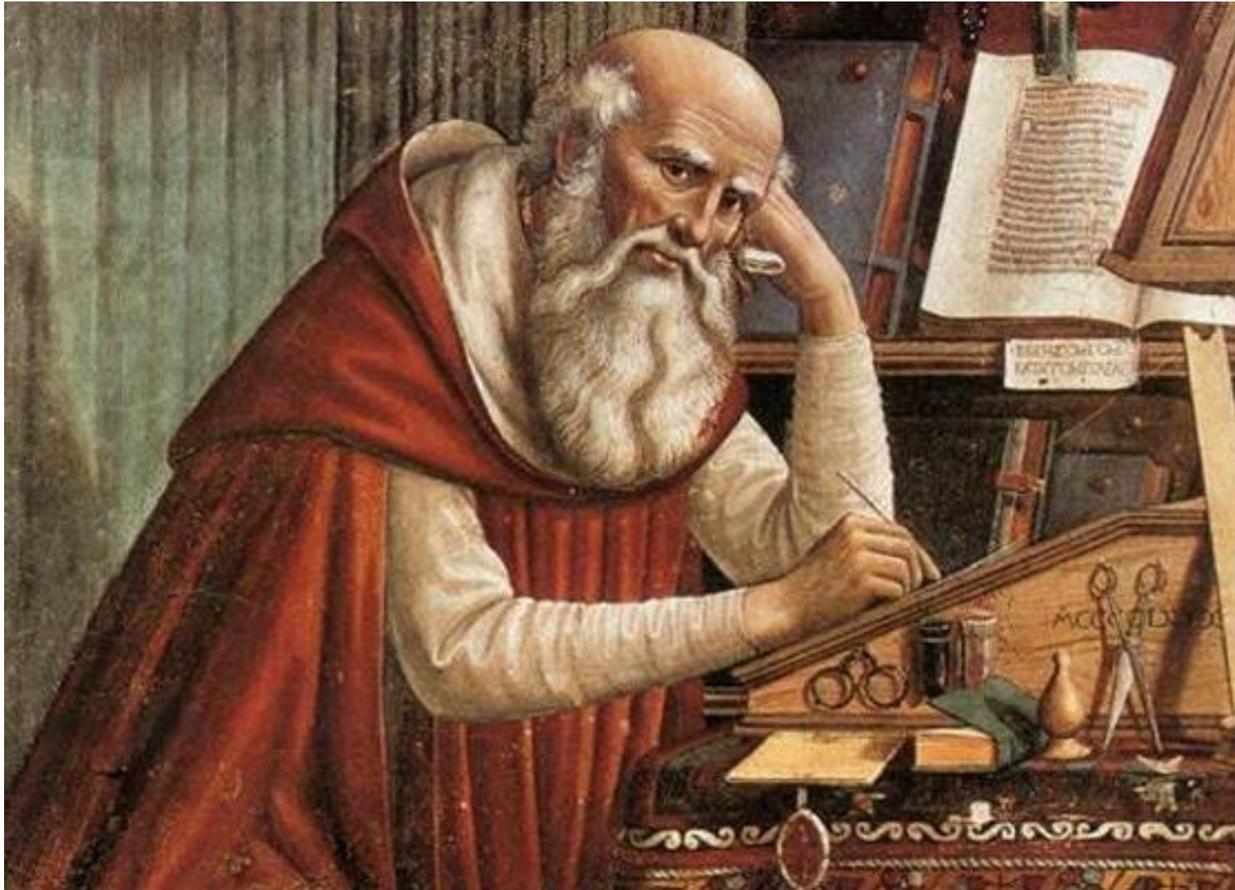


Turning Points: God's Faithfulness in Christian History Augustine and Early Medieval Church



410 AD Rome Sacked

Goths (Visigoth, barbarian tribe) triumph. Rome paid ransom, did not work. Goths destroyed infrastructure, set up barbarian kingdom. Goths = **Arians** (Jesus= son of God, but not God) & enemies eastern Byzantine Empire (Trinitarian, Nicene Creed)



St. Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo

The City of God Against the Pagans

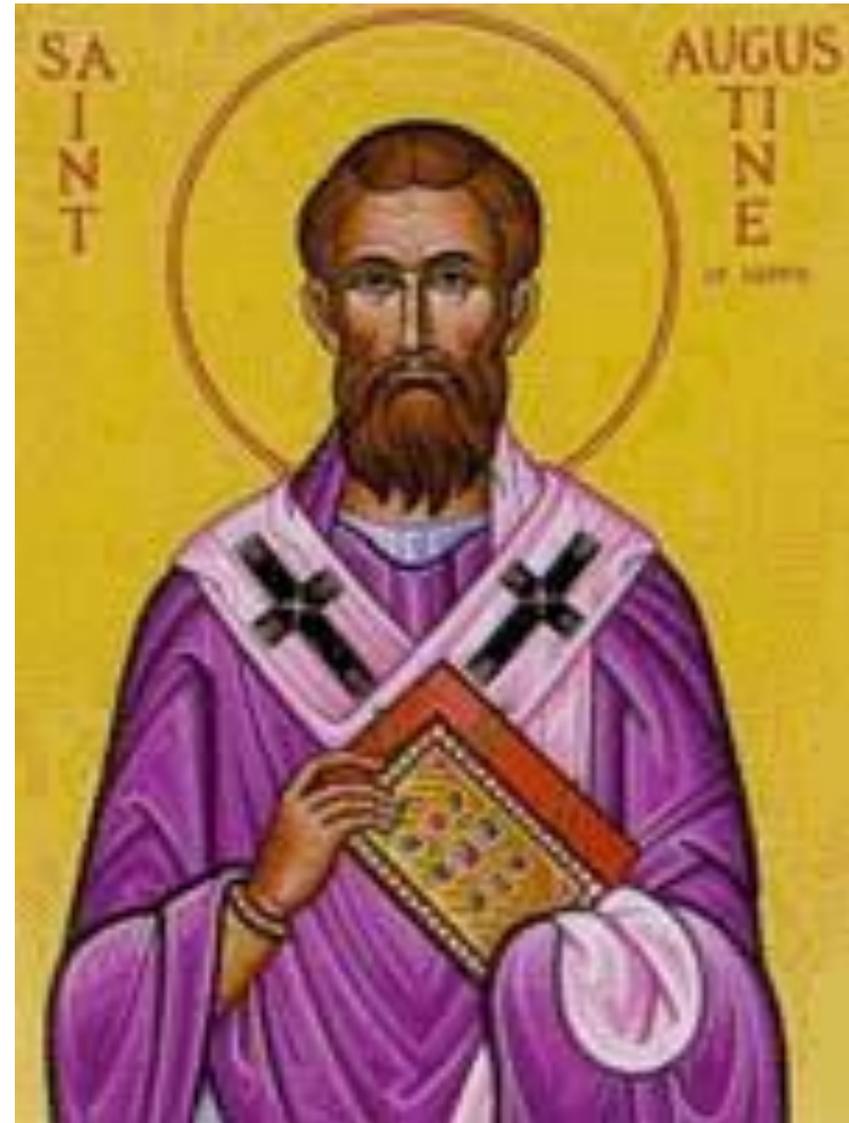
De Civitate Dei contra Paganos

written 413-417 after Goths sacked Rome.

Primary goal = **Consolation**

God present in history; events have purpose in God's plan; history has meaningful end.

Secondary goal to refute pagan arguments Christianity destroyed Rome.



St. Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo

Hippo is a smaller city just outside Carthage.



Fall of Rome and Christianity?

Big Questions:

1. Place of Christianity in society: what is being “salt of the earth” & “light on a hill”? [Matt. 5:13-16]
2. Purpose of God in history:

312 Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity: was this the purpose of God, likened to how Yahweh used Israel in O.T.?

After 410 Rome sacked & defeated by Goths; what now?

St. Augustine (354-430): Worldview

Redemptive history = *Creation, Fall, Redemption* ordained by God; history has meaning & purpose. Unlike the prominent ancient cyclical view of time, Augustine establishes a linear view in which events matter, prophecy foretells of significant future events, the greatest are Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, and return.

The State = divinely-ordained punishment for fallen man, w/ armies, power to command, coerce, punish, even put to death; as well as institutions, such as slavery & private property.

Romans 13 = civil obedience required.

The Decline and Fall of Rome Argument

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1789) kept pagan accusations alive: Christianity weakened R.E. w/ otherworldly focus & intolerance.

But really **Voltaire** claimed “As Christianity advances, disasters befall the [Roman] empire....”

Gibbon (chap.39): “The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age....”

Perhaps Gibbon more observant: [confusion of belief & practice]

“The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosophers as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful.”

Fall of Rome and Christianity?

Problem: did Christianity contribute to decline & fall of R.E.?

Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, 2014).

Augustine of Hippo a Biography (1967; newest ed. 2013)

Not militant Church, aggressively changing Rome for own purposes, “The decades immediately after Constantine were in fact fraught with **heresies, imperial rivalries, and paganism**. The emperor Julian, who for a brief moment re-established the pagan cults, is paradoxically the most luminous figure in that gloom.”

The **wealthy joined Christian churches** (end 4th c.), not conversion of Constantine, that “marks the true beginning of the triumphant Catholicism of the Middle Ages.” Meant radical shift from civic munificence to pious donations.

BUT, too many “pious” donations ended up corrupting the church!

Fall of Rome and Christianity?

Brown:

After 5th c. process of transforming clergy, **sacral class** arose, w/ distinctive dress, grooming, celibacy.

Brown calls “othering” of the clergy. He claims the impetus came from **laity’s desire: “The imposition of celibacy on the clergy was what we would call ‘consumer driven.’”**

Donations to Church became assurances for afterlife rather than ostentatious display for subsequent generations or selfless help for the poor.

Pagans worried about loss of “supernatural protection caused by Christian blasphemy.”

St. Augustine, *The City of God*

Central arguments *The City of God*:

James J. O'Donnell (*Augustine: A New Biography*, Harper 2006):

“it was not precisely the sack of Rome in 410 that aroused A. to write *civ.* but the lingering contention it provoked among sophisticated citizens, Christian in name but classical in allegiances.”

Augustine **more concerned** to help Christians understand the **silence of God** (apparent inaction, but **working in history**) & suffering of Roman Christians than refute pagans.

See: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/civ.html>

St. Augustine, *The City of God*

O'Donnell sees in Augustine's sermons: "Slaughter, torture, and captivity inflicted upon the just all have scriptural precedents."

Some pagans "who criticize the Christian god themselves benefitted from his protection by taking refuge in the basilicas of the apostles."

A much more **sensitive pastoral issue** = "the plight of religious women who had been raped during the siege," and while some committed suicide, others lived in great distress & even endured criticism about their morals.

"The **purpose was entirely pastoral**: to dismantle first (in Books 1-10) the prevailing, all-too-natural, interpretation of the meaning of human affairs, and then to find hidden just beneath the surface a second interpretation, divine in origin, full of hope for the future."

See: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/civ.html>

St. Augustine, *The City of God: the State*

What makes a Republic
(commonwealth) strong?

Cicero: (Bk 2, ch. 21)

Republic= people united by “a common acknowledgement of law, and by a community of interests.”

Question= Cicero: was this enough to keep Republic from becoming Empire? Rome fell because of corruption: leaders driven by **self love**; even gods did not love!

CONTRAST:

Augustine: (Bk 19, ch. 24)

Republic= “a people is the association of a multitude of rational beings united by a common agreement on the objects of their love.”

Two cities- two loves:

Earthly city created self love

Heavenly city created love of God.

LOVE = center of human action in society in way never previously done.

St. Augustine, *The City of God: the State*

“Tale of Two Cities” theme Western civilization.

Societies: some people advance Common Good; others do bad.
Christians serve loving God; human relationships only **flourish** if humans act w/ love for God.

True “***apatheia***” (Stoics missed point) = love of God.

Augustine used terms from philosophy (& Stoicism) to explain Christianity and its place in the world.

telos (= meaningful end); history has meaning.

St. Augustine, *The City of God: the State*

“When there is a question as to whether a man is good, one does not ask what he believes, or what he hopes, but what he loves.”

Cain & Abel (metaphor) history = 2 brothers; God constrained evil of Cain. Even after Cain killed Abel, God protected Cain for another chance to repent. (Gen.4:15)

St. Augustine, *The City of God: History*

A Christian meaning of History: *telos* = end, purpose of a thing
Christians live in the world but are not fully at home in the world.

TWIN CITIZENSHIP =

Christians live in both cities & must endure vicissitudes of earthly kingdom, yet can rejoice in knowledge that ultimately their Love is rewarded in eternal life.

Jesus said (Matt.22:21): “*render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, render to God what belongs to God.*”

Pilgrims

Christians live as people who are not completely “at home” on earth, but passing through.

St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*: Use of Greek Philosophy?

Credo ut intelligam “I believe so that I may understand.”

Since St. Paul went to Mars Hill in Athens [see *Acts* 17:16-34] the question had been asked, “what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?”

Athens represented best of Greek philosophy & Jerusalem represented God’s special revelation in scripture, first to Jews. Augustine works out a possible way of synthesis.

He refers to “*spoliatio Aegyptorum*” or *spoils of Egypt* that should be taken and used by God’s people, Israel [see *Exodus* 3:21-22; 11:2; 12:35-36].

St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*: Use of Greek Philosophy?

Connection made to Christian Church using spoils of Greco-Roman tradition. God's providence allowed former developments in order to educate humans & help them turn away from destructive polytheism.

= “*praeparatio Evangelium*” or preparation for the Gospel, which is central teaching of Christ's message to the world.

Christ becomes the *Logos*

[see *John* 1:1-18 where “Word” = logos], formerly understood by Stoics as universal & eternal reason, inherent in all things.

Augustine: History, Books 15-18

Augustine one of 1st (and best) to make a case for [universality of history under God's providential control](#).

[Only other attempt= Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*]

Significant points:

1. **All events in history, even evil actions of fallen men, in God's providence.**

“His providential purpose is not simply as retributive punishment, but as a chastening of all to the end that some might be led to repentance and eternal life. For the evil in man that God seeks to heal is the perversion of His love, so that earthly peace is sought, but eternal peace ignored. God's chastening, then, as it affects both the good and evil, is righteous.”

See John A. Maxfield, “Divine Providence, History, and Progress in Saint Augustine's City of God.” *Concordia Theological Journal*. 66.4 (Oct. 2002).

Augustine: History, Books 15-18

2. **History moves in a linear** way forward, but cannot be measured as progress. **Progress** can only be measured as **perfecting of Church**, the body of Christ toward its eternal goals.
3. **Christ the central meaning of History**, since all history prior pointed to his coming; history after is awaiting his return.

See John A. Maxfield, "Divine Providence, History, and Progress in Saint Augustine's City of God." *Concordia Theological Journal*. 66.4 (Oct. 2002).

Augustine: History, Books 15-18

4. **Visible, earthly Church** is not necessarily **true invisible, spiritual Church, body of Christ!** Earthly church = “wheat and tares.”

Unfortunately, Augustine’s visible & invisible church became ONE in Medieval Christendom:

“...in particular by **Otto de Freising** (c. 1114-1158)... modeled his *Chronicon* on the Augustinian schema as a history of two cities, but when he reached Book V and began to deal with the rise of the Christian Empire he suddenly realized that ‘since everyone including, with only a few exceptions, the Emperors themselves, had become devout Catholics, it seems to me that I have written, not a history of two cities but, to all intents and purposes, that of only one which I shall call the Church’.”

See John A. Maxfield, “Divine Providence, History, and Progress in Saint Augustine's City of God.” *Concordia Theological Journal*. 66.4 (Oct. 2002).

Augustine: Six Ages of History

in *On the catechizing of the uninstructed*, Chapter 22: each age (*aetas*) = 1,000 years → 2 Peter 3:8: “...one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

The First Age = “beginning of the human race, that is, from Adam, who was the first man that was made, down to Noah, who constructed the ark at the time of the flood.”

The Second Age = “extends from that period on to Abraham, who was called the father indeed of all nations.”

The Third Age = “extends from Abraham on to David the king.”

Augustine: Six Ages of History

The Fourth Age = “from David on to that captivity whereby the people of God passed over into Babylonia.”

The Fifth Age = “from that transmigration down to the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Sixth Age = “With His [Jesus Christ's] coming the sixth age has entered on its process.”

Final Age = Judgement

Christian Monasticism



Context of Medieval World & Monasticism

From 410 AD sack of Rome, western, Latin-speaking Europe descended into wide-spread invasions, war, and great insecurity with no centralized power.

Goths, then Huns, Germanic tribes (Vandals, Lombards, Anglos, Saxons, later Vikings).

In the absence of any centralized state (with exception of brief attempts—Charlemagne....) the Church offered some stability and organization (Christendom). Monasteries played a significant role in preserving scholarship, training leaders, and prayer.

Yet, despite some positive contributions, most laity (ordinary believers) had very little education and knowledge of Christianity.

Twin Citizenship: living in two worlds?

“Holy Dying”

Martyrdom Early Church before 312. Christianity illegal.

Often no choice under persecution if one did not deny Christ & Church.

Tertullian, *Apologeticus* (197 AD): “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”

Inspiration to persevere under persecution; demonstrates religious power of Christianity.

“Holy Living” dying to self.

After 312 (Constantine’s conversion) no martyrdom.

But, still human dilemma of self & desires keeping from Christian ideal.

Monks:

1. demonstrated denial & lived (dying to flesh) an exemplary life for laity. “white martyrdom”

2. prayed for souls of all Christians in their struggle w/evil forces.

Isolation from world

escape earthly powers. Skellig Michael, County Kerry, Ireland



St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai

(honored as most holy Christian sites)



Gabriel Wuken Monastery, Mount Workamba, Ethiopia



Pilgrimage

Medieval Christians had many rituals no longer practiced among modern Christians (although somewhat similar to Muslim practices today: i.e. prayer five times a day, pilgrimage to holy sites, etc.)

Three Christian sites= holiest; if possible “lay” believers who could afford it tried to go there.

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Rome
- C. Santiago de Compostela (legendary resting place of St. James in northern Spain)

Each region of Europe had its own local shrines.

Pilgrimage to Compostela

Tomb St. James discovered Compostela 9thc. Pilgrims from all over Europe arrived end 11thc., some by sea, most through France.



Medieval Canonical Hours of Prayer

6:00 am - First Hour (*Matins / Lauds / Orthros*)... *Psalm 5*

9:00 am - Third Hour (*Trece*)... *The Lord's Prayer*

Noon Prayer - Sixth Hour (*Sext*)... *23rd Psalm*

3:00 pm - Ninth Hour (*None*)... *Psalm 117*

6:00 pm (*Vespers / Evensong*)... *Psalm 150*

9:00 pm (*Compline*)... *Psalm 4*

Midnight Prayer... *Psalm 119:62, Psalm 134*

Roots to Monasticism

“**monastery**” from Greek *μοναστήριον- monasterios* “to live alone”

1. Hebrew “Nazarites”: (Num.6) special vow of separation to God; John the Baptist (Matt.3)
2. Platonic & Stoic philosophy: deny “earthly” or “fleshly” desires (*apatheia* = clear judgment by denying *pathos*).
3. Christ spend significant times alone to prayer. Matt. 4 Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights.....
4. St. Paul (1 Cor.7) “...it is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.” Jesus (Phil.2) became a man, a servant, humbled and emptied himself; he had no real possessions, no marriage or children.

Therefore: devote oneself fully to God and His Kingdom

Roots to Monasticism

Despite physical battles on earth, real **battle is spiritual**.

Eph. 6:12: “For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm.”

Prayer = only effective human way to combat evil spiritual forces. Humans possess no natural weapons in themselves, but as part of Kingdom of God they have promise God hears & answers prayers.

James 5:16: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

James 4:7: “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Monks spend time praying for all Christians, to ward off evil forces & ask for protection by angelic & saintly good, and by God’s grace.

Asceticism

Asceticism. Greek: ἄσκησις, *áskēsis* = exercise or training, referring to athletic training. Exercise requires abstinence from various sorts of worldly pleasures (food, sleep, sex, marriage, family, wealth, power), w/aim of gaining religious & spiritual goals.

Degrees: from extreme denial to moderation in all things.
Commonality= vows of poverty & celibacy.

Cloistered asceticism. Latin *claustrum* = enclosure. German= *hof* (Hoffman= someone from enclosure, town or farm).

Cloistered meant physical separation from world/ society.

