

The Temporal Contours of Community

Augustine unquestionably puts community at the core of his theology, but the shape and definition of that community remain for him an open question. The *City of God* is, in large part, aimed at approaching this problem of definition. It does so, however, not by providing us with some neat solution, but rather by showing us why the definition of a community might be so difficult in the first place. Time, it turns out, is what makes the contours of a *civitas* or an *ecclesia* so tough to sketch out. The passage of time blurs the boundaries of communities: people change, they come and go with their unsteady wills; societies change, they rise and fall with inconstant history. Because of all this, Augustine argues, communities must remain temporally open. Those now within the walls might be without tomorrow—and vice versa. Insofar as we recognize this temporality of community, then, love for one's community could only be possible as a kind of love that remains open to the outside.

It is, after all, the failure to appreciate time as time and eternity as eternity that lies at the heart of Augustine's over-cited, under-appreciated distinction between the two kinds of cities and their two kinds of loves:

Two loves, then, made two cities. Love of oneself, up to the point of contempt for God, made the earthly city. Love of God, up to the point of contempt for oneself, made the heavenly city. One is glorified in itself, the other is glorified in God.ⁱ

Augustine draws this distinction in Book XIV, after a sustained treatment of the difference between temporal happiness, which is illusory, and eternal blessedness, which alone holds true. All too easily, we can then string together a series of resulting dichotomies: heavenly city, earthly city; love of God, love of self; humility, pride; and so on. But the strange thing about this dualism is that it is not static. The boundaries of these two states do not appear to us as fixed across time and space. They seem to be shifting. Given how deeply Augustine sees temporality

running beneath every aspect of human life, this shouldn't surprise us. Our awareness of our own communities is unsettled and provisional, just like our awareness of ourselves.

Augustine's story of the two cities doesn't really get going until Book XV of the *City of God*. By then, Augustine has already sketched out for us the bookends of eschatological time: the absolute past of Adam's fall and the absolute future of the final resurrection. Between these two poles lie the six ages of human history: our infancy, from Adam to the Flood; our childhood, from the Flood to Abraham; our adolescence, from Abraham to David; our youth, from David to the Babylonian Exile; our adulthood, from the Exile to Christ; and our old age, the inscrutable *saeculum* of history in which we now live.

According to Book XV, then, the character of our infancy was made clear as soon as the first child ever born was killed by the second. Cain, the first founder of 'cities' in the literal sense, inaugurated the history of the earthly city (in Augustine's sense) by slaying Abel. In doing so, he foreshadowed the fratricide at the heart of Rome. From initial concern over the possibility of Rome's violent demise following its sack by Alaric, the *City of God* has taken us back to the violence that scarred that same city's founding. In some sense, Augustine's relative devaluation of the historical destiny of states can be read all the way back into this critique of the violence that makes states possible. Even Rome, however dear it may have been to Augustine or his audience, could not escape being marked by the curse of Cain.

Yet, for all that, we cannot simply identify Rome with the 'earthly city.' To do so would be to attribute a legibility to providence that it cannot have for us. Even within the relatively lucid history of the first age, Augustine admits, the division between the two cities was not at all obvious. After the Fall, there could be no more correlation between earthly successes and

ultimate fates. The evil spread out to cover the earth, while the good are lost in the mix. Cain's statecraft is only an early example of how meaningless worldly gains can be.

The infancy of humankind, our first attempt at history, thus ends in total confusion and apparent failure. Only a divine incision could separate out the good from the bad, the worthy from the unworthy, in the world built up by Adam's offspring. That incision would come only in the form of Noah's flood. The violence of the deluge cut off the rotten majority of the human family, leaving only a small remnant to re-start the story of the heavenly city on earth. The seed of Cain looks to have been wiped out, while the lineage of Adam's third son, Seth, lives on through Noah. The end of Book XV thus arrives at the flood as a quite visible discerning of the two cities.

But just before that, Augustine feels compelled to make a special remark about one of the relatives connecting Adam to Noah: Enoch, who was somehow carried off to God, apparently without having to die in this life.ⁱⁱ This story about Enoch could prove problematic for Augustine's purposes. It seems to take a razor to his eschatological framework, slicing out the time of delay that separates us from the very end. If Enoch can be directly translated into some heavenly realm, we might ask, why is it that we have to wait so long? Heading off such worries, Augustine is quick to make Enoch into an exceptional case:

The translation of Enoch has prefigured the deferral [*dilatio*] of our own dedication. To be sure, this was done in Christ, our head, who rose to die no more, and was also translated. Yet another dedication remained for the universal house that has Christ as a foundation. This dedication is deferred until the end [*differtur in finem*], when all will be resurrected to die no more.ⁱⁱⁱ

Augustine is emphatic about the delay that stands between us and this "dedication" of the house of Christ.^{iv} *Differre* is the operative verb here. Augustine repeats that the decisive dedication must be "deferred." To assume that we are already within the walls of such a divine house

would be premature, even infantile. Instead, we might say that the rest of the heavenly city will have to await its confirmation at the eschaton—precisely in the way that Enoch did not.

For now, though, the residents of both cities are caught up in the same historical net, to borrow one of Augustine's idiosyncratic images. Caught fish that we are, we must wait to be sorted out on the eschatological shore. There the sun of justice will shine on all, dividing up that which is currently so intermingled. Augustine does not unfold the implications of this until deep into Book XVIII of the *City of God*. There, we find that this intermingling of the two cities in the world conditions even the constitution of the Church itself. By the latter books of the *City of God*, Augustine has come out strongly against any simple identification of the Church with the 'heavenly city.' The true city of God is made up of those who are truly chosen. But not even the Church itself can tell those who have been chosen apart from those who have not. This is how Augustine describes the current situation:

Many of the rejected are mixed in with good people. Both are gathered up in the Church, as if it were a net. Both swim in the sea of this world, and both are indiscriminately caught in the same net. But when they arrive at the shore, the evil will be separated out from the good. And 'God will be all in all' in the good, as if in His temple.^v

The dedication of the house of God will, then, occur only on that eschatological shore. Until then, we are caught writhing about in the mixed net of the *saeculum*.^{vi}

This calls for a humble response on our part, though a particular kind of humility is needed. It can't be the false, self-defeating humility that says, 'We are humble, they are proud.' As Augustine well knows, those kind of humble airs lead only to a more perverse pride and a deadlier sickness in the soul. Instead, what is needed is the humility to understand the provisional and relative status of such 'us vs. them' dichotomies. Those kinds of judgments are relative not on account of moral relativism or some other anachronistic liberality on Augustine's

part. Rather, they remain provisional precisely because they are time-bound and so remain subject to temporal upheavals and reversals until the very end.

Entangled as we are in the net of the *saeculum*, we have great difficulty telling fish from fish. Even within the walls that are said by some to define the Church, it remains undecided who will truly stand among the blessed in the end. The divine decision about this has, being timeless, already been made, as far as we are concerned. But we ourselves lack the criteria needed to mimic such a decision. And this lack of criteria is directly linked to our temporal condition. About those who fall away from the Church, Augustine writes:

It should not bother us that the devil often seduces even those who have already been reborn in Christ and are walking the paths of God. ‘The Lord knows who are His.’ No one from that group is seduced into eternal damnation by the devil. The Lord ‘knows’ them as God: nothing, not even the future, is concealed from Him. He does not ‘know’ them like people know other people. We see other people when they are present—if indeed we see them, since we do not see their hearts. But we do not see what they are going to be like later, just as we do not even see what we ourselves are going to be like later.^{vii}

Just as each of us is a question to ourselves, so too do our communities remain in question. The temporal open-endedness of our lives lends a certain undecidedness to the boundaries of our communities. In texts like the *Gift of Perseverance*, this future-oriented openness seems to leave some room for redemption.^{viii} Even those who turn back to their old ways could change again in the years to come.^{ix} Here, though, Augustine places more emphasis on the other possibility: that those who appear to be just and virtuous will later turn out to be quite different.

Augustine is equally emphatic that this temporal undecidedness of our lives and communities is not to be understood as a shifting back and forth between the heavenly and earthly cities in their proper sense. What is at stake there is a kind of citizenship that is granted atemporally by God Himself. Our documents have already been drafted, in other words, though

we have no access to them. The question remains one of legibility. Perhaps that's why, later in the *City of God*, Augustine brings us to the topic of 'books.'

In Book XX, Augustine takes his lead from Revelation 20:12, which makes references to books both of the dead and of life: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books."^x The books of the dead are many, but there is only one book of life. The difference between these volumes will become apparent at the scene of Christ's judgment. Only then, in some kind of time-bending mental awakening, will illegible disorder succumb to lucid legibility. "So," according to Augustine,

we should understand that there will be a certain divine force that will make it so that everyone's works, whether good or bad, will all be called back into their memories. With astonishing speed, these works will be sorted out via a mental intuition. Knowledge will accuse or excuse them according to conscience. In this way, each and every person will be judged simultaneously. No wonder, then, this divine force has received the name 'book.' In it, whatever is recalled through its effectivity is, in a way, 'read.'^{xi}

Even the books of the dead, then, might as well be closed to us. Their ink is too faded to read. But that does not make their pages blank. And according to Augustine, what is needed to render a human life legible is not a more well-rounded human perspective on life, but a divine force. Nothing but a *vis divina* could discern the depths of human memory.

The book of life is likewise mysterious. Its effect is made clear in Revelation 20:15: "anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."^{xii} With the words of Revelation, the separation of the two cities ends in a grotesque climax. A fairly creative exegetical approach would be needed to get around that. And, while Augustine might show such flexibility elsewhere, in the closing books of the *City of God* he is primarily interested in re-narrating the tangible effects of his eschatology.

Finding out the content of this book of life would thus seem to be a fairly desirable goal. But that's why we have to hold on to this distinction between the legible and the illegible. While Augustine is blunt when describing the flames of everlasting punishment, he's reserved when it comes to throwing our own contemporaries into the fire prematurely. Doing so would only be justifiable if we had access to the text of the book of life. In Augustine's view, we do not. If the many books of the dead are a collapsing of temporally disordered human lives into a condemnable lump, the sole book of life is the atemporal decision of the divine, which stands beyond all that disorder. The purpose of that book is not to be read by God, but to be opened up for us at the very end:

But this book does not 'remind' God, as if He would otherwise forget and be mistaken. Instead, this book signifies the predestination of those whom He is going to give eternal life. It is not that God is ignorant of them and so needs to read this book so that He comes to know about them. Rather, His foreknowledge of them, which cannot be mistaken, is this book of life. That they have been written in this book means that they have been known in advance.^{xiii}

With its fixed, illegible text, the book of life remains both decisive for us and unknown to us. Knowing about it serves to clarify the relationship between humanity and God. Augustine's reading of Revelation here affirms the priority of grace as it follows from the timelessness of divine agency. But it does so while pulling back from another potentially dangerous consequence: the hubristic supposition that we might already have taken hold of this book before the time.

Such hubris is always a risk when we try to define our own communities from within history. According to Augustine, the names written in the book of life are there only by the grace of God. No write-in candidates are allowed. Not even membership in the visible Church, as Augustine conceived of it, should allow anyone to claim that their names are to be found there. The mercy of God (for some) is assured, but it resists being so easily weaponized. What

keeps it from being used that way is, ultimately, the fact that our communities are temporal. For Augustine, that means they are mutable, fluid, and provisional. While all of humanity sinned in the first Adam, it is true that only some will be reborn through the second.^{xiv} “But no one ought to confess that they have passed over from that evil to this good,” Augustine reminds us, “unless they have arrived there where no temptation remains, unless—through so many different kinds of battles—they have arrived at peace from the war of flesh desiring against spirit and spirit against flesh.”^{xv} This goes both for the conversion claims of individual Christians and for the attempts of the Church as a whole to define itself. Though humankind is always in flux, its attempts to neatly pinpoint its own transformations continue to meet with frustration.

Those within the walls of the Church can always pass beyond them, as Augustine constantly cautions us. Yet he also holds—perhaps with less frequency—that the fates of those outside the walls also remain unknown to us. They could quite easily reenter the fold sometime between today and the eschaton. That’s why they must be prayed for rather than rooted out. It’s difficult to say whether Augustine observed such openness in his daily practice, but the force of his argument does nevertheless lead us in this direction.^{xvi} Of the Church, he writes:

So, for now, it prays for those people it holds to be enemies, since it is the time of fruitful repentance. Why would it pray for them at all, if not so that, as the Apostle says, ‘God might give them repentance so they are rescued from the snares of the devil, who was holding them captive on account of their own wills?’ Lastly, if the church were so certain that it knew who in this life was predestined to go into eternal fire with the devil, it would pray neither for them nor for the devil. But since it is certain about no one, to this extent the church prays for all its embodied enemies. Still, its prayers are not always heard. The church’s prayers for its enemies are only heard when those who are opposed to the church are nevertheless predestined, so that the church’s prayers on their behalf are heard and they are made children of the church.^{xvii}

Here Augustine is able to set the stability of the divine decision right alongside our inability to take hold of that stability for ourselves. These might at first strike us as competing claims. On

the one hand, Augustine is telling us to pray for outsiders, since we don't know who'll turn out to be on the inside in the end. On the other hand, he's saying that our prayers won't be heard if God hasn't already chosen those outsiders as His own. The work of human hands seems to bristle against the timeless decision of the divine.

The *City of God*, however, sees no such competition between humanity and its God. We can only understand this if we appreciate Augustine's take on the illegibility of historical life. The *saeculum* greets us as emptied of meaning not because there really is no order at all, but because that order is concealed. Justice strikes us as impossible not because it *is* impossible, but because it's impossible for us to fully grasp it now. Providence is kept secret, but God is still provident. We can't see grace descend upon us as a dove, yet it continues to count for everything. What Augustine is doing here is thinking his way through the relationship between one timeless decision and many lives lived out in time.

By passing through the logic of timelessness, rather than navigating around it, Augustine is forced to confront some awkward aspects of his faith, not the least of which is the priority of predestination. Yet, by doing this, he's eventually able to come out on the other side of timelessness and dive back into the dim world of temporality. That part is crucial. It's not enough to acknowledge the decisiveness of God's timeless judgment. We also have to acknowledge our own inability to access that judgment before the time. That's how Augustine, so near to the end of the *City of God*, arrives at his understanding of communal boundaries as deferred, possible, and open.^{xviii} This is as true for us as it is untrue for God.

Already, in Book VIII of the *Confessions*, Augustine had recounted Victorinus' remark about the limits of community: "So it's walls, then, that make a Christian?"^{xix} Victorinus poses his question first as a challenge, though later he comes to accept the role that spatial visibility

plays in the constitution of a community. This is a lesson that Augustine, too, had to learn, as he eventually made his way from the splendor of isolation at Cassiciacum to the messiness of civic life at Hippo. But what the *City of God* teaches us is that the contours of community are neither entirely intellectual nor solely spatial. It is not simply a question of *where* we build our walls, but of *when* we build them and *how long* we're able to stay within them. What seems firm and impassible when considered statically might become more porous when looked at over the long run. By the end of the *City of God*, after he has taken us through the whole span of human history, Augustine leaves us with the sense that a community is not so much something enclosed in space as it is a thing opened up by time.

ⁱ CD XIV.xxviii: *fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem vero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui. Denique illa in se ipsa, haec in Domino gloriatur.* In XV.xviii, Augustine adds that the two cities can also be distinguished by two hopes—in humanity and the world (*transcursus saeculi mortalis*) or in God and the other-world (*immortalitas beatitudinis sempiternae*). Frend, 11-14, provides a helpful summary of how Augustine's two-cities doctrine was influenced by—while differing from—the exegetical work of the Donatist Tyconius. Tyconius already has the *duae civitates*, but, Donatist as he was, draws close to identifying the *civitas dei* with Donatist congregations. Augustine, rejecting that degree of apocalyptic clarity, works hard to undermine any such easy identifications. Markus, in *Saeculum*, 45-47, traces the development of the two-cities notion through Augustine's own earlier works, such as *De Vera Religione*, while also arguing that the two cities received a new kind of emphasis after the Sack of Rome.

ⁱⁱ See Genesis 5:21-24, which can, of course, be interpreted in other ways.

ⁱⁱⁱ CD XV.xxv: *Sed huius Enoch translatio nostrae dedicationis est praefigurata dilatio. Quae quidem iam facta est in Christo, capite nostro, qui si resurrexit ut non moriatur ulterius, sed etiam ipse translatus est. Restat autem altera dedicatio universae domus cuius ipse Christus est fundamentum, quae differtur in finem, quando erit omnium resurrectio non moriturorum amplius. Sive autem domus Dei dicatur sive templum Dei sive civitas Dei, id ipsum est nec abhorret a Latini eloquii consuetudine.* The last sentence can be rendered as: “But whether we say ‘house’ or ‘temple’ or ‘city’ of God, it is all the same and we should not bristle against our customary Latin eloquence.”

^{iv} On this, see Frend, 14: “These ideas [about the deferral of the division of the two cities to the eschaton], together with the conviction that he himself had been saved from permanent error and self-seeking by an act of divine grace, were to provide the basis for his alternative vision of Christian destiny to the bland acceptance of the permanence of the *tempora Christiana* sustained by the Roman Empire.”

^v CD XVIII.xlix: *multi reprobi miscentur bonis et utrique tamquam in sogenam evangelicam colliguntur et in hoc mundo tamquam in mari utrique inclusi retibus indiscrete natant, donec perveniatur ad litus, ubi mali segregentur a bonis et in bonis tamquam in templo suo ‘sit Deus omnia in omnibus.’* [1 Cor. 15:28] Cf. XV.xxii, where Augustine, when discussing the Nephilim (of all things), attributes this process of intermingling to free choice: *Hoc itaque libero voluntatis arbitrio, genere humano progrediente atque crescente, facta est permixtio et, iniquitate participata, quaedam utriusque confusio civitatis.* / “As humankind moved forward and grew, a mixing-together occurred through this free choice of the will. With the full participation of injustice, a certain confusion took place between the two cities.”

^{vi} See Markus, *Saeculum*, 133: “The saeculum for Augustine was the sphere of temporal realities in which the two ‘cities’ share an interest. In Augustine's language, the saeculum is the whole stretch of time in which the two cities are ‘inextricably intertwined;’ it is the sphere of human living, history, society and its institutions, characterized by the fact that in it the ultimate eschatological oppositions, though present, are not discernible...”

^{vii} CD XX.vii: *Nec moveat quod saepe diabolus seducit etiam illos qui regenerati iam in Christo vias ingrediuntur Dei. ‘Novit’ enim ‘Dominus qui sunt eius;’* [2 Tim. 2:19] *ex his in aeternam damnationem neminem ille seducit. Sic enim eos novit Dominus, ut Deus, quem nil latet etiam futurorum, non ut homo, qui hominem ad praesens videt (si tamen videt, cuius cor non videt), qualis autem postea sit futurus nec se ipsum videt.* Cf. his exegesis of the ‘seal’ from Rev. 20:1-6 earlier in XX.vii: ‘*Et clusit,’ inquit, ‘et signavit super eum ut non seduceret iam gentes donec finiantur mille anni.*’ ‘*Clausit super eum’ dictum est ‘interdixit ei ne posset exire,’ id est vetitum transgredi. ‘Signavit’ autem, quod addidit, significasse mihi videtur quod occultum esse voluit qui pertineant ad partem diaboli, et qui non pertineant. Hoc quippe in saeculo isto prorsus latet, quia et qui videtur stare, utrum sit casurus, et qui videtur iacere, utrum sit surrecturus, incertum est.* / “God sealed the devil in and put a sign on him,” says John, ‘so that he could not seduce the nations until a thousand years had passed.’ ‘He sealed him in’ means ‘He forbade him from being able to get out,’ i.e. from being able to transgress this boundary. But John adds ‘He put a sign on him,’ and to me this seems to signify that John wanted it to be hidden who belongs to the devil's portion and who does not. By all means, this is concealed in this age, since it is uncertain whether those who seem to be standing might fall, while it is equally uncertain whether those who seem to have fallen might still get up again.”

^{viii} Augustine underlines the importance of perseverance a fair number of times throughout the last books of the *City of God*; see, e.g., XXI.xxv. Marrou, 77-78, also connects perseverance to the problem of defining communities in time, pointing us all the way back to Book I of the *City of God*: “Perhaps we can identify the City of God with the visible Church in some way (I wouldn't dare say otherwise), but we cannot simply identify it with the those who ‘visibly belong the visible Church.’ St. Augustine never stops repeating this to his people. There are among us, in our churches, some bad Christians and sinners and, most formidable of all, future reprobates. Austere Augustinian spirituality willingly meditates upon the anguishing mystery of perseverance until the end. Outside the Church,

even among its persecutors there are hidden some ‘predestined friends who still don’t know themselves.’” (citing CD I.xxxv)

^{ix} Again, look to CD XX.vii: “it is uncertain whether those who seem to be standing might fall, while it is equally uncertain whether those who seem to have fallen might still get up again.”

^x NRSV; the Greek is: καὶ εἴδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, καὶ βιβλία ἡνοίχθησαν· καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἡνοίχθη, ὃ ἐστιν τῆς ζωῆς· καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.

^{xi} CD XX.xiv: *Quaedam igitur vis est intellegenda divina qua fiet ut cuique opera sua, vel bona vel mala, cuncta in memoriam revocentur et mentis intuitu mira celeritate cernantur ut accuset vel excusat scientia conscientiam atque ita simul et omnes et singuli iudicentur. Quae nimur vis divina libri nomen accepit. In ea quippe quodam modo legitur quidquid ea faciente recolitur.*

^{xii} NRSV; the Greek is: καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῷ βιβλῷ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.

^{xiii} CD XX.xv: *Non Deum liber iste commemorat ne oblivione fallatur; sed praedestinationem significat eorum quibus aeterna dabitur vita. Neque enim nescit eos Deus et in hoc libro legit, ut sciat; sed potius ipsa eius praescientia de illis, quae falli non potest, liber est vitae, in quo sunt scripti, id est ante praecogniti.*

^{xiv} CD XXI.xv: *Sicut enim per unum hominem peccantem in hoc tam grave malum devenimus, ita per unum hominem eundem Deum iustificantem ad illud bonum tam sublime veniemus. /* “Just as we came down so heavily into this evil through one man who sinned, so we will come to such a sublime good through one man, who was also the God who justifies.”

^{xv} CD XXI.xv, following the line cited just above: *Nec quisquam se debet ab isto ad illum transisse confidere, nisi cum ibi fuerit ubi temptatio nulla erit, nisi pacem tenerit quam belli huius, in quo caro concupiscit adversus spiritum et spiritus adversus carnem, multis et variis certaminibus quaerit.*

^{xvi} We cannot escape the fact that Augustine wrote the words “compel them to come in.” If we are to entertain the possibility of an Augustinian openness, it cannot be taken as a kind of modern, ‘liberal’ open-mindedness. Augustine was not particularly ‘tolerant.’ Instead, he passes through the timeless certainty of the divine decision and comes out the other side, in the temporal realm of human uncertainty about that very decision. That is why he is able to hold at once to both fixed predestination and communal openness. It is not that communities do not have boundaries at all, but that we lack any proper criteria for determining those boundaries from within history itself. For a subtle sketch of the development of Augustine’s position on coercion, see Markus, *Saeculum*, 134-135 and 141-145.

^{xvii} CD XXI.xxiv: *Nunc enim propterea pro eis orat quos in genere humano habet inimicos quia tempus est paenitentiae fructuosa. Nam quid maxime pro eis orat, nisi ‘ut det illis Deus,’ sicut dicit apostolus, ‘paenitentiam et resipiscant de diaboli laqueis, a quo captivi tenentur secundum ipsius voluntatem?’ [2 Tim. 2:25-26] Denique si de aliquibus ita certa esset, ut qui sint illi etiam nosset qui, licet adhuc in hac vita sint constituti, tamen praedestinati sunt in aeternum ignem ire cum diabolo, tam pro eis non oraret quam nec pro ipso. Sed quia de nullo certa est, orat pro omnibus dumtaxat hominibus inimicis suis in hoc corpore constitutis, nec tamen pro omnibus exauditur. Pro his enim solis exauditur qui, etsi adversantur ecclesiae, ita sunt tamen praedestinati ut pro eis exaudiatur ecclesia et filii efficiantur ecclesiae.*

^{xviii} Appreciating Augustine on the temporality of communities might help us get at why Markus’ interpretation of the *saeculum* proves so resilient against those who want to mobilize the two-cities model for a more virulent critique of ‘secular’ society. Wetzel sums this debate up with concision; see “Tale of Two Cities,” 17: “When Markus attempts to make a political virtue out of the invisibility of the *civitas peregrina*, the godly but foreign city, he gets criticized by a number of astute theologians for secularizing Augustine’s theology and blunting the church’s critique of the world.” These theologians include figures as diverse as: Rowan Williams, “Politics and the Soul: a Reading of the *City of God*,” *Milltown Studies* 19-20 (1987), 55-72; Oliver O’Donovan, “The Political Thought of *City of God* 19,” in Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 48-72; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), in which see especially p. 411. Markus responded to such criticisms in *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame: UND Press, 2006). He had already argued for his position quite eloquently in *Saeculum*, 71: “The new emphasis [on the two-cities model] is part of Augustine’s most mature reflection on the secular components of human life and flows from his understanding of the *saeculum*, not as a no-man’s land between the two cities, but as their temporal life in their interwoven, perplexed, and only eschatologically separable reality.”

^{xix} *Conf. VIII.ii.4: ergo parietes faciunt christianos?*