

Augustine of Hippo and The City of God: A Response to War
Following the Gothic Sack of Rome

‘A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint
David in fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of Master of Church
History’

2021

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation follows an investigation into the historical circumstances prior to the Gothic sack of Rome in 410 CE. Research was focused on the pressures and influences bearing on Saint Augustine which motivated him to write the *City of God* and identifies and evaluates significant themes on just war contained therein. The Visigoths were a menace to the Western Roman Empire and, by extension, a serious threat to Christianity and the Catholic Church in the West. The sack of Rome sent shock waves through the Roman world and pagans accused the Christian God of failing to protect the city and its people. Whilst Christianity was effectively the religion of the Empire, paganism still held sway in many people's lives. Augustine, a doughty and reliable defender of the Church, wrote the *City of God*, in part, to refute pagan claim that failure to honour the old gods was at the root cause of the calamity.

Through his many works and sermons, as a priest and as a bishop, Augustine tried to shape a united Catholic Church. The *City of God* was a defence of the Christian faith and is a sustained attack against paganism and the pagan gods. Within this work Augustine began to address the issue of how Christians should respond to war and how to see their role within the state. He also wanted to explain how the consequences of war, such as torture, slavery, and rape, should be accepted in a Christian context. It is argued here that Augustine only partially developed a just war theory in the *City of God* and it is further argued that he did little to persuade Christians to defend the Empire from barbarian depredations.

Introduction

The influence of Saint Augustine of Hippo on Western society is attested to in the works of many authors writing from his lifetime and down the ages to today. His contribution to the development of Western Philosophy, to theology, to biblical exegesis and to just war theory has been significant and lasting. He has been portrayed as: “indisputably the most important churchman in the Latin West, and perhaps the most prolific and influential Latin author in history”.¹ It has been further posited that even today Western culture is still heavily influenced by Christianity,² if this is true, Augustine remains a significant force in the Western world.

Augustine was a prolific author and a powerful preacher who became a tough and reliable defender of the Church. One of his seminal works was the *City of God*, written shortly after the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410 CE. In the *City of God* Augustine, amongst other themes, began to sketch out a Christian concept of just war. Violence and justification for war posed problems for Christian thinkers, most notably in trying to reconcile the often-warlike nature of the Old Testament with the more pacific nature of the New. Augustine was to tackle this dichotomy in the *City of God*, as he also attempted to quieten pagan claims that the sack of Rome was due to a failure to honour the old gods. He was also conscious that he needed to still the doubts of many Christians who saw the sack as a significant blow to their belief in God’s purpose, one that was centred to their conviction that He would protect the newly Christianised Empire.

Augustine lived in violent times and he died as the city of Hippo, in North Africa, where he was bishop, was being besieged by barbarians. On one occasion he had been targeted for death by religious opponents and he himself had advocated the use of Imperial forces to coerce enemies back into the fold. The *City of God* was his response to the sack of Rome, and it is his thoughts on just war contained therein and the historical background to this work that was the primary focus of research for this dissertation. There are therefore two main

¹ Michael Kulikowski (2019) *Imperial Tragedy: From Constantine’s Empire to the Destruction of Rome AD 363 – 568*. London: Profile Books Ltd. p 117.

² Tom Holland (2019), *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind*. Great Britain: Little Brown. p xxv.

questions to be answered here: What were the historical circumstances that led to Augustine writing the *City of God*? What did he say about just war in his work?

The historical circumstances that led to Augustine writing the *City of God* following the sack of Rome are many and varied. In Augustine's time Rome had become a Christian state, one in which paganism was banned but which was not wholly silent or absent from private and public life. Christianity was often riven with heretical or schismatic groups opposing the Catholic Church. Augustine was a leading figure in the war of words against opponents of the Church, where his training as a rhetor and his instincts for a fight made him a formidable adversary. At times Augustine advocated state use of force to combat opponents and Christians were often unruly and violent in their dealings with their perceived enemies. At the time of the sack of Rome the Empire was split into Eastern and Western halves, with the West ruled by a weak emperor. Into the mix there were Gothic barbarians, who in the previous century had sought sanctuary within the Empire from their fearsome neighbours. The Goths served as soldier in the imperial armies but were accorded few rights and became an armed enemy within the borders of the Empire. Gothic disillusionment with their treatment led to the sack of Rome under their leader Alaric. It is in response to the sack of Rome Augustine wrote the *City of God* in which he sought to explain away the reasons why the city had fallen.

The *City of God* covers a plethora of subjects, but the most important for this research project were Augustine's thinking on just war. Augustine's pronouncements on war in the *City of God* are spread between a handful of the twenty books that comprise the work. Whilst Augustine has been lauded as an architect of just war theory, his thoughts on war in the *City of God* are not easily discerned and they do not always fall neatly into a recognisable or overarching theory. Augustine adopted thoughts on war from earlier philosophers and writers but added a unique Christian perspective.

It is argued that Augustine was the right man at the right time to refute pagan claims against Christianity following the sack of Rome, but that he was remiss in not fully developing his thinking on just war and that he failed to use his influence to mobilise the faithful to defend the newly Christianised empire.

Whilst research into this dissertation was focused on the historical background to the writing of the *City of God* and is not therefore principally concerned with Augustine's theology, it is impossible to divorce the two strands. Aspects of Augustine's theology must be understood in order that the historical narrative can be properly appreciated and, as such, are addressed when necessary.

This paper has three main subject headings and a concluding chapter. The first chapter includes a contextual overview of Augustine's life and times, the second concerns the rise of the Goths within the empire and the last chapter explores the *City of God* and the most important themes of war contained in it and touches on his legacy to just war theory.

Research Methods

Due to restrictions on movements and meetings that were in place during much of the period covered by this project, options normally taken for research, such as library visits and short class-based courses, were impractical. The main research methods however did include reading translations of as much of the primary sources of Augustine's work as was possible within the time frame available. Some of Augustine's work referenced for research included the *City of God*, Augustine's *Confessions*, his political writings, his work on Christian teaching and writings in respect to his disputes with prominent Manichaeans.

Research into the historical context leading to Augustine writing his great work includes an overview of his life, an appreciation of his willingness to defend the Church, the state of the Roman Empire prior to his writing the books, notably Christianisation of the Roman Empire, the threat of the Goths and the sack of Rome. Themes of war in the *City of God* were then investigated and guides and critiques of the work were referred to as research progressed. Of particular interest here is what Augustine said on war and to what extent a just war theory is apparent in his writing in the *City of God*.

Augustine

His Life and Times

Augustine was born in Thagaste in North Africa in 354 CE into a Christianised Roman Empire but one that was still in essence, a largely pagan world.³ He died in 430 at a time the city of Hippo, of which he was bishop, was besieged by Vandals and with the Western part of the Roman Empire on its knees.⁴ Born of a forceful Christian mother, Monica, and a pagan father, Patricius, Augustine was lucky enough to benefit from a classical education supported by his patron Romanianus. A bright pupil, through his studies he was to become fluent in Latin but was less accomplished in Greek. He came to appreciate the works of both Plato and Cicero.⁵ On completion of his studies he went on to become a schoolmaster, at first in his home town in Thagaste, then in Carthage and afterwards in Rome. In 384 he left Rome aged 30 to become a professor of rhetoric in Milan, a post won for him partly through the influence of a pagan, Symmachus.

Augustine was intelligent, restless, and travelled widely, and as Holland has succinctly noted of his early interests, he “dabbled in a whole range of cults and philosophies: he had picked up women in churches”.⁶ In spite of his Christian up-bringing he became a Manichaeian, much to his mother’s annoyance, he also found time to take on a concubine, fathering a child with her.

Turning his back on his professorship Augustine left Milan in 386 and founded a philosophical retreat for followers and friends in Cassiciacum, where he experienced his famous conversion to Christianity. He was subsequently baptised by Bishop Ambrose of Milan in 387. Ambrose was to become Augustine’s mentor. Augustine had turned away from his Manichaeian past and back to the God of the Catholic Church of his mother. Doubts have been expressed that Augustine did indeed genuinely come back to Christianity, and Fox in discussing his conversion, has portrayed him as a serial convert, citing three previous instances, once towards philosophy, then to celibacy and once to Manichaeism. To Fox

³ Robin Lane Fox. (2015) *Augustine: Conversions and Confessions*. UK: Allan Lane. p 1.

⁴ Ibid. p 2.

⁵ Saint Augustine. (2002) *City of God*. London: Folio Society. Dods in preface p xxxiv.

⁶ Tom Holland (2019) *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind*. Great Britain: Little Brown. p 138.

Augustine's various conversions had in effect, meant that they were more "conversions away from rhetoric, worldly ambition and sex".⁷ Whatever the reality of Augustine's conversion it was a seminal moment in his life and one that had a profound effect on him and his influence on Christianity and the Western world. From now onwards Augustine's world changed, sex and worldly ambition were behind him, celibacy and service to God were his future.

Following his conversion Augustine returned to North Africa in 388, where founded a monastery in Thagaste. He later became a reluctant priest and in 395 was dragooned into becoming the Bishop of Hippo, a position he held until his death. His return to Africa and subsequent ordination was a period of a great outpouring in his preaching and writing. This was the time in which his rhetorical skills and his classical education came to the fore, he rose to prominence and began speaking on behalf of the Church.⁸ It has been said of Augustine at this time that "His works after ordination show a desire to present ideas within a language and genres that would fit with his position as an official spokesman for the Church."⁹

By the time Augustine came to write the *City of God* he was a veteran of several campaigns on the Church's behalf against its perceived enemies, most notably Manichaeans, Donatists and Palagians. He was a formidable and sometimes unforgiving opponent. He was by nature, training, and instinct, readied for conflict. Augustine lived at a time when the Western Empire was under strain and one in which he played his part in many of the struggles involving the Christian West at the time.¹⁰

Augustine's life as a Christian was one of endless battles on behalf of the Church. He was a man ever ready to pick up the cudgels and lay about perceived enemies of the faith. The sack of Rome war with all its attendant horrors, intruded into his life in a way that he could not ignore. The *City of God* was a defence of the faith and a broadside against pagans who blamed the Christian God for the fall of the city. Augustine not only attacked paganism but also unpicked and debunked Roman history. In refuting pagan Rome's' claims about its past

⁷ Fox, p 297.

⁸ Ian McFarland et. al (eds), (2011) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 48.

⁹ Ibid. p 48.

¹⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch (2011) *Christianity, The First Three Thousand Years*. Penguin Books: London. p 301.

Augustine began to develop and rationalise a Christian understanding and response to violence and warfare based on scriptural foundations. But, as Armstrong writes of him, he “struggled (not always successfully) to encompass the writings of Plato and such political disasters as the Fall of Rome within a biblical perspective”.¹¹

The Rise of Christianity within the Empire

The beginnings of the Christianisation of the Empire are to be found in the conversion of the Emperor Constantine. From a persecuted sect, particularly under the Emperor Diocletian, it had become the dominant religious force within the Empire. In 313 Constantine issued an edict of toleration to end the persecutions and which permitted Christians to worship without fear.¹² His conversion was seen by Christians as providential, with Christianity seen as becoming the state religion as part of God’s purpose. The Roman Empire and the Church were working as one, albeit both directed by Constantine who would shrewdly use bishops to excommunicate Christian soldiers who forsook their oaths and military responsibilities.¹³ Constantine used the Church to his advantage and the Church in turn used him to further their own ambitions. The Church and the State were competing institutions, their respective aims were distinct and divergent.¹⁴ The Church needed Rome’s protection, the state wanted the Church’s obedience.

Christian communities withdrew from Roman civic life, loosening their bonds with their pagan neighbours and becoming intolerant of them.¹⁵ A separate society grew up within the Empire with its own structures and rites and which adopted a position towards the state of docility, playing little active part in defending it from its enemies. Even before the time of Augustine the Empire had a growing counterculture within its borders and had barbarians outside wanting to get in. Edward Gibbon was forthright in his analysis of the separateness of the Christian community growing in the heart of the Empire, as a situation offering an “indolent or criminal disregard for the public welfare”.¹⁶ In the *Decline and Fall of the*

¹¹ Karen Armstrong (2019) *The Lost Art of Scripture*. London: Bodley Head. p 415.

¹² William Harmless (2010) *Augustine in His Own Words*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press. p 233.

¹³ Edward Gibbon (MCMLXXXIII) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. London: The Folio Society. vol II, ch 20, p 317.

¹⁴ Ibid. vol II, ch 20, p 330

¹⁵ Ibid. vol II, ch 15, p 104.

¹⁶ Ibid. vol II, ch 15, p 121-2.

Roman Empire, Gibbon showed an undisguised hostility to Christianity.¹⁷ His hostility to Christianity in general, and particularly to clergy and of miracles, earned him enemies at the time that *Decline* was written and criticism of his views persist.¹⁸ To Gibbon, Christianity that had emerged from persecution to a state religion under Constantine had become a cohesive and effective counter force to the civic society that underpinned the Empire that harboured it. Even though anti-clericalism was evident in his writing, it is not unreasonable to accept his basic notion that Christianity diluted the vigour of the state.

A later Emperor, Theodosius, was a baptised, energetic, and committed Christian, who furthered the cause of Christianity within the Empire and banned the worship of the old pagan gods.¹⁹ Augustine praised Theodosius in the *City of God* as an emperor who was to be lauded for his fidelity and devotion.²⁰ Theodosius through, on more than one occasion, was to be humbled by Bishop Ambrose of Milan, Augustine's mentor. Theodosius was once berated by Ambrose for the killing of thousands of people following riots.²¹ In spite of Theodosius's missteps Augustine was supportive of him as an ideal ruler and as someone who "shared the same Christian prejudices as his own congregation".²² It was under Theodosius that Christianity was to become the religion of the Empire.

Gibbon, again with his customary eloquence, considers the rise of Christianity within the Empire as a situation whereby a:

"Candid but rational enquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman Empire. Whilst that great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol."²³

¹⁷ Duncan Ferguson (1983) '*Historical Understanding and the Enlightenment: Edward Gibbon on Christianity*', Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, vol. 52, no. 4, p 400.

¹⁸ Gibbon, introduction by Betty Radice, pp 18-20.

¹⁹ Henry Chadwick (2010) *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 71.

²⁰ Saint Augustine (2002) *City of God*. London: Folio Society. bk v, ch 26, p 227.

²¹ Oliver Nicholson (ed.) (2018) *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 1484.

²² Peter Brown (2000) *Augustine of Hippo*. London: University of California Press. p 289.

²³ Gibbon. vol II, ch 15, p 93.

On Theodosius's death the Empire separated into two halves, with his two sons Honorius and Arcadius becoming emperors of the west and the east respectively. Honorius ruled from Ravenna, the new centre of power within the Western Empire at the time that Rome was sacked. He was said to be weak, malleable, and prone to being manipulated by his senior general Stilicho. Nor was his relationship with his brother particularly strong, with periods of conflict between the western and eastern parts of the Empire boiling over into violence.²⁴

Gibbon's assertion that it was the gradual establishment of Christianity within the Empire that led to its subsequent fall is not fully convincing and has to be contested. Barbarian incursions have also been blamed for Rome's fall and these also weakened the cohesion of the Empire. The Gothic sack of Rome is evidence of this. Incursions and resettlements by barbarian tribes were a factor in Rome's fall, but this was coupled with a muscular Christianity undermining its institutions. Augustine's *City of God* demonstrates a Christian based re-evaluation of the citizens relationship with, and support for, the state. Christian attitudes towards the state, to war and to Roman institutions were a significant factor in the decline and fall of the Empire - but were not the only causal factors. In the *City of God* Augustine articulated a Christian attitude towards the state that loosened an individual's close identity with its ancient values. In the *City of God* Augustine re-cast: "the need for political authority and institutions in terms of his new vision of human existence: social life, too, had to be seen as radically fallen and infected with sin."²⁵ In this re-casting Augustine held that the state was to be the power that bound society together against forces that could pull it apart.²⁶ The state was no longer to reflect and advance its citizens desire for dominion over others but was rather to preserve what Augustine felt was the fragility of life in the earthly city

²⁴ Nicholson. pp 119, 740.

²⁵ R. A. Markus, (2007) *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p xi.

²⁶ Ibid. p xi.

Augustine in a Violent World

Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight
(Psalm 144)

Violence has always been a feature of human life. As societies became more organised and tribal, violence became more organised and purposeful. Organised violence in the form of open warfare, leading to bloodshed between peoples, has been with us throughout recorded history. Saint Augustine's *City of God* does not have war as its central theme, but warfare and violence are central to much of it.

Augustine lived in a violent world, one in which Christians often initiated violence against fellow believers and against pagans. It was Theodosius who had given the upper hand to Christians and gave them the cover of legitimacy. Bloodshed was ever present in an empire that was slowly withering on the vine.²⁷ For some the excuse for violence had been signalled for Christians under Constantine, when the persecuted became the persecutors, it being said that the Emperor gave the Church: "security, wealth, honours and revenge".²⁸ It was not always easy for Christians to resist resorting to violence as the New Testament encouraged them to - and as Augustine hoped that they would. In the *City of God* though Augustine attempts to reconcile the tensions between the Old Testament and of wars ordained by God, with the more peaceful nature of the New Testament.

That some Christians did resort willingly to violence during Augustine's time is clear from the sources. What is less clear is the extent to which violence and intimidation was widespread and an accepted norm. Towards the end of the 4th Century Synagogues were often attacked by intolerant Christian mobs.²⁹ On one occasion Bishop Ambrose publicly derided Emperor Theodosius for wanting to rein in Christian attacks on synagogues and the churches of schismatics, arguing that they had no right to protection.³⁰ In the deserts of Egypt, one monk, Shenoute of Atripe, a contemporary of Augustine, claimed that "there is no crime for those who have Christ". Shenoute was responsible for harassing and attacking local

²⁷ James Wetzel. (ed.) (2014) *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.55.

²⁸ Gibbon. vol III, ch 21, p 19.

²⁹ Gerard O'Daly, (2009) *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 6.

³⁰ Kulikowski. p 113.

officials,³¹ and he was said to have beaten a subordinate so badly that he died from his injuries.³² In 415 the famous female philosopher, Hypatia, was murdered in a particularly brutal fashion by a Christian mob.³³ Even Augustine's himself was once targeted by fringe gangs of religious thugs, Circumcellions, who were wedded to the Donatist cause and created a climate of fear in North Africa. These thugs were eager for what they perceived to be martyrdom, often courting death at the hands of their enemies, one group planning to murder Augustine.³⁴ Whilst those that acted violently in these instances may have had different motivations for their acts, fear, revenge or even a sense of righteousness, it does illustrate that Christians were willing in some instances to resort to violence and were showing growing confidence in their power.³⁵

The Church had become intolerant, not just of pagans but also of schismatics and heretics, most notably in respect to Donatists who were a particular target. The Church was prepared to use the clergy to further its aims in what was an unforgiving time by using "measured severity".³⁶ As the Church and its clergy fought and won their battles the resulting triumph of Christianity brought in its wake a domineering presence into the heart of the Empire.³⁷ In his role in these battles Augustine was not shy to seek state coercion to subdue enemies and was not always inclined to pacificism,³⁸ seeking the use of force against schismatics and heretics as part of his duties in a form of "pastoral care", that of bringing the errant back into the fold.³⁹ Augustine was prepared to talk to his opponents to coax them back to the Church but over time he saw the need for force to achieve his aims. He came to argue that coercion by the state was required to bring about social cohesion and he became an advocate of the State forcing Donatists back into the fold. Augustine saw tough love, using force to remedy errors, as part of his duties as bishop.⁴⁰ Augustine was seeing the state and the Church joined

³¹ Michael Gaddis. (2015) *There is no Crime for those who have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*. London: University of California Press. p 1.

³² Krawiec, Rebecca. (2002) *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 44.

³³ Catherine Nixey. (2017) *The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World*. London: Macmillan. p 135-6.

³⁴ Harmless. p 267.

³⁵ Peter Brown, Peter (2013) *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity A.D. 200-1000*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. p 73.

³⁶ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 219.

³⁷ Gibbon. vol IV, ch 38, p 374.

³⁸ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 290.

³⁹ Markus. p 150.

⁴⁰ Chadwick, Henry. (2010) *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp 112-3.

together in a common enterprise at this point, that of bringing peace in troubled times and in maintaining social order together. But even as he wanted the State's support in defence of the Church, by 410 he had come to doubt that it was in fact the guarantor of a Christian order within the Empire, and he walked back on his attachment to the idea.⁴¹ He had moved away from an earlier belief that the newly Christianised Empire under Theodosius upheld a promise from God as foretold in the Old Testament.⁴² Some Christians had difficulty reconciling the need for them as individuals to have a role in state sponsored violence, particularly if it meant partaking in what was perceived to be an unjust war but could accept state support for the repression of pagans or heretics.⁴³

His Fights and his Enemies

Augustine's classical education and subsequent training as a rhetor prepared him for his life as a bishop and defender of the Catholic Church. He had an innate ability to connect to his audience through his writing and sermons, using language and images appropriate to those he wanted to reach. This ability to appeal to and persuade his various audiences is succinctly summarised as a process by which Augustine uses his rhetorical skills to influence his audience by inviting them to join him on a journey of discovery.⁴⁴ As adept at persuasion as he was, Augustine was not afraid to recommend the use of force, if a sinner would not see the error of their ways, then they should be corrected forcibly. As Cavadini has noted "we see Augustine allowing the coercion of schismatics and also slaves, and other members of his household out of love".⁴⁵

As an adept polemicist Augustine had earned his spurs as a champion of the Church largely through his written and verbal spats with its antagonists. His legacy was built on his combative spirit and his ability to pick and win battles against a series of opponents, most notably Manichaeans, Donatist and Pelagians. Augustine was a man in need of controversy,

⁴¹ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. P 338-9.

⁴² Markus. pp 25, 52-3.

⁴³ Daniel Weiss (2019) 'Christians as Levites: Rethinking Early Christian Attitudes toward War and Bloodshed via Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine', *Harvard Theological Review*, v. 112, n. 4, p 511

⁴⁴ John Cavadini (2019) *Visioning Augustine*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons. p 86.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p 129.

and he had an overwhelming need to justify himself.⁴⁶ It has also been said of him that his burgeoning reputation was made in large part by “brawling through letter”.⁴⁷ He fought opponents throughout his time as bishop, often engaging more than one at the same time. That he felt compelled to act at times quite vigorously against pagans, schismatics and heretics, demonstrates the essence of his mission, to try and bring order out of chaos and to ease the tensions that unsettled the Catholic Church of the time, particularly those that affected the Church in Augustine’s North Africa. His combative spirit emerges in his writings against his enemies and violence was occasionally threatened by him or was an outcome of the tensions between the Church and its opponents that his writing and sermons helped to foster. His often-confrontational approach is in evidence in the *City of God*, most notably in his condemnation of the Roman lust for power and in his attacks on pagan gods. Augustine was not a man who would shy away from conflict.

Following his conversion back into the Catholic fold Augustine set about attacking his former co-religionist the Manichaeans, exposing their heretical beliefs in his writings and sermons. Mani, the founder of the sect and who died in 276, promoted himself as the apostle of Christ.⁴⁸ The sect denied that Christ had died on the Cross, they rejected the Old Testament and saw the world as one of contrasting light and darkness.⁴⁹ To Manichaeans the world of light, the good, was constantly threatened by evil and the world of darkness. Following his conversion Augustine became a bitter opponent of Manichaeans and was not averse to threats to intimidate rivals. In his debates with Faustus the Manichaean he at one point argued, when speaking of the coming of Christ heralded in the Old Testament, that “whoever tries to teach of another Christ should be put to death”. Augustine adding for good measure that the Church “puts to death all who try to turn us away from our God, or to break any of the commandments”.⁵⁰ It is assumed that Augustine was speaking of a spiritual death here, the death of the soul rather than of a physical death. He then goes on with a rhetorical flourish to bully and berate Faustus by questioning his mental acumen.

⁴⁶ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 10.

⁴⁷ Douglas Boin, (2020) *Alaric the Goth: An Outsider’s History of the Fall of Rome*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. p 170.

⁴⁸ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 33.

⁴⁹ Henry Chadwick, (2001) *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 13.

⁵⁰ Saint Augustine. (2014) *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*. Bombay: Aeterna Press. bk xvi, ch 25. pp 136-7.

In North Africa the persecutions under Diocletian had led to a schism within the Church, with Donatists denying the legitimacy of the Catholic Church for surrendering holy books to the persecutors and making token offerings to pagan gods. Donatist argued that the Clergy should have held fast and accepted inevitable martyrdom by refusing to bow to the persecutors demands. This schism was deep, divisive, and at times violent, with Augustine often at the centre of the storm. He was to use all his considerable skills and influence to attempt reconciliation with Donatists, but in the end he was to advocate coercion to force them into defeat and being absorbed back into the Catholic Church. When asked by a Roman officer how he should deal with Donatists who had been ordered to return to the Catholic Church and had refused, Augustine wrote back to him saying “Compel them to come in”.⁵¹

Following the sack of Rome one prominent and increasingly influential theologian, Pelagius, who had fled to North Africa, began to expound an argument (amongst several others) that humankind was not tainted with Adam’s original sin and that they can choose to do good under their own free will - and become better Christians for it. Both points were contrary to the teaching of the Church. Augustine and Pelagius engaged in an increasingly bitter dispute, which at times led to violence amongst respective supporters.⁵² For a while Pelagius held the upper hand in the argument until the then Pope, Zosimus, eventually decided against him in 418.⁵³ For Augustine his role in the victory was dimmed by another critic, a bishop, Julian of Eclanum, entering the lists against him in support of Pelagius. Julian was a “masterful writer and skilled polemicist” who proved to be a thorn in Augustine’s side until, like all other opponents, he was seen off.⁵⁴ Augustine, though capable of provoking his enemies was in essence a man of peace who made and kept many friends throughout his life, and he was also a man who honoured to his mother.⁵⁵ He devoted his life as a bishop to the care of his flock and actively promoted the principle of hatred towards sin but also advocating love towards the sinner,⁵⁶ a principle that he sought to follow in his spats with debates with the Manichaean Faustus, using persuasion in the first instance to get him to change his mind. Where opponents were wilful and would not concede the truth only then did Augustine consider coercion.

⁵¹ Harmless. pp 236, 271.

⁵² Harmless. p 377-9.

⁵³ Ibid. p 380.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p 381.

⁵⁵ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 50.

⁵⁶ Henry Chadwick (2010) *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*. p 2.

Barbarians

The Rise of the Goths within the Empire

The Goths were not the only barbarian peoples with peaceful or malign intentions in crossing into the Empire, but they were to play a significant role in its eventual collapse.⁵⁷ It was the Gothic sack of Rome that prompted Augustine to write the *City of God*. This act by a barbarian, though a nominally Arian Christian army, shook the Roman world and worried Augustine enough to complete his books.

The origins and various early migrations of the Goths is obscure and is disputed,⁵⁸ however, in the light of recent archaeology and scholarship, Heather states that Gothic origins were most probably to be found in northern Poland.⁵⁹ By the time of the sack in 410 the Goths had been in turn both a threat to, and ally of, both Rome and Constantinople. There were periods of hostility that were punctuated by times when the Goths fought to protect the Roman world by providing much needed manpower for their army. They had crossed the borders into the Empire not always as invaders, but often as migrants, who as a people had come under increasing pressure from incursions into their territory by the Huns and were forced to move. Over time groups of Goths moved from their lands near the Baltic and towards the end of the third century they had migrated southwards towards the Black Sea. They became an increasing threat to the Empire and in 251 they defeated the army of Emperor Decius, killing him in the process. By the mid third century Goths had occupied the Roman province of Dacia, and as Heather notes at this time there was “Gothic inspired mayhem” directed against the Empire.⁶⁰

When Constantine became the sole Emperor of both East and West of the Empire in 324, he subdued the Goths. A treaty was agreed in which the Goths were to provide manpower for the Roman military in return for subsidies and so a period of relative peace between the two followed. The Goths were persuaded to Christian Arianism by Ulfilas a missionary bishop.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Peter Heather (1998) *The Peoples of Europe: The Goths*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. p 7.

⁵⁸ Thomas Burns (1982) 'Theories and Facts: The Early Gothic Migrations', *History in Africa*, vol. 9, p 1.

⁵⁹ Heather. p 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p 42.

⁶¹ Thomas Hodgkin (2000) *The Barbarian Invasions of The Roman Empire*, London: Folio Society. p 45.

Augustine was to make much of Gothic Arian Christianity in the *City of God*, claiming that it was this fact that made the sack of Rome less destructive than it could have been.

More peaceful Gothic interactions with the Empire were made in 376, when large groups of Goths asked to be allowed into Roman territory and thousands were permitted to cross the border. They offered their military skills to Rome and were allowed to settle within the Empire. The Empire needed fighting men and the barbarian tribes on their borders were able to provide them.⁶² On the face of it this was a straightforward deal from which both parties could benefit, Rome would have her fighting men and the Goths in turn would have sanctuary and protection within the Empire. However, Rome failed to manage the Gothic migration effectively and unfortunately this was a deal that went sour with disastrous consequences for both parties. During their entry into the Empire many Goths were ill used by border guards, boys were taken from their parents and hostages murdered.⁶³ Unrest followed and in 378 the Goths defeated and killed the Emperor Valens. A later entry by Goths into the Empire in 386, the year of Augustine's conversion, led to an attack on them as they crossed a river into the Empire.⁶⁴ Soon however the Goths had asserted themselves within the Empire and no longer needing to find succour from the Huns, now in relatively safety "assumed the character of citizens and masters".⁶⁵

Immigrant Goths, born outside of the Empire, were denied Roman citizenship and therefore were without important rights that were conferred on citizens.⁶⁶ They were often subject to mistreatment and suspicion. There was a build-up of anger and resentment by the Goths which was exploited through the rise of an ambitious and forceful Gothic leader, Alaric. The Goths had been a menace on the border, making military incursions into the Empire and by the 4th century they were an armed enemy within its borders, neither integrated into the Empire nor constrained within it.⁶⁷ A sense of grievance by the Goths, now directed by a forceful leader and able to move freely in a weakened state, were to have significant consequences for the themselves, for the wellbeing of the Empire and for Augustine.

⁶² Peter Brown. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity A.D. 200-1000*. pp 47-9.

⁶³ Boin. pp 38-42.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 70.

⁶⁵ Gibbon. vol 3, ch 26, p 260.

⁶⁶ Boin. pp 28-9.

⁶⁷ Kulikowski. p 88.

Alaric the Goth

In contrast to Augustine there are far fewer clear traces of Alaric's life in the literature. What is known is that he became a leader of the Goths within the Empire, that he was ambitious, wanting to become a leader of Roman armies and not just the head of Gothic units within the army. Gibbon notes that Alaric was a Christian in command of an ordered army and who "understood the rules of war and sanctity of treaties".⁶⁸

As a Goth, Alaric's rise was beset with frustrations, early on in his career he was slighted by the Eastern Emperor in his request for a general's position, which was offered to him and then withdrawn. Frustrated, he moved his army of Goths to raid and occupy Illyricum, where ministers of the Eastern Empire in 397, with "almost sublime cowardice",⁶⁹ rewarded him for his depredations with promotion to Master General of Eastern Illyricum.⁷⁰ In 401 Alaric's promotion however was rescinded and he and his army took to raiding Italy, where in 403, he was beaten in battle and returned to Illyricum. In time Alaric was persuaded to make an alliance with Honorius the emperor of the Western Empire.⁷¹ The promises made on Honorius's behalf were not forthcoming and Alaric, angered by his treatment, camped his army outside of Rome, finally entering the city on the 25th of August 410.⁷² The Gothic army spent three days sacking the city before leaving.

The Sack of Rome

The sack of Rome in 410 was the third occasion that Alaric had besieged the city, the other occasions being 408 and 409. The first siege ended in mass starvation, the second ended with Rome paying for its own ransom, and the third siege ended in its despoilation. Hodgkin succinctly summarises these three events, whilst imagining Saint Jerome in Bethlehem receiving the news belatedly, of all three events at the same time, as "the famine, the purchased peace with its vain humiliation, the capture and sack".⁷³

⁶⁸ Gibbon. vol iv, ch 30, p 62.

⁶⁹ Hodgkin. vol 1, ch xiii, p 379.

⁷⁰ Gibbon. vol iv, ch 30, p 47.

⁷¹ Kulikowski. pp 137-148.

⁷² Kulikowski. p 148.

⁷³ Hodgkin, vol I, ch xvii, p 458.

The Romans had promised Alaric much and had delivered little and in frustration he had ordered the sack. On his orders the Gothic army entered Rome, not for any other cause than to make a point to their erstwhile Roman masters and of course, to plunder. It has been stated that Alaric and his army carried away the wealth of the city which had been acquired over centuries.⁷⁴

Alaric had urged restraint on his soldiers demanding that they respect churches, and there is evidence of Goths showing some kindness and mercy to the vanquished.⁷⁵ But while Alaric's Goths may have been comparatively more merciful than other conquerors had been, Hodgkin states that: "we cannot doubt that brutality and outrage of every kind marked their entrance into the conquered city".⁷⁶ A later writer notes the experience of a monk caught in Rome during the sack describing the fear that pervaded all sections of society amidst the noise and shrieking of the Goths on the rampage.⁷⁷

Short of food Alaric and his army left Rome and he died shortly afterwards. The sack of Rome has been described as the world being in a state of profound shock at a city that had been despoiled and the heart of the Roman Empire pierced and slain.⁷⁸ The administrative centre of the Empire might now be at Ravenna, but Rome was still its heart and the centre of Christianity in the western half of the Empire.

Augustine in Shock

There was considerable shock felt amongst both pagans and Christians in the western half of the Empire following the sack, with Christianity being questioned over an apparent failure of God to come to the aid of the city.⁷⁹ Pagan sacrifices had been made before the Gothic entry into Rome to try and forestall Alaric, at the same time Christians were asking for help from the saints. But after the event each side went on to blame the other for what happened.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Kulikowski. p 148.

⁷⁵ Gibbon. Vol iv, ch 31, pp 110-1.

⁷⁶ Hodgkin. Vol 1, ch xvii, p 455.

⁷⁷ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 287.

⁷⁸ Kulikowski. p 149.

⁷⁹ Karla Pollmann (ed). (2013). *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p 255.

⁸⁰ Henry Chadwick. *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. p 103.

Augustine heard directly from refugees of their experiences as they flooded into North Africa seeking relief after the sack.⁸¹ It has been asserted that the sack was one of greater symbolic import than one that would threaten the political well-being of the Empire.⁸² Augustine himself though was said to have been deeply affected by events and as in a state of shock at the attack on the city.⁸³

In all events the fall of Rome was a blow to the prestige of the Empire and was to pit Christians against pagan in apportioning blame. There were scars to be healed as the sack had left both emotional wounds as well as material losses. O'Daly poses the question that Christians and pagans would have asked, and one that Augustine sought to answer, "Had Peter, Paul, and the other martyrs failed to protect the city where pagan gods had, in the past, succeeded?"⁸⁴

Though there were undoubtedly material and emotional loss to contend with, but it has been argued that the sack had little long-term or substantive consequences for the Empire and that it recovered quickly. Whatever the reality, Augustine saw another dynamic, that the sack was a trial that Christianity had overcome.⁸⁵

Augustine and the Shaping of History

Gothic behaviour during the sack of Rome is central to how Augustine presents, in mitigation, how a nominally Christian, but heretical, Arian army, had stayed its hand in ravaging the city. That damage was done to the city, that rape and murders were committed and that the dead lay unburied is evident from the literature. Augustine argued that the Goths, as barbarians, would be expected to behave badly, but that their Christianity had had a moderating effect on them.⁸⁶ In the *City of God*, Augustine makes clear that the brutalities visited on the city and its people were according to the norms of war and what should be expected, but that the acts of mercy by the Goths were due to the influence of Christ.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Wetzel. P 75.

⁸² Chadwick. *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. p 103.

⁸³ Pollmann. (ed). (2013). p 1562.

⁸⁴ Gerard O'Daly. 2009) *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide*. Oxford: Oxford. p 28

⁸⁵ M. R. Godden. (2002) 'The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: rewriting the sack of Rome', *Anglo-Saxon England*. pp 47, 48, 54.

⁸⁶ O'Daly. p 76.

⁸⁷ Saint Augustine. *City of God*. bk 1, ch 7. p 13.

Another Christian, Orosius, reputedly at the prompting of Augustine, wrote his work *Histories against the Pagans* at a similar time as the bishop laboured on the *City of God*. Ward notes that both men sought to persuade the Roman world that the sack was not a result of the failure of God or of Christianity to protect the Empire. Both works strove to portray the sack in a positive light for their respective audiences.⁸⁸ Orosius, as did Augustine, promoted Alaric as a Christian mediating in minimising the destruction and argued that God had allowed the sack as punishment rightly visited on pagans and Roman blasphemers.⁸⁹ Both Augustine, and Orosius were shaping history by presenting the facts to serve the interests of the Church and according to McCulloch, history now became wholly subservient to theology.⁹⁰

After the sack Augustine was to respond through sermons and letters before starting his great work, as he tried to rally disheartened Christians and to placate pagans.⁹¹ Conscious of the ethical, emotional, and material challenges posed by the sack, Augustine felt compelled to address the issues head on.

The City of God

The Book

Augustine was prompted by his friend and Imperial Commissioner, Marcellinus, to write the *City of God*. The twenty-two books comprising the finished work were written between 413 and 426. The books are divided into two parts. The first part of the *City of God* is his *Refutation*, with books one to ten addressing the contention that Christianity was the cause of the fall of Rome. The second part is *The Cities*, with books eleven to twenty-two describing Augustine's concept of the two cities, the one on earth and the one of God.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ward, G. (2014) 'All roads lead to Rome? Frechulf of Lisieux, Augustine and Orosius', *Early Medieval Europe*, 22(4), p 495.

⁸⁹ Orosius (2010) *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. bk 7 ch 1-12, p 398.

⁹⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch. (1987) *Groundwork of Christian History*, London: Epworth Press. p 4.

⁹¹ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. pp 287-9.

⁹² Pollmann. Michael C Sloan. p 255

The scope of the *City of God* ranges widely, covering as it does “cosmology, history, and eschatology”.⁹³ Augustine tries to tie humanity’s history, from the point it was written and beyond, to his understanding of the Bible.⁹⁴ God created the world and time began at that point, there was no world before time began and no time before the world was created.⁹⁵ It has been said that “With Augustine, the idea of universal history was born. He saw the fall of Rome as one episode in the unfolding plan and purpose of God for human history.”⁹⁶

The Empire had become a challenge for Augustine and according to Markus, became a pressing issue that he could no longer ignore.⁹⁷ Augustine would have wanted to calm Christians, stiffen their resolve, and provide a rationale for the sack of the city robust enough to blunt the pagan claims. By doing so Augustine also addressed the issues of why God allowed war and why Christians who believed in him should suffer because of it.

Augustine’s great work has been described as one that “lays out in a vast canvas the themes of Christianity and paganism, providence and power, empire and church, and divine and human justice, writing as a learned Christian apologist, an intellectual addressing his peers”.⁹⁸ In the *City of God* Augustine also wanted to counter a growing apocalyptic and millenarianism feeling within Christianity at the time. He addressed these fears by arguing that the sack did not signal the end of the world,⁹⁹ nor was it a failure of Christianity, it was God who had allowed the sack as due punishment for sins.

Augustine lays out the history of Rome only then to unpick it to discredit the pagan gods. He condemns the human urge, exemplified by Rome, to dominate through a lust for power. Augustine undermines claims that the old gods protected Rome from calamity, citing the incursions into the empire and defeats inflicted by Carthaginians in the Punic wars and the god’s inaction in preventing the civil wars that erupted periodically throughout Roman history.¹⁰⁰ Augustine also recalls the civil strife unleashed by enemies of Sulla in the first

⁹³ O’Daly, p 37.

⁹⁴ Wetzel, p 5.

⁹⁵ Saint Augustine, *City of God*. bk 11, ch 6, p 441.

⁹⁶ Ferguson. P 391.

⁹⁷ Markus. p 44.

⁹⁸ Atkins, E. M. and Dodaro, R. J. (eds.) (2001) *Augustine Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p xi.

⁹⁹ Pollmann. Jeffrey K Jue, p 1394. George Heffernan, p 1584.

¹⁰⁰ Saint Augustine. *City of God*. bk 3, ch 18, pp 121-3.

century BCE. Sulla, according to Augustine, killed seven thousand unarmed men, laid waste to cities and had people tortured to death, even after hostilities had ended. He contrasts the violence of Sulla with the relative compassion of the Goths and notes that Sulla killed more senators than they had. Sulla's crime was that he had not shown mercy to the defeated and had not allowed peace to follow war.¹⁰¹ To Augustine the Romans had built their empire by engaging in near continual warfare against their neighbours and had suffered in turn with bouts of internal civil strife. The state was inherently unjust and based on dominating others.¹⁰² Augustine is dismissive of the Roman need to subdue its neighbours, making the point that it is better to: 'have a good neighbour at peace, than to conquer a bad one by making war'.¹⁰³

The wide range of his theological writing encompasses, amongst many other topics, the nature of evil, original sin, baptism, predestination, free will and sexual lust. Crucially, as the title suggests, Augustine expounds on his concept of the two cities, that there is a heavenly city, a *City of God* and an earthly city rooted in sin. The earthly city is by nature unjust and a city through which good Christians must transit as pilgrims - whilst trying to avoid the many pitfalls which may tempt them on their way. In the *City of God* there is justice, and it is this city to which Christians should aspire to and work to enter. Dodd's summarises this difference between the two cities as one in which "The earthly city is founded on blood taken – on coercion- whereas the *City of God* is founded on blood willingly given."¹⁰⁴

Aware that educated pagans found the Christian message difficult to reconcile with their perceptions of the culture, history, and power of Rome, Augustine sought to persuade them that the simple and honest living that Christians promoted was also an exemplar of an early Roman virtue.¹⁰⁵ Augustine drew heavily on the Roman historian Varro to provide context on the historical and religious history of Rome that he critiques in the *City of God* and which he then used to discredit Rome's pagan past.¹⁰⁶ For Augustine the pagan gods never offered devotees a moral outlook to life - as the Christian God does.¹⁰⁷ Augustine sees pagan history

¹⁰¹ Ibid. bk 3, ch 28-29, pp 132-4.

¹⁰² Ibid. bk 4, ch 3-4, pp 142-4.

¹⁰³ Ibid. bk 4, ch 15, p 156.

¹⁰⁴ Saint Augustine. Marcus Dodds. *City of God*. p xxiii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp xxvii-xxx.

¹⁰⁶ Wetzel. p 23.

¹⁰⁷ O' Daly. p 84.

as one in which societies sought dominance over others, even as they retain feelings of human bonding,¹⁰⁸ accepting at least a degree of understanding and affinity between peoples - even in groups striving to subdue each other. In the *City of God*, Markus argues that Augustine set out allay the fears of pagans that Christians were unable and unwilling to play their part in the support of the state. Augustine, in trying to allay those fears, argues that to maintain order a state may resort to arms and that war, though regrettable, may be necessary.¹⁰⁹

The lives of Adam's two sons Cain and Abel were utilised by Augustine as a useful metaphor and evidence for the existence of the two cities, the one earthly and the other heavenly. Cain killed his brother Abel, Cain through this act represented the earthly city, Abel through his innocent death was of the heavenly city.¹¹⁰ Augustine felt that the love of self, of pride, was at the root of social discord and earthly upheaval. Another kind of love however, that of love towards others, was the quality that bound people together rather than driving them apart¹¹¹ and to him the monasteries came the closest to recognising this ideal. A father watching over obedient monks, living a life of care for others, and fostering a strong sense of social cohesion within the group was a hint of what was to be expected in the heavenly city.¹¹² The restraint of pride and the promotion of charity in monasteries, under the guidance of a firm but fair father figure, were the same qualities that states should aspire to.

In the *City of God* Augustine also began to outline a Christian concept of just war, but his thoughts on violence and war are not always straightforward. Whilst Augustine did on occasion advocate violence, he was more often inclined to compassion, even for his enemies, in one case appealing against the death sentence imposed on two Donatists who had killed and disfigured Catholic clergymen. He also requested that they should not be tortured. In another instance he berated a crowd who had killed an official, ordering them in future to endure without reacting to the wrongs inflicted on them by the state.¹¹³ Augustine was active in rescuing slaves who had been taken illegally by slavers, but he did not want slavers

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p 184.

¹⁰⁹ Markus. pp xii-xiii.

¹¹⁰ Saint Augustine, *City of God*. bk 15, ch 17, p 631.

¹¹¹ Markus. p xviii.

¹¹² Ibid. p xv.

¹¹³ Harmless. pp 97,100.

prosecuted or punished as the outcome would have meant their certain death.¹¹⁴ Augustine clearly wanted to mitigate violence in the main, but with some exceptions.

Although often cited as the founder of just war theory, Augustine in fact drew on Roman and Greek traditions, as well as appealing to the Old Testament, in developing his thoughts on war. Augustine mirrors Plato in the *Republic* in some of his views on war, notably in the hope that peace will follow hostilities and that a vanquished opponent be allowed to live in peace with their former enemies.¹¹⁵ Plato argued that Greek warfare should be fought so that peace with an enemy would be easier after conflict by foregoing the taking of slaves or killing of captured enemies, mirroring Augustine's hopes of Christian conduct in war.¹¹⁶

Augustine was also influenced by the Roman philosopher Cicero and agreed with the Roman that wars of aggression are not just, but that going to war to defend your country, or to uphold the rights of an ally was.¹¹⁷ Cicero also argued that peace was the objective of war and that it should only be declared as a final option and that prisoners should be dealt with mercifully.¹¹⁸ What was different in Augustine from the old Roman traditions was that he offered a Christian perspective by reconciling the violence in the Old Testament with the more peaceful nature of the New. Augustine also argued that a true republic had never existed in Rome, as for him there never was a qualifying condition for a state of proper justice. He argues again that without justice there can be no true state on earth without its roots firmly tied to the acceptance of God. He is clearly casting doubt on the legitimacy of the Roman state, only the faithful, bound in common union to God and therefore with justice at its heart, can claim true statehood.¹¹⁹ He also disparages any Roman claims to virtue, plainly stating that: "without true religion, there can be no virtue".¹²⁰

Religion in the old world most often served as a servant of the state¹²¹ A position not shared by Augustine who held that the state should uphold Christian values and promote justice. For

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p 102.

¹¹⁵ Plato. (MMII) *Republic*: London: Folio Society. p 205.

¹¹⁶ Gregory Reichberg. et. al. (eds). (2013) *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p 27.

¹¹⁷ Nicholson. p 179.

¹¹⁸ Reichberg. pp 50-2

¹¹⁹ Ibid. bk 19, ch 21, p 873.

¹²⁰ Ibid. bk 19, ch 25, p 882.

¹²¹ Miles Hollingworth. (2013) *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. p 16.

Augustine Roman culture was one predicated on violence and domination and he was dismissive of the Roman concept of virtue as one that actually promoted sin.¹²² Augustine was alive to the dangers of Christians becoming servants of the state and argued that they should not be overly caught up in the machinations of an earthly city.¹²³ This seems a curiously circular argument in that this is exactly what Augustine was proposing in his *City of God* whereby Christians had to deal with the pitfalls in an earthly city on their pilgrimage to the heavenly one. In the *City of God* Augustine was delivering a clear theological and moral steer to his Christian audience as to their responsibilities to the empire, which as a last resort was there to protect them.

The Reception to the City of God

A selective search of the literature, undertaken to try to contextualise the historical reception of Augustine's *City of God*, shows a range of opinion over time. Critics have praised the vision and vigour of Augustine's work, but often with caveats as to the soundness of his theology, most notably original sin, free will, the damnation of the sinful dead and the fate of dead but unbaptised infants. Memorably Gibbon, in praising the book but damning the author, offered a robust appraisal of Augustine and his *City of God*, casting doubt on his learning and excoriating his incredulosity in accepting miracles associated with the relics of saints.¹²⁴

A later authority on the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire, Hodgkin, whilst acknowledging the *City of God* as an important book, criticised its scope, arguing that Augustine took on too many arguments. He further suggests that it is of more importance as a window on pagan Rome than use as a Christian argument. He also exposes a weakness in Augustine's argument that the Arian Goth's were merciful during the sack, noting that whilst at times churches were spared and sanctuary honoured, the slaughter was such that bodies were left unburied.¹²⁵

¹²² Ian McFarland et. al. (eds) (2011) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 49.

¹²³ Saint Augustine. (2010) *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p x.

¹²⁴ Gibbon. vol iii, ch 28, pp 352-3.

¹²⁵ Hodgkin. p 461-2

Whilst Hodgkin derided Augustine's *City of God* as useful only for its lessons in history, Chartres was surely nearer the mark in stating that Augustine had little interest in history, his motivation was the salvation of humanity.¹²⁶ Chartres states that to Augustine, the coming of Christ had ended perceived cycles of history, as understood by ancient philosophers, now there was a start and a finish to all human endeavours, and there would be a final reckoning.¹²⁷ Augustine used the written history of the Greeks and Romans to prove a point, that history as they had understood it was now at an end, Christianity had changed everything that they had taken for granted. For Augustine Christians "live *in* this world but they are not *of* this world: they are strangers lodging in a foreign country".¹²⁸

As noted above aspects of Augustine's theological thinking in the *City of God* have attracted criticism, both at the time it was written, and continuing to this day. His belief that dead and unbaptised infants are consigned to hell has been seen as harsh and unjust, with Russell noting that he was convinced that these infants were the "limbs of Satan", adding that his theology left a "gloomy sense of universal guilt" that became dominant in the middle-ages.¹²⁹ Similarly Augustine's views on original sin, predestination, and free will have caused controversy. Augustine has also been accused by Wetzel of getting himself into a muddle over Adam and his will to sin that resulted in this stain being visited on all his descendants.¹³⁰

The Augustinian scholar, Peter Brown, argues that Augustine could have written the *City of God* without the sack of Rome acting as a trigger and, that it is incorrect to believe otherwise.¹³¹ But it seems certain that the sack did move Augustine to write his work.¹³² Augustine could have developed his arguments contained in the *City of God* at another time, but would he have had the motivation to do so without the sack and the threat to Christianity?

¹²⁶ Saint Augustine. Richard Chartres. *City of God*. p xx.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p xx.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p xxii.

¹²⁹ Russell, Bertrand. (2004) *History of Western Philosophy*. London: Folio Society. pp 350-1

¹³⁰ Wetzel. p 11.

¹³¹ Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 311.

¹³² Harmless. p 317.

Themes of War in the City of God

In this chapter the most significant themes of war in the twenty-two books comprising the *City of God* are set into historical context and discussed. Augustine never developed a full Christian concept of just war, and he seldom developed a “systematic textbook” for the issues he addresses in his works, the fragmentary nature of his writing on war in *City of God* attest to that statement.¹³³

There are seven commonly agreed conditions for a just war (*jus ad bellum*) as identified by Frowe, which are: a just cause, proportionality, a reasonable chance of success, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort and a public declaration of war.¹³⁴ Augustine’s writing on war do fall within the above definition, but they do not fit neatly into all of the seven steps and not all of the conditions are clearly defined in the *City of God*. There are however six broad themes identified that emerge from Augustine’s thoughts on war in the *City of God* that are worthy of consideration in respect to just war theory, these are: suffering in war, the rightful authority to wage war, free will, obedience to the state, waging war to bring peace and avoiding war. Each of these themes are addressed separately here.

Suffering in War

The *City of God* is not a work about war, it was however the visitation of physical violence on the ancient city of Rome and its people that drove Augustine to write it. The themes of war are detailed throughout the twenty-two books, but mostly in the first five books of *The Refutation*, and in part-two towards the end of his work on *The Cities* in book nineteen and twenty-two particularly.

Much of Augustine’s writing on war in the *City of God* reflect the horror and violence that war brings and how Christian victims should come to terms with suffering and accept it. It is worthy of note that Augustine did not seek to regulate the horrors of war, other than through his expectation that Christians would stay their hand as the Goths had done. Suffering in war for Christians was a price they paid for their sins in the earthly city, but this was to be a cost

¹³³ Pollmann. p 10.

¹³⁴ Frowe, Helen. (2016) *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p 52.

worth paying for the transit to the *City of God*.¹³⁵ Augustine's views on Christian suffering have been neatly summarised by O'Daly as an affirmation of faith where there is: "a test or punishment is being asserted".¹³⁶

In the opening books of the *City of God* Augustine draws a contrasting picture between how pagans conducted war in the past and how the Goths had acted on a higher moral level in their sack of Rome. His argument that the Goth's were more merciful in their sack of Rome than other conquering armies is debatable and given the lack of first-hand evidence available to us, it is difficult to be sure. It is apparent that Augustine himself met with harassed survivors fleeing to Africa, but it is clear though that he put a positive spin on events, with the primary aim of reassuring those Christians whose faith had been challenged by the sack and who were stung by pagan accusations at the failure of God to protect the city.¹³⁷

Augustine states clearly that although many were killed, those who survived and blamed the sack on Christianity should have acknowledged the clemency shown to them by the Goths and their respect for people and sanctuaries.¹³⁸ Book one rationalises how the pain and indignities of war are to be accepted and endured as he addresses specific effects that war has on its victims. Augustine sets out his robust and uncompromising views on loss of possessions, torture, captivity, rape, burial, and suicide. His thoughts here are not part of a framework of emerging just war theory, how war should be initiated or conducted, rather they explain why Christians suffer from war and why this suffering offers some hope to the victims.

To Augustine the responsibility for the sack rested squarely on the shoulders of the inhabitants themselves.¹³⁹ It was the Romans love of earthly rewards that was directly responsible for their sorrows and those tortured for hidden wealth, that they may not on fact have, were to blame by sinfully coveting it. The pain and humiliation inflicted by the Goths on those who they suspected of having hidden their goods was for Augustine a small price to pay in return for heavenly rewards earned through suffering and death. Those who starved to death prior to the sack are likewise shown little sympathy for their physical suffering, for

¹³⁵ Wetzel. p 81.

¹³⁶ O'Daly. p 79.

¹³⁷ Peter Brown. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity A.D. 200-1000*. p 91.

¹³⁸ Saint Augustine. (2002) *City of God*. London: Folio Society. bk 1, ch 1, p 7.

¹³⁹ Saint Augustine. *City of God*. bk 1, ch 3, p 10.

Augustine they were taken from a world of hurt, and those who survived this period of want had learnt to live more frugally.¹⁴⁰

In a sermon following the sack Augustine speaks plainly of the suffering endured by the people during the violence, comparing the misery inflicted on them to the tribulations of Job.¹⁴¹ To Augustine, as with Job, suffering is to be endured and not avoided. Augustine in the *City of God* is alive to the horrors that war brings, but other than stating that Christians should show mercy to the vanquished, he is largely silent on how war should be conducted to minimise its horrors.

Augustine acknowledged that though the brutality of the sack was such that the dead lay unburied, he reassured the Christian faithful that in the heavenly city, to which the pious unburied were bound, they would be whole and that: “not a hair on their head shall perish”.¹⁴² Significantly Augustine also states that the dead, especially the faithful, should not be left unburied in similar circumstances, even if it had happened on this occasion.¹⁴³

Augustine was fully aware that the nominally Christian Goths violated women and argues that virgins and those who have devoted themselves to a chaste life and who had not consented or derived any pleasure during the act, were blameless and without sin. He is however equally clear that suicide following such a violation is wholly wrong and contradicts the sixth commandment that “*Thou shalt not kill*”, for him suicide was murder and a breach of the command.¹⁴⁴ According to Augustine Christians are bound not to kill a captured enemy and by extension neither should they kill themselves if they had been captured or violated.¹⁴⁵

Being taken into slavery by a conquering foe was an ever-present risk for those exposed to the ravages of war at the time of Augustine’s writing and he makes clear that this evil should not be charged to God’s doing, rather it’s the result of human sinfulness. If slavery is due to sinfulness, Augustine, citing an apostle, asserts that however wrong slavery is, for good

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. bk 1, ch 10, pp 20-1.

¹⁴¹ Atkins, E. M. and Dodaro, R. J. (2001) *Augustine Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp 205-14

¹⁴² Ibid. bk 1, ch 12, pp 22-3

¹⁴³ Ibid, bk 1, ch 14, p 24.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. bk 1. ch 16-22, pp 28-35.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. bk 1, ch 26, p 41.

order, the slave must obey their master.¹⁴⁶ Few subjugated people enjoy the experience of their suppression but for Augustine, a conquered people would still normally prefer to live in a state of subjection rather than face the stark alternative, on the basis that it is better to live in bondage than to die.¹⁴⁷ That Christians should be taken captive and enslaved was for him a source of pity, but that those who had suffered the loss of freedom would reap their rewards in heaven.¹⁴⁸

Rightful Authority to Wage War

In the first book of the *City of God* Augustine begins to address the issue of authority to initiate war, his thinking though falls short of a detailed doctrine. Augustine must reconcile the commandment not to kill with the violence that is replete throughout the Old Testament, which contrasts with the more pacific nature of Christianity implicit in the New Testament. He does this by arguing that killing may be authorised in two circumstances, by God himself, or a by someone who has been given responsibility either through “general law, or by a special commission”.¹⁴⁹ Those who kill at God’s command are blameless and Augustine cites Abraham as one who killed at His express instruction and was without guilt for his acts.

To Augustine those who kill as sanctioned through law or by commission, kill on behalf of those who have instructed them and are not deemed responsible for the act. Augustine acknowledges the violence in the Old Testament and makes a clear distinction, that if commanded by God, or through law or commission, those who kill under these two conditions are not committing murder; however, those who kill outside of these two stipulations do murder. In determining the two strands for authorising war in the *City of God* Augustine accepts that killing is justified in some circumstances and that in these cases they override the instruction in the Commandments not to kill.¹⁵⁰ Whilst not fully fleshed out here Augustine is beginning to grapple with a central concept of just war theory, that of the rightful authority to initiate and conduct war.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. bk 19, ch 14, pp 866-7.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. bk 18, ch 2, p 764.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. bk 1, ch 14, 15, pp 25-8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. bk 1, ch 21, p 35.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. bk 1, ch 21, p 35.

In the second book of the *City of God* Augustine again discusses authority and legitimacy for war by using the rape of the Sabine women to make a point both about the Roman need to dominate and how war should be conducted. The Sabine women were taken by guile from their menfolk without consent. Augustine argues that if the Romans had been denied permission to take the women, they should have first declared war if they thought they were wronged. To Augustine the fact that the Romans took the women without looking for a peaceful solution first and then not declaring war when this failed, was wrong. To him it was the Sabines who were wronged as they had been denied a remedy for finding a peaceful solution.¹⁵¹ Following the capture of the women and forced marriage to Roman bachelors, war ensued and only ended when the women themselves brokered a deal between their kinsmen and the Romans.¹⁵²

In his one of his many disputes with the Manichaeans, Augustine wrote, *Contra Faustum*, which was completed before the sack of Rome and in which he lays out some of thoughts on war that he later revisited in the *City of God*. In *Contra Faustum*, he chronicles his debates with his opponent Faustus, telling him that a ruler has the right to wage war, and that the military should perform their duties for the good of society. He also argues against Faustus that a soldier who kills in an unjust war waged by their ruler has no responsibilities for the deaths they cause because they are following orders.¹⁵³

Augustine's thoughts on the legitimate reasons for going to war in the *City of God* are rather thin, particularly viewed from a modern and secular standpoint. However, Augustine does make clear that the only legitimate authority for initiating war is God - or a rightful earthly authority. What constitutes a rightful authority though is left unqualified by him in the *City of God*. Whilst who, or what, constitutes a rightful authority is left open, Augustine does address the circumstances in which just war can be initiated by this authority and is couched in the context of a trespass that is inflicted on one group by another for which, after attempts at resolution, war may be declared.

In book five Augustine considers why the Roman Empire was to flourish for so long and makes clear that it was God who allowed Roman domination over its neighbours. and it was

¹⁵¹ Ibid. bk 2, ch 17, p 70.

¹⁵² Lawrence Norfolk (ed.) (MMVIII) *Myths and Legends of Ancient Rome*, Bury St. Edmunds, Folio Society. p 86.

¹⁵³ Saint Augustine. *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*. bk XXII, ch 75, pp 263-4.

God alone who decided the outcomes of war.¹⁵⁴ For Augustine it is God who allows the rise of rulers as he sees fit, and He gives them the power to dominate others.¹⁵⁵

It has been said that Augustine held Rome in esteem and felt obliged to offer Christians a moral steer in defending it.¹⁵⁶ These assertions are not immediately apparent however in the *City of God*, where he is critical of the Roman lust for power, and he is less than forthright in making a case for Christians to defend the Empire. For Augustine a Christian was bound to protect the blameless if they were unfairly attacked. To him this was an expression of one's love for others, in keeping with the requirement to "*love thy neighbour*".¹⁵⁷ However, this is not a theme that Augustine makes explicit in the *City of God*. What he does do is make clear that God is justified to make war, a claim that the Romans of course could not make.¹⁵⁸

Augustine revisits war conducted under Divine authority in book sixteen noting that wars conducted by Joshua were both "prosperous and wonderful".¹⁵⁹ He also writes in book seventeen that the Jews, being in his eyes responsible for the death of Christ, were later to pay the price, suffering being uprooted as a people and by having their lands destroyed as punishment.¹⁶⁰ Augustine does not state here who he felt was responsible for the destruction of the Jews, but it is likely that he refers to the sack of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in 70 CE. If that is the case the Romans in this instance would have been the unwitting instruments of Divine retribution.

Free Will

Augustine spells out his thinking on sin and free will in book twelve, stating that men and women have free will and that people can decide if they sin or not. God did not create evil, but he knows that we can and will sin, and it is the individual themselves who have the choice and must therefore bear the consequences of sinning.¹⁶¹ If we choose to sin then God

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. bk 5, ch 1, pp 181-2.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. bk 5, ch 19, p 218.

¹⁵⁶ Johnson, James Turner. (1984) *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p xxix.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p 197.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p xxix.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. bk 16, ch 43, p 709.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. bk 17, ch 18, pp 752-3

¹⁶¹ Ibid. bk 12, ch 6-8, pp 487-89, ch 22 p 511.

can then punish us for our “voluntary vices”.¹⁶² Death is the price paid for sinning, but according to Augustine we can die twice, once of the body and for the wicked alone, the death of their immortal soul if God decides it.¹⁶³ Whilst his writings are not directly related to war it is reasonable to infer that Augustine considers that we have a choice whether or not that we become involved in violence that is not legitimate and, if we do, we can be punished for exercising our free will and sinning.

Obedience to the State

The relationship between the two cities is made clear by Augustine in book fourteen where a stark and fundamental contrast is made between the two. The earthly city is one of self-worth and one “of contempt of God”. In the heavenly city this is reversed, it is love of God and “contempt of self” that are the determinants. In the earthly city rulers seek to subjugate others.¹⁶⁴ As a Christian progresses on their pilgrimage to the heavenly city they are surrounded by the inherent injustices and sins of the earthly city. Christians must engage with authorities in the earthly city, but they must retain their focus on God and on their eventual entry into the heavenly city. How Christians must live and act in the earthly city, without compromising the chances of getting into the heavenly city, is at the crux of how Augustine sees their relationship with the state and in what circumstances they are permitted to engage in warfare.

The earthly city says Augustine is most often “divided against itself”, where discord is its key feature. In book fifteen Augustine addresses this propensity for discord in the earthly city and he argues that we war in order that we can secure peace, and that we want peace so that we can enjoy the indulgences of life. Peace though is only gained at a price, that of engagement in “toilsome wars”, in contrast Augustine states that the good do not wage war with the good – but they do resist those that are evil.¹⁶⁵ Augustine makes clear that the earthly city is never free of evil, nor of the threats of civil upheavals.¹⁶⁶ In addressing tensions in his own time Augustine acknowledges the perceived plight of the Church as beset by temptations and danger. He asserts that in the earthly city the good and the bad are mixed until such time as

¹⁶² Ibid, bk 12, ch 3, p 483.

¹⁶³ Ibid, bk 13, ch 15, p 533.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. bk 14, ch 28, p 599.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. bk 15, ch 4-6, pp 605-8.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. bk 19, ch 5, p 851.

they are separated out, with the elect (those God has determined will be saved) bound for the heavenly city.¹⁶⁷

Waging War to bring Peace

In book nineteen Augustine argues that the unity won by the Romans in creating their empire was bought through much violence and he questions opponents who claim that only the wise engage in just war. Augustine decries the need for war stating that even if the wise wage just war because of the wrong visited on them by others, the outcome is still one of horror and pain.¹⁶⁸ He argues that the object of war is to bring peace, conceding that even the Romans sought peace through war, even though they fought mainly for glory.¹⁶⁹ Peace to Augustine is a state that families, communities and even criminals seek amongst themselves.¹⁷⁰ Peace to Augustine is “the tranquillity of all things”, and even those living in miserable circumstances are comforted by the fact that peace and order are better than war.¹⁷¹ Peace in the earthly city can only be attained for individuals by loving God, loving their neighbour, doing no harm, and doing right by others.¹⁷² For Augustine a just war is one where there is no intent to subjugate others or one fought for glory, but one initiated because the foe has sinned. In this book Augustine refers to Cicero’s *Republic* in which he maintains that a state should not engage in war other than for “honour or safety”. Augustine, whilst not addressing waging war for honour, does endorse Cicero’s argument that wars are to be fought for the safety of the state.¹⁷³

Augustine accepts that Christians and those without faith all want peace in the earthly city, but their aims in achieving it is different. The faithless want peace brought about through order and “civic obedience and rule”.¹⁷⁴ The faithful, whilst seeking the same advantages of peace brought through the hope of orderliness in the earthly city, ultimately seek to minimise the corrupting burdens threatening them as they journey to the heavenly city.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. bk 18, ch 49, p 826.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. bk 19, ch 7, p 854.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. bk 19, ch 12, p 858.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. bk 19, ch 12, pp 858-862.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. bk 19, ch 13, pp 864-4.

¹⁷² Ibid. bk 19. ch 14, p 865.

¹⁷³ Ibid. Bk 22, ch 6, pp 1018-19.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. bk 19, ch 16, pp 868.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. bk 19, ch 17, pp 868-9.

Avoiding War

To Augustine it is far better to avoid war by being friends with your neighbours and he views social stability as the key to securing peace internally within the earthly city. War harms everyone in its path, both victors and victims alike.¹⁷⁶ Peace is preferable to war and in the earthly city this means there is a need for social cohesion. Social cohesion is a benefit that all Christians should aim for, and to this end, they have a duty to follow the rightful authorities to achieve it.¹⁷⁷ Social stability requires that Christians obey the law and only engage in war if it was initiated by a rightful authority and are not forced into “impiety and iniquity”.¹⁷⁸ Killing is permissible for Christians, but only if God wanted it or a legitimate authority required it.¹⁷⁹

Augustine’s Just War Legacy

It is not intended here to undertake an exhaustive analysis of Augustine’s contribution to just war theory, rather it is an attempt to place his writing on war in the *City of God* into a broad historical context. It is necessary at the outset though to determine what is meant by a just war in a Christian context. A definition that Augustine would surely have recognised posits the emergence of a Christian concept of a just war as:

“A form of Christian witness to the need to curtail violent conflict in the form of a reflective and deliberative response to the understanding of God’s eternal peace as the aim of history and human susceptibility to the temptation of violence.”¹⁸⁰

Augustine’s writings on war, in the *City of God* and elsewhere do fit into this definition. And apart from his occasional incitements to use violence against foes, peace and stability were at the heart of Augustine’s thinking.

¹⁷⁶ Schillings, Sonja. (2016) *Enemies of All Humankind: Fictions of Legitimate Violence*. Dartmouth College Press. p 28.

¹⁷⁷ Wetzel. p 53.

¹⁷⁸ Saint Augustine. *City of God*. bk 5, ch 17, p 211.

¹⁷⁹ Wetzel. p 81.

¹⁸⁰ McFarland. P 255.

What is evident in Augustine's writing in the *City of God* is that the right to make war is only partially made clear, as is having the right intention. More recent scholars have identified in Augustine's wider works though more elements of a just war theory notably in the rightful authority to make war, the requirement for a just cause, having the right intention, that there is a reasonable chance of success, that there is a balance of rewards of good over evil and that there is a good chance of a successful conclusion.¹⁸¹

According to Langan, Augustine never addressed how non-combatants should be protected during war, or indeed the status of those who refuse to fight on grounds of conscience.¹⁸² Neither issue is addressed directly in the *City of God*, however Augustine does say that Christians should not kill a captured enemy and that they should not serve if it led to "impiety or iniquity". His writing on the protection of civilians in war and more obliquely on conscientious objection, is bound up with his theological thinking in the *City of God*. Langan makes the case that Augustine made no specific case for the protection of non-combatants, but that death is preferable to being morally compromised.¹⁸³ Langan also states rather that if God did not demand that non-combatants be spared, why should Augustine?¹⁸⁴ This contrasts with the view posited by Lee who claims that Augustine had: "a desire to protect the weak".¹⁸⁵

Whilst Augustine does start to develop a Christian concept of a just war in the *City of God*, Johnson states that he says little about how war should be prosecuted in his writings.¹⁸⁶ In this respect Augustine offers only the comfort that Christians must suffer in war to earn later rewards and hope that Christians show compassion to their enemies.

Augustine thoughts on war were to influence later Christian thinkers, particularly Gratian and Thomas Aquinas, who in their turn helped to develop a more rounded concept of a Christian just war theory.¹⁸⁷ Both Gratian and Aquinas drew on Augustine's various works in refining

¹⁸¹ Johnson. p 123.

¹⁸² Langan, John. (1984) "The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory." *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 19–38. p 19.

¹⁸³ Ibid. p 31.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p 32.

¹⁸⁵ Lee, P. (2012) "Selective Memory: Augustine and Contemporary Just War Discourse," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 65(3), pp. 309–322. p 320.

¹⁸⁶ Johnson. p 123.

¹⁸⁷ Johnson. p xxiv.

their own thinking on just war. Gratian was a monk writing in the early 12th century who compiled into one compendium the proclamations of popes and previous works on canon law. His endeavours are known commonly as the *Decretum*,¹⁸⁸ in which he referred to some ten of Augustine's works, including the *City of God*, his sermons, some letters to Boniface and to *Contra Faustum*. Gratian rarely made use of Augustine from original works, instead gleaning insights through intermediary materials.¹⁸⁹ By including Augustine's pronouncements on war in the *Decretum* they became accepted as part of the canons of the Church. Gratian was to refine Augustine's thoughts on Christians waging war out of a feeling of charity which he saw as a legitimate reason for just wars.¹⁹⁰

Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican friar who wrote his influential work the *Summa Theologiae*, in the 13th century and, like Gratian before him, cited Augustine as an authority on just war, using the *City of God* and other sources in his own work. Aquinas stated that although Jesus promoted non-violence, he had not expressly preached against joining the military and he supported Augustine's pronouncements that war should only be initiated by a rightful authority. He also echoed Augustine in arguing that suffering in war was the outcome of sinful behaviour.¹⁹¹

A more recent work that has echoes of Augustine's thoughts on war and strongly emphasises the ideal and peaceful nature of Christianity, is *War and the Gospel*, by Jean Lasserre, in which he argues that "Jesus quietly says no to Mars".¹⁹² Lasserre wrote with the horrors of the second World War fresh in the memory and with the fear of nuclear destruction ever present during the Cold War. He concedes, as does Augustine, that the state is to be obeyed by Christians, even when the state is unjust, and he also concedes that it can resort to violence. Lasserre, again echoing Augustine, argues that Christians should not be engaged in warfare on behalf of an unjust state.¹⁹³ Lasserre strikes a more peaceful tone to his work than Augustine in the *City of God*, and he explores the role of the Christian within the State with more consideration. Surprisingly perhaps, given that he follows similar themes, he does not make a direct reference to Augustine in his book.

¹⁸⁸ Reichberg. p 105.

¹⁸⁹ Pollmann. pp 1889-90.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. pp 1889-90.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. pp 1890-1.

¹⁹² Lasserre, Jean. (1962) *War and The Gospel*. London: James Clarke and Co. p 16.

¹⁹³ Ibid. pp 77,112.

Augustine's writings on just war continue to be relevant today. In the foreword to the written records of symposia to debate Augustinian just war theory from a Catholic perspective, specifically in respect to the American led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Teske, a translator of the Saint's works, states that he could find no real just war theory in them, rather there were parts of a theory found in several different places.¹⁹⁴ To Teske, Augustine's reputation as father of just war theory is not sustainable, however he is still claimed as the "founder of Christian just war theory in the west" later in the discussions.¹⁹⁵ As a sign of the difficulty in the practical application of Augustine's just war theory, it is apparent in the records of the symposium that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan proved difficult for the participants (and the Church) to decide whether either war could be seen in hindsight as just or unjust.¹⁹⁶ Was the war in Iraq specifically pre-emptive and the cause obscured by the case for war being "factually deficient"? If none of the allies had suffered directly at the hands of the Iraqis prior to the war - could there be a just cause for invasion as Augustine has insisted there should be?

It has been argued that there have been three stages of Christian just war thinking that are separated by time¹⁹⁷. The first stage of development was that of the early Church fathers, to which Augustine belonged. The second stage of development came in the middle ages where the concept of just war was organised into a more detailed and coherent whole, Gratian and Aquinas are thinkers from this time. The final stage is that of more recent times where theologians and secular thinkers continue to grapple with the moral, legal, and humanitarian implications of war. Lasserre and the symposia on the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq show that this third stage of just war thinking is evolving and that Augustine remains an integral part of the debate.

Conclusions

The Gothic sack of Rome and the rise of Christianity represented twin pressures that bore down simultaneously on the Empire. There were uncontrollable barbarians within the boundaries of the Empire and Christians establishing a separate identity to challenge Roman

¹⁹⁴ Craig J. N. De Paulo. et al. (2011) *Augustinian Just War Theory and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Confessions, Contentions, and the Lust for Power*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. pp xv-xvi.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p 26.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p 9.

¹⁹⁷ McFarland. p 255.

society. These twin pressures were destabilising factors working on the Western half of the Empire particularly. Augustine in the *City of God* was assuming responsibility for re-defining the old empire, undermining its ancient sense of self and identity. He was intent on reordering Roman history as a wholly Christian construct, with the old gods as frauds and Rome built on injustice and domination. The old gods and pagan ways had to be exposed to accommodate his new Christian reality. Augustine also had to explain away why the Christian God had not come to the aid of the city, and why a nominally Christian army was responsible for the catastrophe. Alaric though was free of any real empathy towards his fellow believers in Rome and had a simple decision to make. He wanted the power and status that the Empire in the East and the West had denied him, by sacking Rome he wanted to force the hand of the emperor and get what he deserved. Alaric was to use naked force to attempt to get the concessions that he wanted, Augustine in contrast relied on the power of words to undermine the ideals of the old Rome and conceptualise a Christians relationship with the state and rationalise their involvement and suffering in war.

It is to Augustine's other works that a slightly fuller picture of his thinking on war emerges, and it was later Christian theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas and Gratian, who were to look to these sources to refine their own views on just war. In 415 Augustine wrote to the general, Boniface, who was charged with protecting the Roman North African territories and who was wanting to withdraw from his duties and turn towards serving God. The letter in some respects mirrors sentiments he had written in the *City of God*, which he was still in the process of writing when he wrote to Boniface. Augustine recalled that David in the Old Testament bore arms and was loved by God, this was justification for Boniface remaining in post and engaging in warfare.¹⁹⁸ For good measure Augustine reminds Boniface that it is God who gives the soldier the courage to fight and goes on to tell him that some Christians serve through prayer, as others serve by fighting. For Christians though, wars were to be fought only to bring about peace and, in victory they should show mercy.¹⁹⁹ A sentiment confirmed in a letter to Marcellinus in 412 in which Augustine states wars conducted by Christians should be carried out so that following hostilities the enemy should be allowed to live peaceably, justly, and in a state of devoutness with their erstwhile foe.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Atkins. P 214. From Augustine's epistle 189.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. pp 216-7.

²⁰⁰ Chadwick. *Augustine of Hippo, A Life*. pp 58-9.

Augustine, like many Christians, had supposed that the time of Theodosius, and his efforts to banish paganism, heralded a new Christian age.²⁰¹ But as he wrote the *City of God* the Roman Empire was no longer synonymous with a wholly Christian Empire.²⁰² As he grew older, Augustine's keen intellect meant that he had often refined or changed his views. In essence though he followed the Roman approach to war²⁰³ seeing aggressive wars as wrong.²⁰⁴

It has been argued, not unreasonably, that Augustine's thoughts on just war in the *City of God* are difficult to comprehend as they are too poorly defined, and the reader must engage with some of his other writings to flesh out his views.²⁰⁵ However there are strong indicators of an emergent just war theory in this work. What is puzzling perhaps is that, given the energy and intellectual firepower that Augustine expended on the *City of God* and, given his concerns for social stability and for the defence of Christianity, that he did not offer a more robust argument for the faithful to play a fuller part in achieving those twin aims.

Augustine has been accused by Bertrand Russell of being more interested in the value of virginity and the sins of unbaptised infants than in wanting to counter the threats from barbarians or in shoring up the state and its culture.²⁰⁶ It could be argued that Augustine had failed to shape and promote a more forceful and coherent Christian doctrine of war in defence of a state that was in effect he guarantor of Western Christianity. This failure, as Russell intimated, played a part in barbarians ultimately dismembering the Western Roman Empire, with Christians aiding and abetting the collapse through a largely passive response to the danger posed. Pagans had, at the time of Augustine's writing the *City of God*, also levelled the claim at Christians that their pacific tendencies could not protect the state.²⁰⁷ Marcellinus, writing to Augustine to ask him to respond to these pagan claims posed the question to him: why should someone who had despoiled Roman territory be free to do so?²⁰⁸

²⁰¹ R. A. Markus. (1983) *Saint Augustine's Views on the 'Just War'*, Studies in Church History, Cambridge University Press. pp 8, 12.

²⁰² Brown. *Augustine of Hippo*. p 321.

²⁰³ Markus. *Saint Augustine's Views on the 'Just War'*. pp 2,4.

²⁰⁴ Gillian Clark. (2018) Imperium and the City of God: Augustine on Church and Empire. *Studies in Church History*, 54, p 4.

²⁰⁵ O'Daly. p 265.

²⁰⁶ Russell. P 351.

²⁰⁷ Harmless. p 324.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p 325.

Even judged by his own criterion, that of his stated requirement for social cohesion in the earthly city, Augustine had missed an opportunity, if he had even envisaged one, to galvanise Christians to protect a Christian state. He had not promoted strict pacifism and had acknowledged that Christians could be justified in engaging in warfare,²⁰⁹ however this is not the same as rallying them to defend their faith and the Empire. To Langan, Augustine promoted a “doctrine of passive obedience”, which is not useful when the state itself is unwilling, or unable, to marshal the will or resources to counter threats to peace.²¹⁰ In Augustine’s defence this perceived failure can be contested when it is considered that he himself said that God determined the outcomes of war and, in any case, Christian Goths had limited the damage during the sack and had acted mercifully. Those that suffered were to blame for their own misfortunes. God had allowed the despoilation and had decided the outcome, in this respect Augustine had answered Marcellinus’s question.

Augustine had lived in violent times which not unnaturally affected his view on social cohesion, and it was the fear of social breakdown that underpinned much of his writing on war and that was evident the *City of God*.²¹¹ Whilst he neglected an opportunity to urge Christians to defend the Empire he did provide a unifying rationale for why Christians had suffered so badly, offering as it were a vision of promise out of suffering. In a different context, though apposite here, Holland, contrasting a Darwinian reality to a Christian promise, asserts that their position was one of “strength in weakness and victory in defeat”²¹² Augustine would surely not have recognised this, for him Christian strength lay in their faith, and this was no weakness.

Augustine was slow to see the seriousness of the threat to Christianity posed by barbarians. His attacks on the Roman past and old gods, coupled with a failure to motivate Christians to protect the Empire, contributed to the increasing pressure bearing down on a weakened state. Paradoxically some Christians were only too willing to indulge in violence against perceived enemies, but at a time that social cohesion, a value Augustine held dear, was needed his *City of God* did little to persuade the faithful of a need to fight and support the Empire. Gibbon, bitinglly, said of Christianity and the fall of the Empire that it was a situation whereby “the

²⁰⁹Markus. *Saint Augustine’s Views on the ‘Just War’*. p 12.

²¹⁰ Langan. p 12.

²¹¹ Holland. P 138.

²¹² Ibid. p 425.

last remains of military spirit was buried in the cloister”.²¹³ Augustine has been a major influence on both Christian and secular writers and thinkers in shaping just war theory, and the *City of God* has been a source document in this respect over the past fifteen hundred years. However, in the *City of God* Augustine did little to articulate a coherent just war theory that would give Christians the theological framework, or instil a willingness, to protect a Christian empire under threat.

Augustine’s reputation as the architect of just war theory is misplaced, he built on the work of his pagan predecessors. His contribution was to bring charity or humanity to the fore as he sowed the seeds of a concept of just war theory that was developed by later Christian thinkers and utilised into modern times. Though Augustine is not the father of just war theory, his contribution to a Christian concept present in the *City of God* remains authoritative to this day.

²¹³ Gibbon. Bk IV, Ch 38, p 373.

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