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## FROM JULIUS AFRICANUS TO AUGUSTINE THE AFRICAN: A FORGOTTEN LINK IN EARLY AFRICAN THEOLOGY\*

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WHO IS THE first African theologian? The answer to that question depends, of course, on how we define the term. If by 'African theologian' we mean a person from any part of Africa who has contributed or does contribute in a characteristic way to the exposition and continued development of Christian thought, we can speak of African theologians from very early on in the history of Christianity. We can, in fact, argue whether the Latin-speaking lawyer Tertullian from Carthage in present-day Tunisia or the Greek-speaking pioneers of the so-called Catechetical School of Alexandria in Egypt were the first African theologians. Tertullian was vigorous and became increasingly enthusiastic in his own Christian commitment. He deviated from mainstream Christianity and became a precursor of African Independent Church movements from the time of Kimpa Vita in the Congo region in the seventeenth century or of Bishop Mutende and Johannes Maranke in this century in Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup>

We can, however, give 'African theologian' a more qualified definition and refer to a person who in his/her own exposition of Christian thought deliberately relates to concepts and symbolism in traditional African religions and lets them colour the interpretation of Christian truth-claims. With such a definition we find African theologians in sub-Saharan Africa and from considerably later stages in the history of African Christianity. B. Idowu from Ibadan, the East African, John S. Mbiti, and the doyen of African Catholic theology, Dr V. N. Mulago from Kinshasa in Zaïre, are the distinct pioneers.<sup>2</sup>

\* In this study I rely on texts and translations which are available in the University of Zimbabwe Library, and, therefore, I draw heavily on translations in two particular series: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, rev. A. C. Coxe [vols. I–VIII], ed. A. C. Coxe [vol. IX], ed. A. Menzies [vol. X] (Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 10 vols., 1956–60); and *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 14 vols., 1952–61). These will be referred to in this article simply as *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Post-Nicene Fathers*, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> For Tertullian, see *The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius*, ed. and trans. H. Bettenson (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), 14–16, 103–67.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, in K. A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds.), *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London, Lutterworth, 1969), B. Idowu, 'Introduction', 9–16; B. Idowu, 'God', 17–29; V. Mulago, 'Vital participation', 137–58; and J. S. Mbiti, 'Eschatology', 159–84. On later developments, see K. Appiah-Kubi and S. Torres (eds.), *African Theology en Route* (New York, Orbis, 1979), and J. Pobee and C. F. Hallencreutz, *Alternatives in Theology in Africa* (Nairobi,

In African theology in the latter sense there is a considerable interest in how traditional African concepts of time relate to a more linear and forward-oriented understanding of history in Christian theology.

It is John S. Mbiti, particularly, who has explored this problematic and, perhaps, has been inclined to over-emphasize the qualitative difference between a Christian and a traditional African view of time.<sup>3</sup>

This interest in time and history within modern African theology is not completely isolated. It runs, in fact, parallel to the scholarly concern in rewriting the history of African Christianity with due reference to local preconditions and indigenous initiatives. This scholarly concern has inspired lasting contributions by African historians such as J. F. Ade Ajayi from Lagos, Nigeria, the Ethiopian ecclesiastical historian Tadesse Tamrat, and Dr N. Bhebe, Dr E. Mashingaidze and Dr C. J. M. Zvobgo from Zimbabwe.<sup>4</sup>

With this interest in history and historiography in modern African scholarship in mind it is interesting to note that the question of time and history — and, more specifically, how the role of Christianity in time and history should be understood — belonged to the key issues of African theologians from the period of the Early Church, which to a surprisingly high degree was an extensive period of African Church history. Actually, it is when he addressed himself to these issues that Bishop Augustine of Hippo Regius — in today's Tunisia — emerges as a significant African theologian. I am, of course, referring to *De Civitate Dei* [*The City of God*], which Augustine wrote from 413 to 426 at a time when Christianity was accused of having been a cause of the defeat of imperial Rome, which had been sacked in 410 by invading barbaric Visigoths.<sup>5</sup>

Uzima, 1985). An independent contribution from South Africa is G. Setiloane, *African Theology: An Introduction* (Braamfontein, Skotaville, 1986). A critical discussion of theological concerns in the study of African traditional religion by African theologians is pursued in D. Westerlund, *African Religion in African Scholarship* (Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Mbiti, 'Eschatology'; J. S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (London, Heinemann; New York, Praeger, 1969), 15–28. See also the critique of Mbiti in Westerlund, *African Religion in African Scholarship*, 54–5, 60–3, in which the author also assesses O. p'Bitek's view of Mbiti as 'Africa's chiefest intellectual smuggler'.

<sup>4</sup> J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891: The Making of a New Elite* (London, Longmans, 1965); T. Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270–1527* (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1972); N. Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859–1923* (London, Longman, 1979); E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Christian Missions in Mashonaland, Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1930' (York, Univ. of York, D.Phil thesis, 1973); C. J. M. Zvobgo, 'The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe, 1891–1945' (Edinburgh, Univ. of Edinburgh, Ph.D. thesis, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> In this study I have made use of the Latin edition of Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Stuttgart, Teuber, 2 vols., 1981), and the English translation by H. Bettenson, ed. and intro. by D. Knowles (Harmondsworth, Penguin, Pelican Classics Series, 1972). It should be noted that Julius Africanus, who developed the biblical chronology which is the basis for Eusebius' *Chronicon* which is quoted frequently by Augustine in *The City of God*, is not explicitly mentioned by Augustine; see below, p. 19.

In his *magnum opus* Bishop Augustine is able to relate to one historiographic option which had been explored previously by Julius Africanus from the third century and which had inspired Eusebius of Caesarea, the father of Ecclesiastical History, from the fourth century. This link, from Julius Africanus to Augustine the African, has not been sufficiently appreciated in the study of early African theology. It is this omission that has prompted this contribution.

### HISTORIOGRAPHIC ALTERNATIVES IN EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

The sack of Rome in 410 by Alaric and his militant army, which adhered to an Arian form of Christianity,<sup>6</sup> was a serious challenge to historians and theologians — Roman and Christian alike — both in Italy and what at that time was called Africa. How could imperial Rome, the Victorious City, be defeated by barbarians? What were the root causes of such illegitimate humiliation? What were the fateful preconditions in terms of divine judgement and guidance of historic events? These (and other) questions were profound issues for Roman intellectuals who still adhered to classical pre-Christian values in the Imperial City. Since the time of Constantine, who had recognized Christianity as a possible resource for the integration of his vast empire, and of Theodosius the Great, who had made Christianity the established religion, the destiny of Rome had become of additional interest to Christian theologians in the West, who, through translations by Jerome and Rufinus, had become acquainted with Eusebius' optimistic imperial theology.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Rufinus from Aquileia translated Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* into Latin shortly after the first Visigothic invasion of Italy.<sup>8</sup>

Volusianus, the Provincial Governor of Roman North Africa, was not explicitly anti-Christian. However, he had not changed his religion and adhered to the increasingly popular opinion among Roman traditionalists that Christianity had undermined the Roman Empire. It had softened its moral values and badly affected its military morale. Christianity was the cause of the humiliating defeat of the imperial city.<sup>9</sup>

It was this interpretation of the role of Christianity in time and history, which was entertained also in Roman North Africa, which provoked Augustine to

<sup>6</sup> Arian and Arianism are derived from Arius, a priest from Alexandria and, later, Constantinople, who advanced a dualistic type of Christology which became the major issue in fourth-century Christian thought, see J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine: I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 4 vols., 1971), 193–210.

<sup>7</sup> See below, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> See W. H. Fremantle, 'Prolegomena on the life and work of Rufinus', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, III, 412–13. On the delicate relationship between Jerome and Rufinus, see *ibid.*, 406–9.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Knowles, xv–xvi, 5.

address himself to basic historiographic issues. He felt compelled to refute the accusations of Roman traditionalists. He also realized that he had to explore further the basis and orientation of a Christian theology of history at a time when Eusebius' imperial theology proved to be too superficial and too optimistic.<sup>10</sup>

Until the early decades of the fifth century there had been tried at least four historiographical alternatives in the evolving Christian tradition. Developments and characteristics of respective options can be illustrated in graphic form:

### HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ALTERNATIVES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

	<i>Apocalypics</i>	<i>Apologetic chronography</i>	<i>Christocentric view of history</i>	<i>Church history within imperial theology</i>	
				<i>Advanced form</i>	<i>Modified form</i>
<i>First century</i>	Gospels, Letters of Paul, Letters of John, Revelation	Genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke	Luke, Acts		
<i>Second century</i>	Irenaeus, Tertullian	Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria			
<i>Third century</i>		Heracles of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Hippolytus			
<i>Fourth century</i>		Eusebius		Eusebius	
<i>Fifth century</i>		Augustine, <i>The City of God</i>		Rufinus	Socrates Sozomen Theodoret

'Apocalypics' is derived from a Greek word which means revelation. As a way of interpreting history, apocalypics claims to aim at *medias res*. It wants to disclose the inner meaning of time and history by means of drastic and colourful symbolism. Apocalypics was practised within Hellenistic Judaism and is reflected also in substantial sections of the New Testament. The main themes in early Christian apocalypics concerned the imminent return of Christ and the time of hardship for the faithful which precedes the parousia. The symbolism of the

<sup>10</sup> See 'apokaluptōs', in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 10 vols., 1964-76), III, 556-92.

Anti-Christ in the letters of St John qualifies early Christian apocalypics.<sup>11</sup> Apocalyptic features are quite frequent among the Early Church Fathers. This is not least true of Tertullian from Carthage.<sup>12</sup> During the third century, when the emerging Christian community was hit by persecutions within the Roman Empire, Christian apocalypics flourished. Hippolytus, the controversial Roman church-leader and theologian, wrote the first study solely devoted to the problem of the Anti-Christ.<sup>13</sup>

From the second century onwards 'apologetics' became a predominant feature of Christian thought. Apologetics, too, is derived from Greek and refers in this context to attempts to prove the coherence and antiquity of Christian truth-claims when they were questioned by Jewish and Hellenistic philosophers and theologians. Early Christian apologetics also explored the implications of the Christian belief in God the Creator at a time when ontological dualism, denouncing the value of the material world, proved compelling to Christian Gnostics, who treated Salvation as esoteric knowledge (cf. *gnōsis*).<sup>14</sup>

This interest in a theology of creation, and deliberate attempts to prove the antiquity of Christianity, necessarily raised historiographical questions. The major issue proved to be how the biblical view of creation and divine guidance in history, which implied a concentrated view of history within a fairly limited span of time, related to more vague concepts of history as cyclic movements within a vast span of time. Apologetic chronography — where biblical chronology was advanced as a basic term of reference against contemporary interpretations of history within other traditions, Greek, Chaldean and Egyptian — became the new feature in the Christian preoccupation with time and history. Compared to similar ventures within Judaism, Christian chronographers could integrate the genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1: 1–17 and Luke 3: 23–8 within their overall perspective. Julius Africanus presents himself as the most compelling of the early Christian chronographers.<sup>15</sup>

Within the New Testament there were, however, not just apocalypics and features of apologetic chronography as valid options when questions of the interpretation of time and history (and not least the future!) were at stake. The Gospel according to St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles have a feature of their own which also influences the way in which apocalyptic themes are explored (see Luke 21). Luke starts off his Gospel as a proper historian. He aims at providing an 'orderly account' of the Jesus-history on the basis of oral tradition and eye-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 587–9.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Early Christian Fathers*, 18–19, 218–27.

<sup>13</sup> For Hippolytus, see *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V, 204–19.

<sup>14</sup> Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, I, 68–120.

<sup>15</sup> See below, p. 10.

witnesses' reports. He also claims to have some personal experience of what was involved (Luke 1: 1-4). In the introduction to the Acts of the Apostles there is claimed an immediate link with St Luke's Gospel, which 'dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up' (Acts 1: 1-2). Even so, the perspective of the new book is different. The main focus of the Acts of the Apostles is on the continued ministry of the exalted Jesus 'through the Holy Spirit' by means of his appointed agents, that is the Apostles (from the Greek verb *apostellein* (to commission) or, more specifically, Peter (Acts 1-12) and Paul (Acts 9-28). Compared to previous apocalypics, which contemplated dramatic preconditions for the imminent return of Christ, the thrust of the Acts of the Apostles is a Christocentric view of history which is open towards the future as the exalted Christ moves time and history towards its end.<sup>16</sup>

It was some time until this Christocentric view of history was explored further. Actually, it is the achievement of Eusebius of Caesarea to have developed Christian historiography from apologetic chronography to a mature study of Church history within general world history. He also managed to explore further the theological implications in the historiographic tradition from St Luke.<sup>17</sup> The stated objective of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* from the 320s corresponds, thus, very well with that of the Gospel according to St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Eusebius starts with the dispensation (*oikonomia*) of Christ, which is 'more divine than many think' (*Eccl. Hist.*, 1:1). He then intends to expound the history of the Church by focusing on the ministry of 'those who have governed and presided over the church in the most prominent parishes and those who in each generation have proclaimed the divine word either orally or in writing' (*ibid.*). Furthermore, he wants to trace the history of the Church in contrast to the continued development of the 'whole Jewish nation' (*ibid.*).

However, Eusebius conceived his historiographic principles in a situation which differed very much from that of St Luke. Whilst the Acts of the Apostles is terminated when Paul has been brought as a prisoner to imperial Rome (Acts 28: 16), Eusebius wrote as a staunch supporter and respected adviser to Emperor Constantine.<sup>18</sup> Already in his *Ecclesiastical History* he excels in eulogies of Constantine and sees his 'conversion' and new policies *vis-à-vis* Christianity as ushering in a radically new and improved situation for the Church (*Eccl. Hist.*,

<sup>16</sup> On the exegesis of the Acts of the Apostles, see H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. G. Bushwell (London, Faber, 1960), and H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London, SPCK, 1958).

<sup>17</sup> See R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> A. C. McGiffert, 'The life and writings of Eusebius of Caesarea', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, I, 19-25, 42-3. This volume also contains translations into English of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*. References to Eusebius' *Chronicon* are based on Jerome's translation, ed. A. Schoene (Frankfurt am Main, Weidmann, 2 vols., 1967).

IX: 9 – X: 9). In his *Life of Constantine* he spells out further his imperial theology as the significantly new framework for the continued history of the Church. It is in this panegyric that Eusebius gives his account of the First Ecumenical Council, in Nicea in Turkey in 325, in which he was an active participant and supported the credal agreement concerning the nature of Christ, which he believed should become the doctrinal accord within Christianity as a unifying force in the Empire (*Life of Const.*, III: 6–14).

Continued developments after the death of Constantine in 337 proved that the new imperial framework for continued ecclesiastical developments did not provide a lasting solution to all the problems. Headed by Eusebius of Nicomedia, the Arian party, which persevered after having been ruled out at Nicea, continued to propagate its alternative Christology and managed to enlist the support of Emperor Valens (364–78) for its cause. During a hectic period from 360 to 364 Emperor Julian had tried to restore traditional Roman religion. It was not until the reign of Theodosius the Great (379–94) that Christianity in the form in which it was defined by the majority at Nicea became the recognized religion of the State.<sup>19</sup>

In the succession of Eusebius, three Eastern Church historians from the fifth century, who were younger contemporaries of Bishop Augustine of Hippo Regius, have covered these developments from Nicea into the 420s. These were Socrates from Constantinople, Sozomen, who came from Palestine, and Theodoret, a prolific writer who was personally involved in the continued Christological debates after the Council in Constantinople in 381.<sup>20</sup> They deliberately modified Eusebius' imperial theology and gave preference in their historiography to different aspects of ecclesiastical developments. In the case of Socrates, the Ecumenical Councils served as the concentrated expression of the Lordship of Christ over the Church.<sup>21</sup> Sozomen gave more attention to monastic and ascetic features in the life of the Church.<sup>22</sup> Theodoret surveyed the conflict over Arianism and expressed his sympathies with Nestorius in his conflicts with Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See A. M. Young, *From Nicea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (London, SCM Press, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. A. C. Zenos, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, II, 1–178; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C. D. Hartranft, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, II, 239–427; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. B. Jackson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, III, 33–159.

<sup>21</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6–17, 120–1.

<sup>22</sup> C. D. Hartranft, 'Introduction' to Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, II, 193–4, 202–4, 212.

<sup>23</sup> B. Jackson, 'Prolegomena: The life and writings of the blessed Theodoretus, Bishop of Cyprus', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, III, 5–7, 18–19. Theodoret gives his account of the death of Theodosius the Great in 395 and of the continued ministry of John Chrysostom in Constantinople. He adds a note on the death of Theodorus of Mopsuestia in 428 in his last chapter, see Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 151–9.

Among these three Eastern Church historians, Socrates and Sozomen have made note of the sack of Rome in 410 (see Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.*, XX: 10; and Sozomen, *Eccl. Hist.*, IX: 6-10). They have, however, for linguistic and other reasons, not been able to register developments in Roman North Africa. They do not mention Augustine and have not at all experienced the sack of Rome as such a demanding historiographic event as did the Bishop of Hippo Regius.

### WHO WAS JULIUS AFRICANUS?

The most remarkable person in this historiographic survey is certainly Julius Africanus. What was his contribution to Christian theology? Is he, perhaps, the first African theologian? In introductions to the evolution of Christian thought, Julius Africanus is often overlooked.<sup>24</sup> In surveys of the history of historiography he is mentioned merely as the precursor of Eusebius.<sup>25</sup> He deserves, however, to be portrayed in his own right.

The extant material on Julius Africanus' life and from his writings is very scarce indeed. He lived during the first half of the third century and seems to have come from Jerusalem. He made his civil career in the Roman colonial administration in western Asia. He served in Emmaus, or Nicopolis, in Palestine for a while and pleaded as part of an embassy to Emperor Heliogabalus for its renovation.<sup>26</sup>

Julius Africanus was a Christian layman who devoted himself to theological studies. He is recognized for his learning by Jerome in his translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* as well as by Eusebius himself, who, in a brief summary of the writings of Julius Africanus in his *Ecclesiastical History*, adds a biographical note of the greatest interest. He says that, according to his *Chronography*, 'in five books' Julius Africanus 'went to Alexandria on account of the great fame of Heraclas, who excelled especially in philosophic studies and other Greek learning' (*Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 31).

This biographical note needs some elaboration. The first point to note is that Julius Africanus mentions Heraclas and not Origen — who, after all, was the most creative and influential representative of Alexandrian theology during the first half of the third century — when he records that he went to Alexandria and

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, T. A. Burkhil, *The Evolution of Christian Thought* (Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), which is based on lectures given at the University of Rhodesia, and Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, both of which overlook Julius Africanus.

<sup>25</sup> See E. B. Fryde, 'Historiography and historical methodology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edn, 1974), Macropedia, VIII, 948.

<sup>26</sup> See F. C. Burkitt, 'The Christian Church in the East', *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 12 vols., 1953-63), XII, 477-8, 485, and useful comments on the life of Julius Africanus by McGiffert in footnotes to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, I, 276.

gives his reason for that visit. There are chronological as well as theoretical issues involved here. Origen proved to be the creative mind of the Catechetical School in Alexandria when this distinguished centre of Christian learning resumed activities after the persecution of Christians launched by Severus in 203, which terminated Clement's term of service in Alexandria. Origen excelled in his allegorical exposition of Holy Writ. The fame of the school increased and he encouraged Heraclas to join the staff.<sup>27</sup>

However, there were certain tensions between Demetrius, the patriarch of Alexandria who was responsible for the Christian teaching in Alexandria and Egypt, and Origen, the principal of the Catechetical School. Demetrius seems to have objected to a layman teaching the Scriptures.<sup>28</sup> Things got worse when Origen agreed to be ordained in Caesarea at around 230 by Theocistus, who was joined in the ceremony by Alexander, his colleague from Jerusalem, and not by Demetrius in Alexandria (see *Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 23). Furthermore, Origen had involved himself in the emerging Neoplatonist school of thought, which was further developed by Plotinus. Origen had, in fact, spent some time as a student of Ammonius Saccas, 'the father of Neoplatonism' (*Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 19), resulting in a reduced interest in Biblical chronology. Origen had to leave Alexandria in the early 230s, and thereafter settled in Caesarea where he continued teaching and writing. Eusebius is able to give a quite comprehensive account of Origen's *Life and Letters* in Book VI of his *Ecclesiastical History* (see *Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 2-4, 7-8, 19 and 23-39).

Origen was succeeded by Heraclas as principal of the Catechetical School in Alexandria. According to Eusebius he had already, prior to the departure of Origen, enlisted the support of Demetrius (*Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 15). After Demetrius' death in 232 Heraclas was enthroned as patriarch of Alexandria (*Eccl. Hist.*, VI: 26). Against this background Julius' reference to Heraclas becomes even more interesting. It may very well be that Julius Africanus is quite specific here and records that it was during the brief period when Heraclas served as principal of the Catechetical School that he was studying in Alexandria. However, this note could be even more involved and indicate a deliberate theological option.

We do not know exactly how Heraclas related to Origen during the emerging conflict with Demetrius and after 230. Nor do we know very much about his theology. There is nothing extant of his writings. He seems, however, to have been more loyal than Origen to the tradition of biblical chronology which was a legacy

<sup>27</sup> See *The Early Christian Fathers*, 24-30, 254-362. See also 'Works of Origen', trans. and intro. by F. C. Crombie, in *Anie-Nicene Fathers*, IV, 221-669, and commentaries by Origen on the Gospels of St John and St Matthew in *ibid.*, X, 297-408 and 413-512.

<sup>28</sup> The relationship between Origen and Demetrius is explored in McGiffert's comments to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, I, 391-7.

in Alexandria from Jewish scholars.<sup>29</sup> It is, in fact, that line which Julius Africanus relates to rather than to the new features in Origen's theology.<sup>30</sup> Not very much is extant from Julius Africanus' literary production. However, there is at least one item which is explicitly written in critique of Origen, though the matter may be quite marginal. Even so, in a letter to Origen, Julius refutes his argument in favour of the biblical authenticity of the Book of Susanna.<sup>31</sup>

Julius Africanus' major contribution to Christian thought is in an area other than that in which Origen specialized. As already noted, Julius Africanus' real achievement was in the field of apologetic chronography.<sup>32</sup> There are available just a few fragments of Julius' *Chronography* as quotations in the *Chronicon* by a Byzantine historian called Georgius Syncellus.<sup>33</sup> It is these fragments which convey to us Julius' contribution to historiography and Christian thought.

In his *Chronography*, Julius Africanus tries to establish a chronology of world history within a limited time-span of 5,500 — or more precisely 5,531 — years from the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ, or what Africanus calls 'the advent of the Word of salvation' (Julius Africanus, *Fragments*, I and XVIII). He admits that in this regard he aligned himself with Jewish historiography, although he made his own calculations on the basis of the Old Testament. He refutes what he calls the 'boastful of their own antiquity' among the Egyptians but tries to identify parallels between his own chronology and accounts from Greek history (*ibid.*, I). He is particularly keen to try to establish that 'from Ogycus to Cyrus, as from Moses to his time, are 1,235 years' (*ibid.*, XII).

Specifying his apologetic chronography further, Julius Africanus suggests the following periodization (*ibid.*, V–XII):

From Adam to Noah and the Flood	2,262 years
From Noah to Abraham	1,015 years
From Abraham to the death of Joseph	286 years
From Moses to Cyrus	1,235 years
From Cyrus to Christ	702 years
	<hr/> 5,500 years

<sup>29</sup> See 'Chronologie', in T. Klauser et al. (eds.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der Antiken Welt* (Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 7 vols., 1950–69), III, 57, which also draws attention to the contribution of Clement of Alexandria to apologetic chronography. See Clement of Alexandria, 'The Stromata, or Miscellanies', trans. and intro. by A. C. Coxe, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, 334–41, in which chapters 22–29 of Book I are devoted to apologetic chronography with a special focus on the antiquity and function of Moses.

<sup>30</sup> For Julius Africanus, see 'The extant writings of Julius Africanus', trans. and intro. by A. C. Coxe, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VI, 123–40.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 123. See also Burkitt, 'The Christian Church in the East', 485.

<sup>32</sup> See above, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VI, 130–8. For the role of Julius Africanus in Byzantine historiography, see H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die Byzantinische Chronographie* (Leipzig, n.p., 2 vols., 1880–98).

Julius Africanus is not the first in the early Church who tries to establish such a framework for Biblical history. He is preceded by Theophilus, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, patriarch in Antioch, who, prior to his death in 180, had tried to convince Autolycus of the validity and antiquity of Christian truth-claims by spelling out his own biblical chronology. In certain details his calculations differ from those of Julius Africanus, whose chronology became the authoritative version. Theophilus suggests the following timetable (Theophilus, III: 24-9):

From the Creation to the Deluge	2,242 years
From the Deluge to Abraham	1,036 years
From Isaac to 'Moses in the desert'	660 years
From the death of Moses to the death of David	498 years
From the death of David to the Captivity	518 years
From Cyrus to the birth of Christ	744 years
	<hr/> 5,698 years

Theophilus was a convert to Christianity who confessed that he had been overwhelmed by the concrete historical dimension of the Old Testament which to him proved to be more convincing than the more lofty Greek view of history (ibid., I: 15). His arguments are simply biblicistic. He is more aggressive in his critique of alternative historiographies than Julius, who, in relation to Greek thought, is keen to establish possible parallels.<sup>34</sup> This is an observation which has, in fact, already been made by Eusebius. In his *Ecclesiastical History* he characterizes Theophilus' *Dialogue with Autolycos* as 'three elementary works' (*Eccl. Hist.*, IV: 24), while he assesses Julius Africanus' *Chronography* as 'a work accurately and laboriously prepared' (ibid., VI: 31). This assessment and the fact that Eusebius draws on Julius Africanus in his own historical writings have, of course, contributed to the recognition of Julius Africanus in the history of historiography.

Concerning Julius Africanus there is still one question outstanding: Why is he called 'Africanus'? Of course, this could have been just an appellation in order to distinguish this learned Christian layman from other Juliuses. But if this was the case the question still remains: Why 'Africanus'? Heracles and Origen — even after the latter's transfer from Alexandria to Caesarea — were not called 'Africani'. Thus, Eusebius' note that Julius had studied in Alexandria for a while does not provide sufficient reason for the name of Julius Africanus. After all, the Greeks distinguished between Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside, on the one hand, and Africa (i.e. Roman North Africa) on the other.<sup>35</sup>

Julius' appellation, therefore, contains a secret concerning his actual

<sup>34</sup> For Theophilus, see 'Theophilus to Autolycus', with introductory notes and trans. by M. Dods, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, 85-121.

<sup>35</sup> W. Pape and G. E. Benseler, *Wörterbuch der Griechischen Eigennamen: Nachdruck der dritten Auf* (Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2 vols., 1911), I, 31-2, 181.

connections with what would become the place of birth and area of future Church service of Augustine, the African. The extant material of Julius' *Life and Letters* does not disclose this secret. His appellation just connects Julius' apologetic chronography in a most enigmatic way to Africa.

### JULIUS AFRICANUS, EUSEBIUS AND AUGUSTINE

In times of continued persecutions of Christians during the third century the emerging apologetic chronography could easily be linked with and reinforce apocalyptic views of time and history. This was particularly the case if the total time-span of world history was seen as comprising 6,000 years which would be followed by an eternal Sabbath-rest.<sup>36</sup> Both Theophilus and Hippolytus did, in fact, add apocalyptic writings to their apologetic chronography.<sup>37</sup>

In the case of Julius Africanus, however, the concern for history and historiography is predominant, according to the fragments which are extant from his *Chronography*. There are no explicit references to apocalyptic disclosures of what the future may entail. Even so, in continued Byzantine historiography Julius Africanus' contribution seems to have provided a basis for Millenarianism.<sup>38</sup> As already noted, Eusebius held Julius Africanus in high esteem. He drew on Julius' *Chronography* when he spelled out his own apologetic chronography. He also made appropriate use of Africanus' contribution when he conceived and wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* (see *Eccl. Hist.*, I: 1 and 4-7).<sup>39</sup> He was encouraged by the historical thrust in Julius Africanus' contribution when he developed Christian historiography from apologetic chronography to a mature study of Church history within general world history. In this way Eusebius provides the immediate link between Julius Africanus and Augustine the African.

Besides the Bible, there is one book which Augustine quotes frequently in *The City of God* without specific critique. That is Eusebius' *Chronicon* in Jerome's translation, which, thus, makes evident the connection between Julius Africanus' apologetic chronography and Augustine's major contribution to the evolution of a Christian theology of history.<sup>40</sup> Although Augustine develops a more involved view of the Creation as the origin of the City of God than Julius Africanus and Eusebius do of the *terminus a quo* of their Biblical chronologies, the

<sup>36</sup> 'Chronologie', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, III, 57, in which references are made to the particular attention paid by Hilarius and Orosius to these dimensions in biblical chronology. Fryde's article, 'Historiography and historical methodology', 948, wrongly suggests that Julius Africanus should have adhered to this view.

<sup>37</sup> For Theophilus, see *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, 88.

<sup>38</sup> 'Chronologie', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, III, 53-5.

<sup>39</sup> Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, 41 does not consider the influence of Julius Africanus' *Chronography* on Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine's use of Eusebius' *Chronicon* is assessed by Knowles in Augustine, *The City of God*. No references are made here to Julius Africanus.

Bishop of Hippo Regius subscribes to the idea of a limited span of time from Adam to Christ (*City of God*, XIII: 13). Although he is able to recognize the value of Neoplatonism (see particularly *ibid.*, VII: 9), Augustine rejects the cyclical theory of the world's history, which he traced also in Origen's theology (*ibid.*, XII: 14-18; cf. XI: 23).

Augustine does not avoid the dimension of apocalypics in the Christian tradition, when he explores the end of the City of God and the Earthly City (*City of God*, XX: 4-25). Even so, he renounces 'any audacious presumption of making any pronouncement on the question' of when exactly the parousia shall take place (*ibid.*, XVIII: 52). He follows the primarily historical thrust of Julius Africanus and Eusebius when he expounds his theology of the City of God, although the detailed historical study is not the primary objective of his *magnum opus*. The framework which Augustine suggests for the interpretation of the dynamics of history, however, is far more radical and far-reaching than the optimistic structures of Eusebius' imperial theology. The link from Julius Africanus via Eusebius to Augustine the African has to be assessed with reference to the overall objectives of Augustine's Christian theology of history.

#### AUGUSTINE THE AFRICAN

Before we explore Augustine's contribution to historiography any further, we have to illustrate first of all the North African context which Augustine addressed himself to and out of which *The City of God* emerged.

Augustine's early development and spiritual journey, from his birth in Thagaste in Roman North Africa until he became a Christian and was baptized by Archbishop Ambrose of Milan in Northern Italy in 387, is well known from his *Confessions*, which is a classic as a piece of personal confessional writing. However, it is during his later period as Bishop of Hippo Regius from 395 to 430 that Augustine emerges as both a prolific writer and a very relevant African theologian.<sup>41</sup>

At that time the structures developed after the Punic Wars in what became Roman North Africa had begun to crumble. There was still a dominant Roman upper class comprising higher colonial administrators (such as Volusianus), landlords and merchants who maintained close links across the sea with Italy and Imperial Rome. There had also emerged a substantial Latin-speaking Roman-Berber middle class — a 'Coloured' community, if you wish — which was Augustine's own social background and which became his particular congregation. Then there were Berber farm-labourers dominating the lower classes.

<sup>41</sup> See the excellent biography, P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London, Faber, 1967).

Further south, into what is today the Sahara, traditional modes of production prevailed.<sup>42</sup>

Towards the end of the fourth century there had been national uprisings in Roman North Africa. The Donatist movement, forced underground when Constantine's religious policy was applied in the North African provinces and which became even more vulnerable after Theodosius the Great, was sympathetic to the nationalist cause. During the 420s, Germanic Vandals adhering to an Arian form of Christianity travelled via Spain and invaded Roman North Africa from the west in order to secure a foothold for attacks against Rome.<sup>43</sup>

It is under such circumstances that Augustine ministered as Bishop of Hippo Regius for thirty-five years. In his 'Introduction' to the translation of *The City of God*, David Knowles gives an appealing illustration of Augustine's context and his extensive ministry as African Church leader:

Four years after his baptism he went to Hippo Regius and began to live as a monk with some companions. He was ordained priest in 391 and in 395 consecrated bishop of the city. For the thirty-five years that followed he lived in a house near the basilica, of which the floor and bases of the pillars survive, in the city lying in a cup of hills. From his window he could see the Mediterranean 'putting on its changing colours like different garments, now green, with all the many varied shades, now purple, now blue'. His days were occupied with activities and cares of his people in that busy city. It was for them that he preached his numberless homilies on the Sunday Gospels, or gave his magnificent allegorical commentary on the Psalms. For them, day by day, he went steadily through the sublime meditations on the Gospel of St John. Hippo, the second port of Africa after Carthage, was an ancient town still retaining the crooked Punic streets, though the city had been replanned by the Romans more than two centuries before Augustine came there. There was a large forum and the usual Roman edifices, a temple, a theatre, and public baths. The Christian quarter with its church and bishop's house stood apart from the Roman centre, but near the fashionable suburbs which had large houses and gardens. The river valley in which the town lay was fertile and intensively cultivated. Cereals and vegetables, vines and olives abounded, and further up the valley were large estates of arable land that provided corn for export beyond the needs of the city. St Augustine's diocese lay in the hinterland, with village churches and the private chapels of landowners. It was beyond this, in the hills, that the violent clashes occurred between the Christians and the Donatist villagers.<sup>44</sup>

At the time of Augustine, the Church in Roman North Africa was severely split. When he did not manage to heal the wounds by conciliation Augustine in the end

<sup>42</sup> On social and political developments in Carthage and Roman North Africa, see A. Mahjoubi and P. Salama, 'Roman and Post-Roman North Africa', in G. Makhtiar (ed.), *Unesco General History of Africa: II: The Ancient Civilizations of Africa* (London, Unesco/Heinemann, 1981), 465-512, and P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, Faber, 1972).

<sup>43</sup> On the Donatist movement, see the provocative classic, W. Friend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1952).

<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Knowles, xiii.

recommended legal measures against the Donatists in accordance with the new policy of religion which was endorsed by Theodosius the Great.<sup>45</sup>

Even so, during the first half of the fifth century the Church in Roman North Africa continued to serve as the cradle of Latin-speaking Christianity. Although its early history still is to a large extent obscure, continued ecclesiastical developments are marked by an impressive succession of committed Christians and distinguished theologians. Tertullian was the first who became internationally recognized. In the third century the most important spokesman for North African Christianity is Cyprian, the ecclesiocentric patriarch of Carthage. During the first half of the fourth century Donatus presented himself as a determined, though increasingly controversial, church leader. He headed the party which pleaded for strict measures against those Christians who had lapsed during the persecutions. He seems to have overstated his case in critique of the new pastoral practices which evolved after Constantine's new religious policy. Towards the end of the century, Monica, Augustine's mother, stands forth as a devout representative of North African Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Augustine, of course, marks the peak in this development. Although the future prospects of the Church in Roman North Africa looked bleak towards the end of the 420s his substantial writings would continue to qualify Latin-speaking Christianity in Europe during the Middle Ages.

### AUGUSTINE'S ACHIEVEMENT

I have already illustrated how the sack of Rome in 410 and the subsequent critique of Christianity among the Roman traditionalists at different levels of society in Italy and Roman North Africa provoked the Bishop of Hippo to explore the basis and orientation of Christian historiography. In 413 he embarked on a major undertaking which in the first instance aimed at refuting the Roman critique, but which subsequently proved increasingly demanding and after sixteen or seventeen years resulted in *The City of God*, which contains a summary of Augustine's theology and, indeed, proved to be his *magnum opus* and the most comprehensive contribution which has so far been rendered by an African theologian.<sup>47</sup>

The first part of *The City of God* (Books I-V) explores critically the basis of the emerging Roman accusations against Christianity. He surveys the history of

<sup>45</sup> See Frend, *The Donatist Church*, and Brown, *Religion and Society*.

<sup>46</sup> For Cyprian, see *The Early Christian Fathers*, 30-3, 363-76. On Augustine's relations with his mother, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, which draws on Augustine's *Confessions*, and not least the delightful chapter on Monica's rural way of life in *Confessions* VI: 12.

<sup>47</sup> A useful introduction to *The City of God* is provided in M. Versfeld, *A Guide to the City of God* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1958).

imperial Rome and shows how the traditional godheads did not guarantee unconditional support for the expansive measures of the imperial city (I: 3-9, 13-23, 30-36, and III-IV, which contains a profound critique of Roman religion on the basis of Varro's systematization). He illustrates that the situation would, in fact, have been worse had Christianity not expanded and become the established religion in the Empire. He admits that Christianity did represent values which opposed traditional Roman attitudes to life (I: 10-13, 20-2, and V: 14-26). To some extent these values were observed also by invading barbarians, although they adhered to a heretical form of Christianity (I: a, III: 29, and V: 23). According to Augustine, the Roman critique was historically inaccurate and reflected lack of devotion to God, who also ruled the destiny of imperial Rome (I: 1, and V: 21-3).

In this first part of *The City of God*, Augustine introduces the theme which became the primary preoccupation in his continued writings. He sees history as an ongoing dramatic contrast between what he calls two cities, the Earthly City and the City of God. The Earthly City is inspired by lust for domination, while the City of God is characterized by trust in divine Grace and humility on the part of human beings (I: Preface). In this way Augustine qualifies his critique of imperial Rome. Aligning himself with an early apocalyptic critique of Rome he sees this city as a concrete manifestation of the Earthly City (I:1). In Book III he gives a very critical summary of Roman expansive policies (III: 14-20) and takes what could be called an anti-imperialist stand against Roman policies during and subsequent to the Punic Wars which led to the Roman colonization of North Africa (III: 18-19).

At the same time Augustine recognized that the destiny of earthly empires is dependent on the providence of God. He is therefore able to admit certain value in Roman policies (V:11-22). Actually, in this regard, Book V reflects a more pro-Roman perspective than Book III. On this basis Augustine is able to move on and assess the implications for the continued history of imperial Rome of the spread and gradual establishment of Christianity as a state religion from the reign of Constantine to the time of Theodosius. He advances a set of quite demanding values which Christian rulers should adhere to, and he applies these when assessing imperial policies from 313 onwards. It is worth quoting this set of values in full as they give an impression of what Augustine has in mind when he speaks of the City of God:

We Christians call rulers happy, if they rule with justice; if, amid the voices of exalted praise and the reverent salutations of excessive humility, they are not inflated with pride, but remember that they are but men; if they put their power at the service of God's majesty, to extend His worship far and wide; if they so fear God, love Him and worship Him; if, more than their earthly kingdom, they love that realm where they do not fear to share the kingship; if they are slow to punish, but ready to pardon; if they take vengeance on wrong

because of the necessity to direct and protect the state, and not to satisfy their personal animosity; if they grant pardon not to allow impunity to wrong-doing but in the hope of amendment of the wrong-doer; if, when they are obliged to take severe decisions, as must often happen, they compensate this with the gentleness of their mercy and the generosity of their benefits; if they restrain their self-indulgent appetites all the more because they are more free to gratify them, and prefer to have command over their lower desires than over any number of subject peoples; and if they do all this not for a burning desire for empty glory, but for the love of eternal blessedness; and if they do not fail to offer to their true God, as a sacrifice for their sins, the oblation of humility, compassion, and prayer (V: 24).

On this basis Augustine recognizes particularly the qualities of the reign of Theodosius the Great. He sees how during this time there develops a balance of functions and powers between ecclesiastical and political authorities within the emerging Christian society, which replaced imperial Rome as the basis for continued social and political development (V: 26). This new form of community will last when the imperial city has been defeated (cf. I: 10-11, and V: 25, where Augustine in fact implies that Rome is at a disadvantage compared to Constantinople as there is 'not a single temple or image of any demon' in the city, which Constantine was granted 'the honour of founding'). In this way Augustine considerably modified Eusebius' imperial theology. He opens up new perspectives on the interaction between Church and society — which are more far-reaching than the parallel modification of the legacy from Eusebius — which were pursued by Augustine's younger contemporaries in the East: Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret.<sup>48</sup>

In his concluding chapter of Part I of *The City of God*, Augustine makes an editorial remark which is worth quoting in full:

I think I have given a sufficient answer, in these five books, to those who wish to worship inanities, because of their love of this world, and who now complain, with childish indignation, that this worship is not allowed. After I had published the first three books, and they began to be widely circulated, I heard that some people were preparing to write some kind of a reply. Then I received information that this reply had been written, but the authors were looking for a suitable occasion to publish it without danger to themselves. I hereby warn them not to wish for something which is not for their own good. It is easy for anyone to imagine that he has made a reply, when he has refused to keep silence. Is anything more loquacious than folly? But it must not be supposed that folly is as powerful as truth, just because it can, if it likes, shout louder and longer than truth (V: 26).

Augustine's undertaking evidently had enlisted critical response, and he had to adjust his presentation accordingly. He has, however, not retreated from his basic position. In fact, he pursues his argument further with reference to the claims of

<sup>48</sup> See above, p. 7, and also N. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London, SCM Press, 1961).

those who suggest that they have sufficient ground for belief in and worship of pre-Christian deities (VI: Preface). This becomes his special preoccupation in Part II of *The City of God*, comprising Books VI to X.

It is here that Augustine pursues his dialogue with Neoplatonism, since he has critically explored the philosophy of religion of the learned Roman scholar M. Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) (VI, and VII: 1–30). Augustine recognizes that the tradition from Saccas and Plotinus is 'the philosophy that approximates most nearly to Christianity' (VIII: 10). Furthermore, he is able to interpret Salvation in Neoplatonist terms as 'a universal liberation of the soul' (X: 32, which concludes Part II and is an eloquent summary of Augustine's theology). However, with reference to his theology of Creation he is keen to establish that the basic dualism with which he operates is not ontological, as is the case in Neoplatonism, but moral in character (VIII: 12–27, IX, and X: 32). It is on this basis that he pursues his contrast of the Earthly City and the City of God and also takes issue with Origen (X: 20–32, XI: 23, and XII: 14–18).<sup>49</sup>

According to a letter to Firmus, which comments on the structure of his bulky manuscript, Augustine explains that Books I–X are primarily polemical and apologetic in character. They had been written against those who claimed that worship of pre-Christian deities 'leads to happiness in this life' (I–V) or secures 'happiness in the life to come' (VI–X). The remaining twelve books address themselves to the origin (XI–XIV), the progress or development (XV–XVIII) and the end of the City of God.<sup>50</sup> However, Augustine does not pursue his study of the City of God in isolation. Thus, section two of *The City of God* also contains significant material on the Earthly City.

From Book XI onwards *The City of God* takes a somewhat different shape. Its basic terms of reference are derived from biblical theology, which Augustine expounds with a combination of allegorical creativity and pastoral concerns. Implications of his argument are, wherever necessary, spelled out in contrast to alternative views, more specifically Neoplatonism and Origen's theology. Part III of *The City of God* (Books XI–XV) is a speculative exposition of the background of the two cities on the basis of the Book of Genesis.<sup>51</sup> Augustine argues that both the City of God and the Earthly City have their basic preconditions in divine providence (XI: 7, and 18–20). However, he adds another dimension when he explores the origin of the Earthly City.

<sup>49</sup> See R. Hoite, *Beatitude et sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris, Etudes augustiniennes, 1962).

<sup>50</sup> See Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Knowles, xxxv, and 'Epistula ad Firmum', in Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Dombard and Kalb, I, xxxv–xxxvii.

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that Augustine had previously written commentaries on both Genesis and Psalms, see Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and ed. J. H. Taylor (New York, Newman, 1982), and Augustine, *On the Psalms*, trans. and ed. D. S. Habgin and D. F. Carrigan (New York, Newman, 1960).

According to Augustine, the Earthly City is qualified by evil, which he sees as non-existence, implying a deliberate choice of that which is contrary to God who is the author of nature and the source of existence (XI: 17, and XII: 2). Augustine explores that point further with reference to biblical imagery about the Devil, who causes human beings to prefer non-existence and to be ruled by lust of domination and concupiscence (see XI: 33, and XII: 1). Although Augustine is very dramatic in his illustration of evil forces, he does not give up his original point that both the City of God and the Earthly City have their starting-point in divine initiative. Thus he is keen to prove that God can allow evil means for just ends. The preaching of the Gospel is made powerful through the suffering of the preachers; the Catholic faith is strengthened by the appearance and challenge of heretics (XVIII: 51). Augustine just makes the general point; he does not include any reference to Donatism here. Even wars can be means of establishing peace (XIX: 12, which provides the basis for Augustine's view of the just war). In this way Augustine elaborates further his theoretical basis for the recognition that even imperial Rome's destiny will be the result of divine providence.<sup>52</sup>

As already noted, it is in Part II of *The City of God* that Augustine subscribes to the theory of the limited time-span from Adam to Christ (XII: 13). He also takes issue with Origen's leaning towards a cyclic view of history (XI: 23, and XII: 14). Both points illustrate how Augustine aligns himself with the tradition of apologetic chronography from Julius Africanus and Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>53</sup>

References to Eusebius' *Chronicon* become particularly frequent in Part IV of *The City of God* (Books XV–XVIII) in which Augustine spells out the development of the two cities. Exploring the history of the City of God, Augustine employs extraordinary interpretative imagination when he tries to establish the chronological implications of references in the Old Testament to the considerable age of the patriarchs (see XV and XVI). In this regard, Augustine actually moves further than Julius Africanus and Eusebius. He does not apply their periodization of the election history more strictly; nor does he define an alternative timetable of his own.<sup>54</sup>

Augustine's objective in Books XV–XVIII is not primarily historical. Instead, his interest in this part of *The City of God* is theological. He wants to establish how far the City of God has manifested itself in Old Testament history. Augustine does not make a simple equation of the Old Testament account of the history of the Jewish people with the development of the City of God. On the one hand he limits the perspective. He uses a Christocentric key and sees that what in the

<sup>52</sup> See above, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> See above, fn. 5.

<sup>54</sup> See above, p. 10. See also Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, where in addition to references to Julius Africanus there is also a reference to Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, *Chronicon*, I, 121.

election history points to Jesus Christ is evidence of the presence of the City of God. This leads him to excel in a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament (see XVII, and XVIII: 28–48). On the other hand Augustine widens the perspective and is ready to trace vestiges of the City of God outside the history of the chosen people. He sees Job, 'who was from the race of Edom', as the model for a recognition of the extended citizenship in the City of God (XVIII: 47). On this basis Augustine can move further and recognize both the antiquity of Christianity and the possibilities of truth in pre-Christian philosophies having been borrowed from the prophecy (see VIII: 11, and XVIII: 37–43).<sup>55</sup>

Assessing the development of the City of God prior to the Incarnation in this way, Augustine does not pursue his analysis in isolation. He also illustrates the interaction of the City of God with the Earthly City by trying to identify chronological parallels in the history of the Jewish people and other political units in the Ancient Near East. In this exercise he draws heavily on Eusebius' *Chronicon* (XVIII: 1–27). However, this part of his argument does not seem to have been the most exciting to the Bishop of Hippo. Having led the presentation on to the time of Cyrus and the liberation of the Jewish people from the captivity in Babylonia (XVIII: 25–6), he leaves the historical line and continues his Christological interpretation of the prophets from Hosea onwards (XVIII: 27–48).<sup>56</sup>

Augustine concludes his fourth part of *The City of God* with some notes on the development of the Church prior to Constantine's 'conversion' and recognition of Christianity within the Empire. He does not deny that persecution belongs to the necessary dimension of the Church in any time. He refutes apocalyptic speculations concerning the one remaining persecution prior to the parousia after the ninth which Christianity is said to have passed through already (XVIII: 52–3).<sup>57</sup>

In the fifth part of *The City of God* (Books XIX–XXII), Augustine moves on and explores the end of both the City of God and the Earthly City. The end of the Earthly City is defined in terms of a deliberate eternal punishment and damnation. This is the special subject-matter of Book XXI. He also refutes Origen's view of a possible restoration of everything in the end, including the reconciliation of the Devil and his angels — the damned agents behind the Earthly City — and their resumption of their original state in the light of which God created (XXI: 17; cf. XI: 9 and 13–22, where Augustine applies the idea of the Devil as a fallen angel).

<sup>55</sup> On the use of this argument in early apologetic theology, see Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, I, 30–8.

<sup>56</sup> Eusebius is, in fact, more consistent, see Eusebius, *Chronicon*, I, 126–7.

<sup>57</sup> At this time this point was developed particularly by Orosius; see Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Knowles, 835–6.

The end of the City of God, on the other hand, Augustine depicts as the highest degree of reality: it is beatitude, bliss, happiness, and peace in the intimate interaction with God the very source of existence (XXII: 3 and 29–30).<sup>58</sup> Exploring this theme Augustine makes his own exegesis of the heavenly vision in the Book of Revelation. He contrasts what he calls 'the eternal felicity of the City of God in its perpetual Sabbath' (XXII: 30, which is the very last chapter of *The City of God*) with the Neoplatonist view of a purely spiritual unification of the liberated soul with God (XXII: 26–8). At stake here is the Christian view of resurrection, which runs counter to Neoplatonist emphasis on the immortality and liberation of the soul (XXII: 11–21).

On the basis of Scriptural evidence, Augustine also explores the characteristics of the time of transition from history, where the City of God interacts with the Earthly City, to the eternal end of the City of God. He expounds at quite some length established themes in Christian apocalyptics such as the time and function of the Anti-Christ and the character of the millennium (XX: 4–25).<sup>59</sup> He is again cautious not to commit himself to any specific timetable for the parousia. Instead he is keen to balance an emphasis on the *continuity* between the City of God here on earth and the same City in its final consummation on the one hand, and the aspect of radical New Creation on the other (cf. XX: 17, where Augustine interprets Rev. 20: 2–5, which contains the words by 'the One who sat on the throne: See I am making all things new'). In this way Augustine develops his theology of history which transcends and radicalizes Eusebius' imperial theology. The Earthly City and the City of God represent two definite contrasts in time which provide the basic dynamic in the historical process from the beginning, i.e. the Creation, to the end, i.e. the parousia, and the subsequent transfer from time to eternity.

This basic contrast is not primarily ontological. It is moral and religious. It is qualified, on the one hand, by demonic forces and destructive human concerns such as pride, lust for domination, and dependency on pre-Christian godheads, and, on the other, by divine grace and humility and surrender under God, the source of being, on the part of human beings. Augustine sees the Earthly City manifesting itself particularly in expansive political units which are supported or integrated by non-Christian religions. Imperial Rome is the concrete expression of the Earthly City prior to the establishment of Christianity as the State religion in the Empire. This profound change placed Rome under new and qualified directives for its continued social and political development (see V: 24).

So far, I have not been able to specify in the same way what exactly

<sup>58</sup> See Holte, *Beatitude et sagesse*, 233–74.

<sup>59</sup> N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, Secker, 1957), 29–30.

Augustine had in mind when he referred to the City of God. It is to this question that we now have to address ourselves.

### WHAT AND WHERE IS THE CITY OF GOD?

Although Augustine in the second section of *The City of God* (Books XI–XXII) deliberately argues on the basis of biblical theology, the way in which he spells out and applies his view of the City of God proves that it is a conception of his own which does not correspond exactly with closely related biblical concepts such as the Kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*) or the Church (*ekklesia*). Of course, Augustine is keen to provide a biblical foundation for his basic concept and is able to do so with reference to Psalms 46: 4–5, 48: 1–2, 8, and 87: 3 (see XI: 1). Even so, the implications of his concepts and the way in which he uses them deserve closer attention.

As I have already stated, the City of God is not immediately equivalent to what the New Testament refers to when it speaks of the Kingdom of God. This New Testament concept can be described as a condition of existence where the Will of God permeates all dimensions of life.<sup>60</sup> According to Augustine, the City of God is qualified by such a condition of existence and is called to represent its basic characteristics here on earth. Living within the framework of world history, however, the City of God has to interact with the Earthly City and asks for qualified participation on the part of humanity against the vices and forces of this Earthly City (XIX: 11–17).

Nor does Augustine's concept refer to exactly the same reality as is covered by the New Testament term for the Church, which is both an inclusive unity of all who call themselves Christians and an institutional and sacramental expression of this ecclesial unity. As was the case with the relation of the City of God to Israel of the Old Testament, Augustine sees this City as something both wider and more limited than the Church in the sociological, institutional and sacramental sense (I: Preface, 35, X: 7, XIX: 26–8, and XX: 11).

The biblical symbol which Augustine seems to be most close to when he speaks of the City of God is in fact *laos theou*, the people of God. There is the same continuity — qualified by Christ — in the way in which biblical writers refer to the people of God as the concrete focus of the ongoing history of Salvation as Augustine has in mind when he illustrates the development of the City of God in Books XV–XVIII. The polarization may in fact be somewhat sharper between the Earthly City and the City of God in Augustine's overall view of history than the New Testament contrast between the people of God and the peoples, *ta ethnē*.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See 'basileia', in Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, 579–93.

<sup>61</sup> See 'laos', in *ibid.*, IV, 29–57.

However, when Augustine speaks of the City of God he has something more in mind than just a religious community, the history of which he reflects on from its very beginning until its end. As has been indicated previously, the City of God can be described as a Christian society, which is anticipated in the Old Testament, qualified by the moral and religious values which Augustine derives from the New Testament view of the Kingdom of God.<sup>62</sup> As such, this community contrasts with the human passions which express themselves in the Earthly City.

According to Augustine, the City of God, therefore, is more than just a potential religious dimension of human life. The basic preoccupation of the City is 'the universal liberation of the human soul' from the bondage of the passions and temptation of the Earthly City (X: 32). The historical effects of this exercise, however, are of wider significance than just personal and spiritual salvation (*ibid.*). As the Earthly City manifests itself in social formations and political units (such as imperial Rome), so also does the City of God express itself in human history and influence social and political life. According to Augustine's account, conditions in the Roman Empire during the reign of Theodosius the Great are the clearest evidence of this dimension of the City of God (V: 26). This means that there are significant aspects of political theology in Augustine's view of the City of God.<sup>63</sup> He does not plead for a simple theocratic form of world order. Nor does he superimpose ecclesiastical structures over political authorities as the necessary and sufficient expressions of the City of God in social and political life (see *ibid.* and XIX: 17).

Within world history, the City of God continues to relate to and interact dramatically with the Earthly City. Furthermore, there are necessary relationships and possible tensions between ecclesiastical and political authorities within the Christian society. The political authorities have to be concerned with temporal objectives for 'the enjoyment of earthly peace'. In addition to this, the City of God is also concerned with 'the enjoyment of eternal peace' which is the objective of the Church within the City (XIX: 14).

On this basis, Augustine is able to give a very compelling illustration of the character and mission of the City of God within world history, which is worth quoting in full:

While this Heavenly City, therefore, is on pilgrimage in this world, she calls out

<sup>62</sup> See 'basileia', in *ibid.*, I, 579-93.

<sup>63</sup> A thorough inventory of the Greek and Roman background to, and the implications of, Augustine's view of themes such as Law, War, Church and State is presented in G. Combes, *La Doctrine politique de Saint Augustin* (Paris, Plon, 1927), H. A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1963). A useful analysis of Augustine's political theology in the light of his interpretation of history is presented in R. M. Marcus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (London, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970). Reference should also be made to E. H. Brookes, *The City of God and the Political Crisis* (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1960).

citizens from all nations and so collects a society of aliens, speaking all languages. She takes no account of any difference in customs, laws, and institutions, by which earthly peace is achieved and preserved — not that she annuls or abolishes any of those, rather, she maintains them and follows them (for, whatever divergencies there are among the diverse nations, those institutions have one single aim — earthly peace), provided that no hindrance is presented thereby to the religion which teaches that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped. Thus even the Heavenly City in her pilgrimage here on earth makes use of the earthly peace and defends and seeks the compromise between human wills in respect of the provisions relevant to the mortal nature of man, so far as may be permitted without detriment to true religion and piety. In fact, that City relates the earthly peace to the heavenly peace, which is so truly peaceful that it should be regarded as the only peace deserving the name, at least in respect of the rational creation; for this peace is the perfectly ordered and completely harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of each other in God (XIX: 17).

In this way, Augustine conceives of the possible sharing of roles and functions of ecclesiastical and political authorities within the City of God as a Christian society. This comprehensive view of the City of God 'on pilgrimage in this world' on the way towards its consummation qualifies Augustine's understanding of general as well as ecclesiastical history. On the foundation of divine initiative in creation and continued divine providence, history moves towards its fulfilment. As has already been stated, Augustine sees that the dynamics within, and the respective ends, differ radically between the Earthly City and the City of God.

Moving on towards its consummation in eternity the City of God expresses itself in world history as a Christian society with adherents of all peoples and races, who are inspired by values which are basically different from those of the Earthly City as it manifests itself in expansive and dominating political units. The primary characteristics — in terms of social ethics — of this alternative social and political order is peace and what Augustine calls *caritas* (XIV: 9). Expounding this comprehensive view of history, Augustine is, furthermore, keen to emphasize the necessary link between the mission which the City of God has to perform within history and its consummation at the end to come. Augustine's interpretation of history, therefore, implies an urgent plea for appropriate action here and now.

## CONCLUSION

In this way I have highlighted certain features in the development of the Christian interpretation of time and history until the first part of the fifth century. I have focused particularly on the contribution of the lesser-known Christian layman, Julius Africanus, and Augustine, the well-known Bishop of Hippo Regius in Roman North Africa. Julius Africanus established what became the recognized biblical chronology within continued Christian historiography in Byzantium and during the European Middle Ages. Augustine developed a dramatic overall

perspective of world history in the form of a continued contrast between the Earthly City and City of God. In his exposition of the origin and development of the two cities, Augustine aligned himself with the biblical chronology of Julius Africanus, which was mediated to him via the Latin translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* by Jerome. My contribution, therefore, illustrates a forgotten link in early African theology.

Continued developments in African Church history did not allow a more extensive spread of Augustine's theology in Africa. After all, Augustine did write in Latin, and, as has already been mentioned, the conditions of the Church in Roman North Africa during the fifth century were not favourable for continued advance. It was Augustine's younger contemporary Cyril, who, as conscientious patriarch of Alexandria from 412, carried the legacy of Athanasius further and who became the Church Father of the Copts in Egypt and of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, while Augustine was more widely read in Europe.

Today, when we look back at this forgotten link in early African theology, our ecclesiastical and general theoretical preconditions differ considerably from those of Augustine and Julius Africanus. Biblical criticism has taken over the role from allegory as the primary analytical tool in biblical theology. Marxist humanism provides a more compelling theoretical option than Neoplatonism. Even so, Augustine's theology of history and its background in the contributions to historiography from Julius Africanus and Eusebius do not present themselves merely as curiosities from a theological past. In a situation when African churches develop as peoples' movements with broad contacts with surrounding society in sovereign states, Augustine's view of the City of God 'on pilgrimage in this world', which expresses itself as a Christian society where ecclesiastical and political authorities interact in the pursuit of earthly and eternal peace (XIX: 17), does not seem to be merely obsolete.

# **The Religious Right in Southern Africa**

*by*

*Paul Gifford*

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