Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine (review)

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of the church fathers, taken as a whole" (29), "Origen and all the church fathers" (132, 136), "all early Christian interpreters" (76), etc. One of the fascinating features of patristic interpretation, in fact, is the diversity of approaches to the text one finds in Greek and Latin fathers (the latter less well represented here apart from Augustine) at different times and in different places or, for that matter, even within one author. While Didymus is cited here for the oblique christological character of his Genesis commentary, one would find a marked contrast in his work on Zechariah. While not smoothing over real hermeneutical differences, the missing compendium that I mentioned would also avoid being partial and unrepresentative; the treatment of Origen's lexical strategy (51–56) is crying out for mention of Eustathius' rebuttal, as the citation of Galatians 4 illustrating the use of allegory (90) should surely attract a note on its rejection by Diodore in his Psalms preface. The bibliography, too, might have included entries under Kannengiesser and Schäublin, and for the treatment of *theoria,* Nassif and Ternant. And a compendium on biblical hermeneutics would be sure to remain biblical; there is insufficient recourse here to patristic biblical commentary ("exegesis" frequently applied ill-advisedly) whereas more generally theological works by Irenaeus, Justin, Hilary, Polycarp, and Athanasius rate a place. Perhaps that explains the odd omission of a scriptural index from a work on the Bible; its entries might reflect an imbalance of attention to OT and NT.

If contemplating purchase of this introduction to patristic biblical interpretation, individuals should not be put off by the title, *SancTified Vision*, with its tau significantly in upper case; I found some exegesis of it only on 116. I hope its opacity does not discourage likely readers, who stand to gain much from the work, pending the discovery of that elusive compendium.

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Robert Dodaro
Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004
Pp. viii + 253. $75.

In the opening sentence of this book Robert Dodaro says that *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* attempts to answer the question "How did Augustine conceive the just society?" (1). Dodaro explains almost immediately that his central question "refers not to the communion of saints in the heavenly city, which is the ideal 'just society,' but to the city of God in its earthly pilgrimage" (1). The central question of Dodaro's book is therefore "How did Augustine conceive of a just society constituted by members of the City of God while on their earthly pilgrimage?" This question is not one to which scholars of Augustine's political thought have given much attention. It is worth beginning a discussion of Dodaro's book by asking why the question it attempts to answer has so often been overlooked.

The standard view of Augustine's political thought takes its bearings from his treatment of Cicero's *De re publica* in *The City of God*. In the first book of *De re publica*, Scipio famously describes a commonwealth as "an assembly united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is right and a community of interest" (1.25). Later in the dialogue Cicero has Scipio ask rhetorically "what is a society except a partnership in justice?" (1.25). Augustine mentions the first two of these passages early in *The City of God* (2.21), and he returns to them in Book 19, where he makes the traditional claim that justice prevails only where each is given his due. Therefore, justice demands, he says, the worship of the true God. Since God was not worshipped in Rome, justice never prevailed there. If Scipio is correct to assert that societies are partnerships in justice, then Augustine's claim implies that Rome was not a society. But since it is granted all around that Rome *was* a society, it follows that Scipio is wrong. Whatever political societies are, they cannot all be, by definition, partnerships in justice (see 19.24).

When Augustine offers his own characterization of a society, he seems to go further. He seems to imply that *no* political societies as we know them—no actual political societies existing in the saeculum—are just. All such societies, Augustine says, are composed of members of the City of God and of the earthly city. These societies are not united, as Scipio thought, by agreement about what is right and wrong, for members of the City of God and the earthly city do not agree about right and wrong. Instead, they are united by some common object of love (19.24); political societies are held together by their members' common love of peace. While it is not impossible that the terms of peace be just, Augustine recognizes that nothing guarantees that they will be. According to the standard view of his political thought, he thinks that they never have been: no political society, not even classical Rome at its apogee, has ever been just.

The prevalence of the standard view explains why scholars of Augustine's political thought have generally ignored the central question of Dodaro's book. They have ignored it because that question refers to a just society composed exclusively of members of the City of God and because the standard view implies that such a society is unlike any political society we have ever known or are ever likely to know.

Dodaro does not attempt to rebut what I have described as the standard view of Augustine's political thought, nor does he ever try to demonstrate that there has been or could be a society of the sort to which his central question refers. What he does do is discuss the ways in which individuals can become just and what statesmen should be like who are responsible for making society more just. These discussions suggest that Dodaro is less interested in the question which is ostensibly central to his book, the question "How did Augustine conceive of a just society constituted by members of the City of God while on their earthly pilgrimage?" and more interested in questions about how it is possible for individual members of the City of God to be just while discharging their civic duties on their earthly pilgrimage.

Dodaro's treatment of these questions illuminates textual issues raised by *The City of God* such as why sixteen books separate Augustine's two discussions of Cicero. The volume also shows the centrality of Augustine's anti-Pelagian views

to his political thought and the centrality of Augustine's theology to his account of the acquisition of the virtues. The author deepens our understanding of what is usually thought to be an early instance of a "mirror for princes"—*The City of God* 19.5—by showing the importance of humility and repentance for persons in political authority. *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* is a most welcome addition to the literature on Augustine's political thought and will be especially valued by graduate students and scholars. One hopes that the extraordinarily high price Cambridge University Press has attached to this book does not deter too many of those who would find it of interest.

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Stephen G. Wilson
Leaving the Fold: Apostates and Defectors in Antiquity
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004
Pp. xvii + 158. $25.

In *Leaving the Fold* Wilson addresses the important issue of what it meant to cross boundaries between religious communities in late antiquity. Through careful examination of the sources, both literary and epigrammatic, and a discerning use of historical and sociological studies, the author provides a very helpful examination of the nature and prevalence of religious apostasy and defection in the ancient Mediterranean world.

The first chapter surveys scholarship on the subject. Particularly helpful is Wilson's discussion of pertinent Greek and Latin terms. He notes that while *apostasis* and *defectio* initially had political connotations in the pagan world, Jewish and especially Christian usages gave the terms religious senses and intensified their negative meanings. Indeed, "it is Christians who turn it [apostasy] into a frequent, almost technical term" (16) that is strongly negative even though its pagan usage is mostly neutral.

Chapter 2, "Jewish Apostates," considers Jews like Tiberius Alexander, nephew of Philo, who as adjutant to Titus during the Jewish War, "did not," according to Josephus, "continue in the customs of his forefathers" (29). Exposed to the attractions of Greek culture and required to take part in Roman rites because of his office, he was, says Wilson, "to all intents and purposes, a defector" (33). While not specifically censoring his nephew, Philo considers those who participate in pagan cults and thinks their participation to be "tantamount to abandoning a . . . defining element of their own tradition" (42). Even the apostle Paul, according to the criteria Wilson adduces from Philo and others, "is a classic example of one group's apostate becoming another group's convert" (52).

In Chapter 3, "Christian Apostates," Wilson concludes that in the New Testament there are "conflicting visions of what Christian belief and practice involved" so that those condemned by Paul or other writers as deserting the faith "presumably had a different definition of what those limits were" (70) and did