “even to the death of their bodies, that the true religion might be made known, and false and fictitious religions exposed”¹⁷⁵. Moreover, this claim is stretched even farther to attest that such bodies are not only a method of the preservation of the truth *in memoriam*, but also, that they are reservoirs of a portion of the city of God on earth. The power vested in them due to their extraordinary conformity to the model of Christ’s holiness is sojourning “in the persons of those who have passed through death, [and] resting in the secret receptacles and abodes of disembodied spirits”¹⁷⁶. That said, how powerful can these bones, the *reliquiae sanctorum*, be, if those of the two most powerful of their order, Peter and Paul, were unable to protect their citizens from violation and destruction at the hands of heretical barbarians?

B. Processing the Miracle Chain of 22.8

By the onset of the 22nd book of the *City of God* the question of the inefficacy of the saints, as the patrons and protectors of Christian citizens, is the only surviving link to the initial purpose of explaining the symbolic disaster of the sack of Rome in

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 13. 11. 63.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 9. 17. 1-3.

¹⁶⁹ See the example of Cicero’s Lucilius Balbus in Augustine of Hippo, *Civitate Dei*, 4. 30. 19-24

¹⁷⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 9. 17. 10-14.

¹⁷¹ See footnote 144.

¹⁷² Augustine, *City of God*, 8. 26. 68-69.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 12. 26. 12-20.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 10. 21. 8-13.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 8. 27. 3-5.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 12. 9. 55-57.

410. On the surface it is an appropriate ending to the text for multiple reasons. Its content is consistent with the intentions which were announced at the end of book 10 as, following the fate of the city of Man discussed in the previous book, it discusses the ‘deserved end’ of the city of God. The style of argumentation, in its refutation of Porphyry’s and Plato’s claims about natural physics, echoes that of the first half: Having acknowledged the soundness of logic which undermines the argument in book 10 and the validity of its specific points (that the body is corporeal and limiting, while the soul is composed of an incorporeal substance¹⁷⁷), Augustine presents opposing evidence which invalidates any conclusions derived from these specific points: that if God has created both the body and soul, corporeal and incorporeal, as reportedly proven in the first half, then surely he is able to circumvent the order which he created. The remainder of book 22 is then concerned with the manner in which God overcame the natural order and how it has been demonstrated both in the history of the world and in contemporary events.

Therein Augustine posits three ‘incredibilities’ or wonders which enable the profusion and acceptance of faith among all men, both ‘learned and unlearned, educated and uneducated’¹⁷⁸. The first incredibility, which Augustine claims to already be believed by the majority of the Christian world is the promise of the second Resurrection. What’s more, he claims that the sole purpose of Christianity’s main tenets (the Incarnation and the Ascension) is to reinforce this one fact: that, upon his crucifixion, Christ rose from the dead and, by example, became the symbolic promise of “that immortality of resurrection in the flesh which [...] is one day to be ours”¹⁷⁹. The second incredibility is that any of these tenets “so counter to experience...have found entrance into men’s ears and hearts and minds”¹⁸⁰ and have come to be believed by a race so ‘encumbered by irrationality and ignorance’. The third incredibility is vital for its role in reinforcing Augustine’s view of human nature that was set out at the end of book 21. For the third incredibility is that this truth was spread by a type of men traditionally considered incapable of deep thought and true belief. They are “uninstructed in any branch of a liberal education, without any of the refinement of heathen learning, unskilled in grammar, not armed in dialectic, not adorned with rhetoric, but plain fishermen, and few in number”¹⁸¹. Yet rather than being at any disadvantage, these men of “mean birth and the lowest rank” are the perfect vessels for the truths of Christianity for two reasons. First, because they are the most unlikely recipients of wisdom and any knowledge which they profess cannot possibly be the product of their mental facilities alone. Second, because they, lacking the capacity for verbal eloquence can only ‘persuade the world and its learned men’¹⁸² of such

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 22. 4. 12-13.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 22. 5. 3-4.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 22. 10. 31-33

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 22. 5. 18-21.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 22. 5.18-20.

¹⁸² Ibid. 22.5. 28-29.

incredibilities through “not the words but the miracles which they did”¹⁸³. These miracles can then be understood as physical evidence of the same divinity which articulated the three incredibilities. Indeed, for the average believer who is unable to comprehend ‘mental objects’¹⁸⁴ or abstract concepts through word alone, the most important incredibility, the promise of the Resurrection, can only be proven by highly visible and otherwise unexplainable phenomenon. With the apostles long dead by Augustine’s time, this role passed to the next worthy set of figures: the martyrs of the 2nd and 3rd century who through the imitation of Christ’s sacrifice “sowed with [their own] fertile blood the seed (of faith) which will sprout forth across the world”¹⁸⁵. However, the fragmented and ill preserved nature of these holy bodies required that the miracles which they conveyed take a specific set of forms.

The eighth chapter of book 22 is composed of a series of 25 miracles specifically chosen by Augustine to create a set of requirements for the potential citizens of the city of God. By his own account, Augustine asserts that over 70 miracles occurred in Hippo Regius within a two year period¹⁸⁶, thus his inclusion of only 25 of these events suggests that analysis of each, first, on its own, and then, in relation to each other might be prudent. The variables used to categorize each miracle have been divided into three categories. The first, that of the subject and recipient of some supernatural power is governed by: age, sex, class, and religious affiliation. The second category is miracle type and for the sake of clarity it has been broken down into the nature of contact (direct or indirect), source (relic or spiritual intercession: dream, prayer, etc), space (public or private), and form of affliction (possession, wound, or death). The third category is composed of any additional variables prevalent in the corpus which do not fall under the previous categories. These are order (narrative sequencing), location, and relation to the author.

The following results have been generated and the patterns which they form may be understood to be representative of larger themes. The first miracle described, that of the blind man healed in the presence of the newly discovered martyrs of Protasius and Gervasius in Milan, is one which Augustine briefly mentioned years prior. It lacks any specific detail and it relies on poetic but empty imagery to express a brief commentary on saintly power. In contrast to this, the tone and content of the second miracle account, that the healing of Innocentius’ fistula, is radically different. The subject is a man of high rank, a deputy prefect, and of definitive age who, after a lengthy trial period, is indirectly healed through his own prayers and those of the religious men attending him. This miracle is then paired with that of Innocentia, miracle 3 [Table 1], a noblewomen of similar age in the same city who is afflicted with breast cancer. She too has consulted various doctors and medical specialists to no avail. Yet, while Innocentius, although “he was with his household the most devout”¹⁸⁷, seems

¹⁸³ “Mira fuerunt facta non verba” (Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, ed. William M. Green (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 192).

¹⁸⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 29. 107.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 22. 7. 11-13; “per orbem terram pullulatura fecundis cum [eorum] sanguine seretur” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 206).

¹⁸⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 301-303; *n.b.* for the sake of clarity all quotations in this section (IV. B) can be understood to be from book 22, chapter 8 unless explicitly noted otherwise.

¹⁸⁷ “Erat cum tota domo sua religiosissimus” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 212).

only have attached a Christian retinue as a last minute act of desperation¹⁸⁸, Innocentia's faith does not waver upon learning of her inevitable death and she places her hopes in prayer over any physical security¹⁸⁹. As a result, she bypasses the first level of intercession¹⁹⁰ and is presented with her answer in a dream and when "she does it, health immediately follows"¹⁹¹. The next pairing that of miracles, 16 and 17 [Table 1], is brief but vital in its introduction of another dichotomy: foreign versus local. Two men, presumably in Calama near the oratory of St. Stephen mentioned in lines 243-259 of miracle 15, are troubled by gout¹⁹². The first man, a local resident, is immediately cured while the second is cured only after proving his belief by heeding explicit instructions¹⁹³. This relationship between local and foreign is discussed further in the another sequential pairing: miracles 19 and 20 [Table 1]. Both miracles are similar in nature: a girl is ill and some article of her clothing as been brought to a shrine of St. Stephen. Lying upon their death beds, a parent lies their garment upon each of them, conveying the *praesentia* of the shrine and its saints, and the girls are restored to health. What differs, as seen in the previous two pairings, is the level of effort which the one group must go through to receive the same miracle. The parents of the first girl, specifically denoted as religious, bear back her simple tunic and are immediately rewarded for this labor¹⁹⁴. While, the poor Bassus, categorized as a Syrian and foreign to Hippo, is subject to a much more final and drawn out mourning period as he must face waves of servants and friends "ringing with lamentations¹⁹⁵" before even being able to see his daughter's corpse¹⁹⁶.

These three pairs of miracles serve several essential functions. Not only do they demonstrate the correct methods by which spirit, or holy power, is conveyed¹⁹⁷. They also attempt to prove that every miracle, regardless of type, is a promise that will become a physical reality whether immediately or after a period of tribulations. Most importantly, these pairings are evidence of a hierarchy of miracles, wherein the same benefit and access to this divine manifestations is regulated according to: the individual's proximity to Christ (in terms of the strength of their religious affiliation) and their proximity to those locations which contain his presence via the relics of his saints.

¹⁸⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 45-46.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 125-137.

¹⁹⁰ The first level of intercession being holy reception by means of prayer. This form is provided to pagan and Christian suppliants alike as opposed to dreams (a higher level of intercession) which are restricted to few individuals.

¹⁹¹ "Fecit, confestim sanitas consecuta est" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 220-222).

¹⁹² See A. Cornelius Celsus, *De Medicina*, IV. 31. 6-7, trans. W. G. Spencer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 457 for the classical association of this inflammatory condition with physical excess particularly drinking and sexual indulgence, common Christian sins.

¹⁹³ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 260-264

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 271-272.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 278.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 273-279.

¹⁹⁷ As opposed to the mother in miracle no. 24 who seeks to use the waters of the baptistery to increase the efficacy of her curse.

At various places within the chain of miracles, Augustine's portrayal of this divine presence validates the reliance which Brown's model places upon *praesentia*. This emphasis is best seen in miracle 6¹⁹⁸, which is both the first double miracle to occur in the chain and the first to introduce the theme of possession. In this episode a wealthy landowner named Hesperius calls up Augustine's priests to rid his family and livestock of 'the harmful force of the most evil spirits¹⁹⁹'. Upon the affliction being lifted by the prayers of the priests and an offering of the Eucharist, a second miracle is revealed. Hesperius only escaped the fate of his family through the power of the small bag of soil he had hung in his bedroom. This 'sanctam terram' was made so by virtue of its origin: the hill in Jerusalem where "Christ had been buried and arose the next day"²⁰⁰. In this case the spirit of the Resurrection imbued the surrounding earth with vestiges of its power and then diffused this *praesentia* into a localized space which, in this case, is Hesperius' room. Other objects made of natural elements such as flowers, oil or even tears can also absorb and channel this same power through contact with another; further testimony to the power of Resurrection stored in the bones of the saints and 'puluere mortuorum²⁰¹'. The conveyance of *praesentia* can be seen in miracles 9, 12, 15, 21, and 22.

The introduction of natural intermediaries and secondary relics also marks the entrance of a new subject: the tempestuous youth. Following its protection of Hesperius, the holy soil, mnemonic of the Resurrection, is buried once again in the earth and a shrine is built upon it. A local paralytic youth is brought to his shrine soon after and he "thereupon departed from there on his own legs"²⁰² once his control over his limbs was restored. The circumstances of the next miracle, no.8., upon a willful youth are even more revealing. A young man is brought to a shrine dedicated to the martyrs of Milan, Protasius and Gervasius, and subject to a violent exorcism. Pulled by some unseen power and bound to the altar of the saints, the evil spirit departs from the youth only after describing how he came to possess the youth: "he confessed where, when and in what manner he had attacked the youth"²⁰³. Indeed, the details Augustine gives of this event in themselves are strangely specific: "when he was bathing his horse in the stream of a river in the middle of the day in the summer, a spirit entered him"²⁰⁴. If the ambiguity of what folly might have seized a youth while bathing on a hot summer's day is not enough, the poor boy's ordeal is not over. After the demon departs, the physical source of evil is localized and removed from the boy's body not dissimilar to the manner in which Innocentia's doctor proposed to treat her cancer: "to separate

¹⁹⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 166-184.

¹⁹⁹ "Spiruum malignorum vim noviam" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 224).

²⁰⁰ "Sepultus Christus die tertio resurrexit" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 226).

²⁰¹ Sermon 317.1 in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons, (306-340A) On the Saints*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1994), 1435/11.

²⁰² "Inde continuo pedibus suis" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 226).

²⁰³ "Confitebatur ubi adolescentem et quando et quo modo invaserit" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 228).

²⁰⁴ "Cum die medio tempore aetatis equum ablueret in fluminis gurgite/daemonem incurrit" (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 226).

from the body the member where it (the disease) originated”²⁰⁵. Only this organ, the boy’s eye, which has fallen out and its pupil discolored, is still connected to boy “just as if by a root”²⁰⁶. A second miracle is needed to restore the boy’s sight and remove any malignant influence his body might have had upon him. This same theme, the ability of the Resurrection and its saintly surety to restore control of the body to the spirit, is also conveyed in miracles of the ‘peregrini²⁰⁷’ bother and sister, 24 & 25, who are healed of their epilepsy through the *praesentia* of St. Stephen. Though in this case the *praesentia* was diffused through the bars around Stephen’s shrine. Others patterns witnessed with less important implications as to Augustine’s purpose in including the chain of miracles within the Civitate Dei include how: the nature of space, whether private or public, tends to determine which group, the family or the community, retains possession of the body; the level of publicity directly corresponds to the class of its subject; those specifically described as old are more likely to be pagan; and Resurrection is only bestowed upon children, or at least those perceived as such by their parents, in application of God’s familial piety²⁰⁸.

Having analyzed the section in which Augustine’s actual treatment of relics in a contemporary setting is concentrated, several important facts have been illuminated. The discrepancy between the saintly benefits received by local versus foreign supplicants suggest that Augustine wished to reaffirm the adoption of these saints in the immediate religious landscape. By erasing the foreign origin of these translated relics and establishing them in previous power centers, country estates or cities, the local communities are endowed with a patron who is impervious to external secular or authoritative pressure. The prevalence of youths being most vulnerable to loss of bodily control is not merely a reflection of Augustine’s own struggles but a demonstration of the ability of the Resurrection to restore control over the body to the spirit; a promise which will be the realized in the eternal City of God. What this section does not explain, however, is why the same man who used to adamantly decry such miracles as superstition has now become one of the most staunch advocates of their validation? To better understand what might have caused this change of heart we must examine the historical events which surrounded the production of book 22.

C. Understanding the Implications of this ‘Change of Heart’

While, this sudden inclusion of relics and the cult of the martyrs in the final book of his magnum opus does fit within the parameters of its intended goal, as it gives empirical evidence for the Resurrection, the chain of miracles in 22.8 has baffled scholars for decades. Assuredly, it is easy enough to ascribe the reasons for Augustine’s reversal of thought and adoption of practices which he previously abhorred to the fancies of a senile mind²⁰⁹. Or, even to fall back on the claim that “the historian will

²⁰⁵ “A corpore separari membrum ubi nascitur” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 220).

²⁰⁶ “Quasi radice” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 228).

²⁰⁷ Pers. comm. Clifford Ando 11 March 2015.

²⁰⁸ See the respective miracles for evidence of these claims: 12 & 13 versus 21 & 22; 3 versus 4; 4 & 15; 18-22. note miracles 14 and 15 are not exceptions as Eucharius (14) is a priest and spiritual son of God and Martial was only granted the first regeneration with his soul being restored (from the errors of unbelief) not his physical body.

²⁰⁹ See evidence against this claim in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 466-469.

probably never penetrate the reason of such a sudden crisis of feeling²¹⁰ as thirty-six years passed between the elitist polemic of *De vera religione* and the writing of the final book of the *City of God*. There are, however, several events that may help our understanding of this shift which transpired, not mid life, but in between the authorship of the two halves of Augustine's work. The first event was the discovery of the relics of St. Stephen in 415 under a small church in Caphar Gamala²¹¹ some twenty miles outside of Jerusalem. The relics of the protomartyr were then divided four times according to contemporary accounts²¹² and distributed among the ecclesiastical and imperial elite. With each translation the number of Stephen's bones grew exponentially - outside of human proportions- and their amplified presence left both newly constructed basilicas and miraculous healings in its wake. Within a year, this *exiguus pulvis*²¹³ had even traveled as far as North Africa by way of the the saddlebags of the Spanish priest, Paulus Orosius²¹⁴, who was returning from the Council of Diospolis and a brief but pivotal sojourn on the island of Minorca²¹⁵. While the ever busy bishop of Hippo was willing to pause his drafting of books 6-10 of the *City of God*²¹⁶ to extract an obligatory treatise from his student²¹⁷, at the time Augustine was far more concerned with the news Orosius bore of the recent council against the Pelagians and his correspondence from Jerome rather than any relics the priest was carrying²¹⁸. Although a portion of these relics did eventually make their way into Augustine's see through the agency of Evodius, bishop of Uzalis²¹⁹, this tour is neither related nor referenced in Augustine's work until a much later date. Moreover, it was only for the sake of

²¹⁰ Ibid. 424.

²¹¹ See disputed epigraphical evidence concerning the identification of the Stephen's mausoleum of the Protomartyr and the discrepancies between the structure of the site's Byzantine church and the evidence given in Lucian's *inventio* of Stephen's relics in Leah di Segni & Shimon Gibson, "Greek Inscriptions from Khirbet el-Jiljil and Beit Jimal and the Identification of Caphar Gamala", *Bulletin of Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 25 (2007): 117-145.

²¹² Francois Bovon, "The Dossier on Stephen, the First Martyr", *Harvard Theological Review* 96.3 (2003): 305.

²¹³ Sermon 317.1 in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons, (306-340A) On the Saints*, 1435/11.

²¹⁴ a Spanish priest who was both Augustine's student and the author of the complementary *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* see footnote 217

²¹⁵ *n.b.* the importance of this event and the conversion of the jews as chronicled in Scott Bradbury, 'Introduction', in Severus, Bishop of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1-25 and in chapter 2 of Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 25-33.

²¹⁶ O'Donnell, *Augustine, City of God*, 1983.

²¹⁷ The *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* which in its premise is complementary to the *Civitate Dei*.

²¹⁸ Scott Bradbury, 'Introduction', 24; Ep. 172 is one of these letters.

²¹⁹ John Crook, 'Relics, Shrines & Pilgrimage' in John Crook (ed.) *English Medieval Shrines*, (Martlesham, UK: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2011),13; the bishop was also said

grooming Eraclius of Hippo²²⁰ as an episcopal successor free from any secular taint²²¹ that the first *memoria* was finally dedicated to Stephen in Hippo Regius in 424; eight years later after the arrival of these relics in North Africa. Within two years of this date the chain of miracles described in 22.8 occurred which Augustine himself attested were only a small fraction of the total. One modern source goes so far as to describe the rate which these *memoriae* and other local manifestations of devotion - whether they are basilicas, chapels, shrines or the *mensae* which accompanied the tomb of the saints - emerged as “shooting up everywhere out of the ground like mushrooms”²²².

In the section of his biography on Augustine’s old age, Peter Brown portrays Augustine’s reaction to this trend as an astute maneuver characteristic of a man experienced in balancing the needs of the public against those of his faith. Although his wording seems to suggest that the bishop’s hand was somewhat forced by popular appeal and the precedent set by his episcopal counterpart in Uzalis²²³, Brown ardently denies that Augustine’s actions were in any way “a sudden and unprepared surrender to popular credibility”²²⁴. Instead, Augustine’s attempts to maximize the publicity of these miracles are simply the best way to accommodate the ‘urgent need for faith’ and any conventions which support it. According to Brown, the aged bishop’s ultimate goal is to create a single codex, a modern day companion to the Gospel, which might finally convince those stalwart local pagans, many of whom were doctors, to believe or at least to test the verity of his claims on the bodies of their neighbors and patients²²⁵. The publication of miracles through the reading and collection of *libelli* also effectively capitalized upon the latent feeling of the North African populace. For, as supported in the analysis of 22.8, these relics provided communities with new spiritual patrons who could alleviate the instability of the temporal world not only with promises of a better future, but also with visible proof of their assertions. In view of this, Augustine’s change in policy is not merely a concession to overwhelming circumstance but a re-evaluation of the needs of his flock.

What Brown fails to answer, however, is: why such a change is needed now and what makes it so pressing as to influence every aspect of Augustine’s *officium*? Moreover, why would he incorporate supernatural accounts which invalidated the agency of mortal actors at the end of a text concerned with defending Christianity’s position within the empire? The first glimpse of an answer to these questions can be seen in the dissertation of Margaret R. Miles. While Miles’ interest in Augustine’s change of heart is primarily to support her own ‘theory of sensation’, her data provides the next piece to the puzzle of relic advocacy. Even if she falls prey to the false ‘mass

²²⁰ Who prior to his ordainment had inherited considerable property, much of which was donated to the church in Hippo Regius, for the construction of local ecclesiastical infrastructure like that of the *memoriae*.

²²¹ Like that which had inevitably damned his choice of Antonius as the bishop of Fussula in 415. The bishop was deposed in 423 after serious charges of corruption were brought against him cite; Eraclius was officially nominated as Augustine successor in 426

²²² Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 478; 482.

²²³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 419.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid. 418.

conversions' of the 5th century which Brown later refutes²²⁶, Miles does precede Brown in arguing that the support of relics by figures like Augustine is in part due to the changing relationship between the living and the dead²²⁷. Her value in understanding Augustine's mental shift is derived from her second claim: that Augustine "experienced an increasing disenchantment with the results of the operation of reason alone"²²⁸. This sentiment brings to mind the dispute Augustine maintained with Pelagius through the influential young bishop Julian of Eclaneum during the writing of the 22nd book²²⁹. Pelagius was a British monk who passed through North Africa as a refugee following the illustrious sack of Rome in 410. His argument of predestination and denial of the importance of God's grace in achieving true belief threatened the foundations of Augustine's doctrine²³⁰. Although the two never met face to face, their dispute was born by Julian, a resident of the imperial court in Ravenna at the time, through a series of letters from 419 until Augustine's death in 430²³¹. With this controversy in mind, the composition of Brown's 'libelli codex' and its germ in 22.8's miracle chain can be seen as Augustine's attempt to further church writings in a time absent of persecution. The supply of martyrs springing forth to die for their faith were far and few between in a world where the empire was ruled by a 'servi Dei. Here we enter into the work of historian Clifford Ando who claims that a new form of internalized suffering had to be found in order to continue the history of a faith which had been constructed around the idea of persecution.²³² By their "similar depraved manners and errors" Christian sects, like the Pelagians, who were rejected by the Church achieved this aim and ensured that

²²⁶ Brown's certainty is based off the lack of archaeological evidence in Hippo and other places which does not indicate a sizable growth on congregations nor in Church size and construction (Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 18-22, 29).

²²⁷ Margaret R. Miles, *Augustine on the Body* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 36; Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 21. "The rise of the cult of saints was sensed by contemporaries, in no uncertain manner, to have broken most of the imaginative boundaries which ancient men had placed between heaven and earth, the divine and the human, the living and the dead, the town and its antithesis". Brown argues that this change was most visible in burial practice and ritual primarily those which concerned the bodies of the saints. And, that their tombs, the *loca sanctorum*, became the focus of communal rituals both original and derivative of previous pagan practices. For Augustine's own views on the proper treatment of the dead body and burial *ad sanctos* see the extension of the *City of God's* Book 1, chapter 12 & 13 in Augustine of Hippo, *On the Care for the Dead*, trans. Paula J. Rose (Brill: Leiden, 2013) and the Dolbeau sermon no.7 in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons (Newly discovered)*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 131-135. For a brief discussion of the correlation between *ad sanctos* burial and individual wealth see Nicholas Passalacqua, "Ad sanctos burial and markers of skeletal health in Medieval Asturias, Spain," *Academia.edu*, 2013. https://www.academia.edu/3307869/Ad_sanctos_burial_and_markers_of_skeletal_health_in_Medieval_Asturias_Spain; For an ethnographic analogy cf. Gregory Schopen, "Burial *Ad Sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archaeology of Religions," in *Bones, Stone and Buddhist Monks*, edited by Gregory Schopen, 114-147. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

²²⁸ Miles, *Augustine on the Body*, 36.

²²⁹ The first of these works the *Contra Julianum* was written in 422 and the last, *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem opus imperfectum*, was finished shortly before Augustine's death in 430 (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 380). Book 22 is estimated to have been written between 425-429 (O'Donnell, *Augustine, City of God*, 1983)

²³⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 367-368.

²³¹ Ibid. 386.

²³² Pers. comm. Clifford Ando. 10 March 2015.

“those who lived piously in Christ...suffer[ed] this persecution, not in their bodies, but in their hearts”²³³. However, while these waves of persecution were instrumental in defining matters of orthodoxy, they were at times too dangerous to the fabric of Catholic unity. The greatest threat from a heresy came not when it created a schism within a single country, as such conflicts could eventually be resolved by an outside party, but rather when it factionalized the two halves of the empire on secular lines. Particularly memorable is the dispute of the empress Justina and the aforementioned Ambrose of Milan where each choose a side, Arianism to the East and Nicene Christianity to the West, to the aggravation of contemporary political stability²³⁴.

Traditional scholarship has also allied this shift with the aspirations of the *City of God* as a whole. Just before launching into the eight chapter of book 22, Augustine said the world would be all but forced to accept the credibility of miracles “if a number of noble, exalted, and learned men had said that they had witnessed it, and had been at pains to publish what they had witnessed”²³⁵. In view of this claim and Augustine’s extreme indignation²³⁶ at the discretion of those persons “whose city and name is so distinguished, that the facts cannot be hidden from those who inquire into the matter”²³⁷, the chain of miracles is also targeted to a specific audience: the very same elite refugees from Rome who initiated the writing of the *City of God* in the first place. As many of these elites had found a home in North African cities like Hippo Regius, Augustine purposely grounded the chain of miracles in this landscape. By naming specific people such as Florentius the butt of local jokes²³⁸ or Irenaeus the tax man and by locating these events in private estates like that of Audurus or Caspalium²³⁹, Augustine gave his audience evidence not just of disputable hearsay but of flesh and blood in the bodies of their neighbors²⁴⁰. Moreover, Augustin excels in this section once again by picking a text, Cicero’s *Republic* 3, which these elites would have been familiar with, and using its logic and terminology to his own advantage. In this text Cicero’s definition of a healthy state and its ability to survive against other bodies hinges upon its ‘salus’ (security) and its ‘fides’ (treatises or other contractual obligations)²⁴¹. After revealing a damaging flaw in the philosopher’s reasoning,

²³³ Augustine, *City of God*, 18. 51. 38-40.

²³⁴ A. Douglas Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 54; For the political dimensions of the cult of relics in the late 430’s-440’s see the competition of Melania the Younger and the Empress Eudocia, widow to Theodosius II in Elizabeth A. Clark. “Claims on the Bones of Saint Stephen: The Partisans of Melania and Eudocia,” *Church History* 51, no.2 (1982), 141-156.

²³⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 34-36.

²³⁶ See Augustine’s treatment of Innocentia in miracle 3, lines 139-142.

²³⁷ “Ampla civitas, ampla persona rem quaerentes latere non sinit” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, 242)

²³⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 212-217.

²³⁹ See footnote 49.

²⁴⁰ “But let them”, those who do not believe in the Incarnation or Resurrection,”make strict inquiry into this miracle [n.23], and if they find it true, let them believe those others” (Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 8. 326-330)

²⁴¹ Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God: A reader’s guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 227.

Augustine then reworks these terms to apply to the only state which he considers worth the subscription, the city of God in Paradise. In Augustine's version, the 'fides' owed by a citizen to its state is idealized in the sacrifice of the martyrs and its 'salus' and the salvation of a citizen's being, both body and soul, is foretold in the miracles performed by the relics of the saints²⁴². That being said, Augustine's account of these miracles is, to a certain degree, constructed to depose the martyrs who already held places in the popular imagination of local North African communities. By supporting the new *memoriae* of foreign saints like Stephen over those established at the graves of past martyrs who were often distant kin to their supporters²⁴³, Augustine was able to legitimize the authority of relics and those who owned them²⁴⁴. More importantly, he was then better able to regulate the local practices and rituals which occurred around them and to criticize any which he deemed to be 'superstition'. Frederik Van der Meer describes Augustine's role as the overseer of the cult of relics as the halfhearted attempt at toleration by a man who was ferociously devoted to eradicating any 'nonsensical' customs produced by the misguided sentiment of the public²⁴⁵. But this opinion is based off the very same texts described in the previous section (II A) that illuminate the bishop's beliefs as a young priest²⁴⁶. This claim is invalidated not only by its reliance upon outdated information but also by inability to consider any other dimensions to the problem of relics; primarily, the benefits which the cult of relics could have towards promoting rather than 'restraining' Christian belief²⁴⁷.

VI. Conclusion: The 22nd Book: Superfluous Appendage or Purpose of the Entirety?

Augustine's view of human nature, and in a sense his own 'two-tiered' model, is divided up into the 'learned' and the 'unlearned'. An individual is generally allotted into one of these two groups according to class, but there are significant exceptions to this rule. While lower class individuals like the Apostles may, according to the theologian, have a harder time comprehending the intricacies of faith and understanding God, in the end, the only men whom Augustine terms 'stultus', or the foolish, are those who refuse to recognize the validity of miracles as a source of God's authority.

Through the *City of God* and complementary evidence selected from other works of his, Augustine is seen to diverge from Brown's clean cut categorization as one of the 'reverentia'. In his model of medieval Christianity, Brown argued that the cult of

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ The implications of which were often seen by critics of the cult of relics as dangerously close to classical hero worship (Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 5)

²⁴⁴ A canon in the Synod of 401 invested bishops with the authority to determine the legitimacy of relics which came into their respective sees and to destroy any shrines whose contents did not meet their approval (Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 483).

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 471-472.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 472.

²⁴⁷ *n.b.* these benefits could also take more practical, administrative forms as is seen in Evodius' rededication of a Donatist basilica with the relics of St. Stephen. This move was more political than religious and served to both divorce the building of its previous association and to secure the loyalty of the congregation to the Catholic church (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 417)

saints was both a unifying factor in a widespread Christian landscape and a mechanism of administrative control at the local, provincial level. Augustine, however, does not promote relics in order to reinforce such existing power relationships or systems of patronage. Rather, quite the opposite, he promotes these relationships and systems of patronage to further the adoration of relics and the publication of the miracles which they produce. Moreover, he does not use the cult of relics to enforce the authority of a Catholic hierarchy, as events in the bishop's life have long since dissuaded him of the notion and possibility of lasting unity or true peace in the temporal world. In Augustine's mind, membership in the city of God on earth may be an admirable goal but it, and any organizations which compose it, like the Catholic church, only exist for the purpose of spreading the Truth and aiding others in their journey to the Paradise of the next life; and any other objectives of these bodies are, and will always be, futile.

Augustine's 'gravitational shift'²⁴⁸ towards embracing the very same cult which he had publicly denounced, and his 'urgent need for faith' that Brown discussed in his *Cult of the Saints*, is a practical solution to contemporary events and, in itself, a very personal decision. For the authority which modern scholars like Peter Brown claim that the entirety of the African church rested upon was not allowed to age peacefully. The bishop faced heresy after heresy and emerged relatively unscathed for the length of his episcopacy until his dispute with the monk Pelagius. Unlike the others, Augustine was not ultimately able to best this opponent or even his opponent's intermediary, Julian of Eclaneum, through his usual skillful tact and such a defeat must have weighed heavily upon the theologian's conscience. Too add to Augustine's worries, the relationship between the African Church and the papacy had not improved since the execution of his friend Marcellinus in 414²⁴⁹. The in 417, a disagreement arose over which body, local or papal, had the authority to punish an African bishop and Augustine was forced to throw his vote in with the other African bishops and deny the authority of papal jurisdiction. Although Augustine did attempt to restore relations with his counterparts in Rome by responding with zeal to a request from Pope Zosimus to help settle a dispute in Mauritania in 418²⁵⁰; fate was not in the bishop's favor and the pope died before Augustine even returned to Hippo. The changing goals of the *City of God* and Augustine's ultimate support of relics in book 22 are a direct result of his desire to reaffirm his authority during this time. Indeed, a good portion of his rebuttal of the canon of classical literature (previously detailed in section III) is focused around

²⁴⁸ See Brown's defense against A.M.H Jones' accusations of a 'surrender to the populace': "It is, rather, that, within the immensely complex structure of Augustine's thought, the centre of gravity had shifted; modern miracles which had once been peripheral, now become urgently important as supporters to faith" (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 419).

²⁴⁹ Brown claims that this was the point when Augustine 'lost faith in the alliance between the Roman empire and the Catholic Church' (Ibid. 338); Though he adjusts this timeframe in his later epilogue by claiming that "the years around 404 mark a turning point in the relations between the Catholic Church and its religious rivals in North Africa, and, in the mind of Augustine himself, in his views on the relation between the Church and society" (Ibid. 449)

²⁵⁰ James Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 145-148; The nature of this negotiation has been disputed by modern scholars. cf. Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Visit to Caesarea in 418," in *Studies in Church History*, ed. C. W Dugmore and Charles Duggan, 104-113 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964) & Albert C. de Veer, "Review of Gerald Bonner's "Augustine's Visit to Caesarea in 418,"" *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 12 (1966), 307-308.

opposing a single line of reasoning: that, no matter how strong an individual's will, belief can not be achieved on reason alone, rather one can only do so by the grace of God²⁵¹. In his insistence that belief is dependent upon God's will alone, Augustine denies the authority of any temporal institution, including the Catholic church, and argues that the only true representations of God's will on earth are manifested by divine signs; the predominant type being the miracles of saints. The majority of Augustine's refutation is concerned with the legitimization of the promise of Ressurrection and the relics which testify to it in order to support this bold claim; and the ultimate rebellion against a machine which, in the end, proved just as inadequate to the brilliant philosopher as all the rest.

²⁵¹ The majority of Augustine's Confessions is focused upon revealing the author's own moral, intellectual and spirtual inadequacies (especially his inability to comprehend the existence of a non-corporeal deity) until his miraculous conversion scene; This was the chief error of Pelgiasius (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 368, 373-375).

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VII. Appendix

Table 1.

Order	Age (young, mid, old) & Sex of Subject	Religious Affiliation (if stated)	Class/ Profession	Relic (Y/N): If no, state type of intercession	Nature of Contact: if direct & non - relic miracle state intermediary	Affliction (Possession, Wound, Death)	Location; Public or Private
1	mid-old; male	N/A	N/A	Y - St. Protasius & Gervasius	Indirect	Wound - blindness	Milan; Public
2	mid-old; male	Christian	deputy prefect	N - prayer	Indirect	Wound - fistula	Carthage; Private (publicized)
3	mid; female	Christian	noblewoman	N - dream	Secondary - Baptism	Wound - breast Cancer	Carthage; Private (publicized)
4	mid; male	non-Christian	doctor	N - dream	Direct - Baptism	Wound - gout	Carthage; Private
5	old; male	non-Christian	comedian	N - dream	Direct - Baptism	Wound - paralysis & hernia	Curubis; Private
6a	all; male and female	N/A	family, slaves & livestock	N - prayer	Indirect - Eucharist	Possession	Fussala; Private
6b	mid; male	N/A	landowner	Y - earth	Direct - imbued	Possession - preventative	Fussala; Private
7	young; male	Christian?	N/A	Y - earth	Direct - diffused	Wound - paralysis	Fussala; Private
8	young; male	N/A	N/A	Y - Protasius & Gervasius	Direct - diffused	Possession; Wound - eye	Victoriana; Private
9	young; female	N/A	N/A	N - prayer	Indirect - oil	Possession	Hippo; N/A
10	young; male	N/A	N/A	N - prayer	Indirect - diffused	Possession	Hippo?; N/A
11	old; male	Christian	tailor	N - prayer	Indirect - natural	Wound - poverty	Hippo; Public
12	mid-old; female	Christian	N/A	Y - St. Stephen	Secondary - imbued	Wound - blindness	river Tibilis; Public
13	mid-old; male	Christian	bishop	Y - St. Stephen	Direct	Wound - fistula	Sinita; Public
14	mid-old; male	Christian	priest (non-native)	Y - St. Stephen	Direct	Wound - stone; Death	Calama; Private

15	old; male	non-Christian	noblemen	Y - St. Stephen	Secondary - imbued	Wound - paganism; Illness N/A	Calama; Private (publicized)
16	mid; male	N/A	citizen	Y - St. Stephen	N/A - immediate	Wound - gout	Calama; N/A
17	mid; male	N/A	non-native	Y - St. Stephen	N/A - delayed	Wound - gout	Calama; N/A
18	young; male	N/A	N/A	Y - St. Stephen	Direct	Death	Audurus; Private
19	young?; female	Christian	nun?	Y - St. Stephen	Secondary - imbued	Death	Caspalium; Private
20	young?; female	N/A	non-native	Y - St. Stephen	Secondary - imbued & delayed	Death	Hippo; Private (publicized)
21	young?; male	N/A	father= tax gatherer	Y - St. Stephen	Secondary - imbued	Death	Hippo; Private
22	young (infant); male	N/A	father = tribute	Y - St. Stephen	Direct	Death	Hippo; Private
23	mid-old; female	N/A	noblewoman	Y - St. Stephen	Indirect - diffused	Wound - paganism; Illness N/A	Uzali; Private (publicized)
24	young?; male	N/A	family = noble	Y - St. Stephen	Direct - diffused	Wound - epilepsy	Hippo; Public
25	young; female	N/A	family = noble	Y - St. Stephen	Direct - diffused	Wound - epilepsy	Hippo; Public